Paternal involvement beyond residence: The role of non-resident fathers in raising their children in Tshwane Metro, Gauteng

by

SIMON TEBOGO LOBAKA

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DEDICATIONS

This research is dedicated to non-resident fathers in South Africa who, despite their socioeconomic constraints, do their utmost to be active in their children's lives. I take off my hat to you… Keep up the good work.

IN MEMORIAM

This research is also dedicated to the kindest, sweetest woman we have ever been blessed to share time and space with – my mother-in-law Selina Moipone Sebitlo – who we lost to a COVID-19 related illness. You will forever remain in our hearts and thoughts; you are dearly missed. Continue to rest in perfect peace

This thesis is also dedicated to my best friend, Thapelo Ephraim Bovula, whose untimely death continues to be a wound that will not heal. We never finished a conversation without discussing the progress I was making towards the completion of this study, and I know if you were here you would celebrate this achievement with me without any reservation. Rest in power, my friend… You are truly missed.

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I have been blessed with three beautiful children Reabetswe Hlongoane, Reaobaka Kgosietsile, and Gaofenngwe Khumoetsile Lobaka. The three of you are my life; my only hope is that I can become the type of father you deserve.

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DECLARATIONS

Name: Simon Tebogo Lobaka
Student number: 5471-453-2
Degree: D.Phil in Sociology

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

08 February 2023

Signature Date

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role non-resident fathers play in the raising of their children over the life course. The main question posed in this study is *What caregiving roles do non-resident biological fathers play in raising their children over the life course?* The following are the three subsidiary questions formulated to address this:

- What are the indicators of responsible fathering in a South African context?
- Which and whose positive fathering roles do we exclude by assuming that father presence equals active involvement?
- How do non-resident fathers care for their children?

The life course perspective was chosen to trace the caregiving role played by non-resident fathers in raising their children. The life course perspective was chosen because it recognises that the core principles of an individual's life course comprise a complex interplay of biological, psychological and social elements. The approach also examines developmental inferences of changes in environmental elements while tracing individual role transitions, turning points and trajectories throughout the course of a person's life. A qualitative study was conducted by way of 30 in-depth interviews with 23 non-resident fathers based in Gauteng province. The data collection process lasted for 12 months – from August 2020 to August 2021. The methodology was adjusted in line with COVID-19 restrictions; as such, some interviews were conducted telephonically and online.

The study found that non-resident fathers play a significant role in the raising of their children. However, many face a myriad of challenges in their attempt to be more involved in child-rearing. The identified challenges varied from maternal gatekeeping to unfair treatment by the judiciary. Despite the challenges, participants indicated having embarked on measures to gain custody of, or at least access to, their children.

This study makes an important contribution by dispelling two myths that have dominated popular discourse in South Africa in the last decade. Firstly, it dispels the myth that Black South African fathers, especially non-resident fathers, are all irresponsible and uncaring towards their children. Secondly, the study shows that co-residence with children is not the only predictor of paternal involvement, and research participants make sustained efforts to remain active in the lives of children.

Key terms: non-resident fatherhood; life course perspective; paternal involvement; masculinity; responsible fathering; Black fathers; caregiving roles; maternal gatekeeping; positive fathering; father-child relationship; parental plans; qualitative research; turning point

APPENDICES

TABLE

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ATM	Automatic Teller Machine
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DoJCD	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
DSD	Department of Social Development
FAMSA	Family and Marriage Society of South Africa
FIS	Father Involvement Scale
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOME	Observation for Measurement of the Environment
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NFS	Nurturant Fathering Scale
PACE	Parents Advocating for Childcare Equality
D.Phil	Doctor of Philosophy
RSA	Republic of South Africa
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"*Fathers undertaking a more active role in caregiving is likely to be one of the most significant social developments of the twenty-first century*" (International Labour Organisation, 2014: 1).

1. Introduction

South Africa has extremely high rates of non-resident fathers, namely the second-highest rate of non-resident fathers in Africa after Namibia (Makusha & Richter, 2015: 1). According to Eddy, de Boor and Mphaka (2013: 7), more than half of all South African fathers between the ages 15 and 49 do not have daily contact with their children. In the latest report on the State of South Africa's Fathers, Van den Berg, Ratele and Makusha (2021: 15–16) report that 63% of South African children do not live with their biological fathers (21% also do not live with their biological mothers), although 41 percent of children co-reside with men who are not their biological fathers. Feni (2016: 2) even argues that South Africa is fast becoming a fatherless society. This introductory chapter provides a summary of the study undertaken, citing the problem statement, research questions and research objectives that steered this study. The chapter further gives an overview of the methodology and theory applied.

1.1. The research problem

The rise in female-headed households and extended family groups in South Africa is intimately tied to father absence (Patel & Mavungu, 2016: 23). According to Statistics South Africa (2018: 8), in 2018, 45 percent of Black African children lived in families with a biological mother but no biological father, whereas just 3.2 percent of these children lived in households with a biological father but no biological mother during the same period. When compared to other races, this shows the largest proportion of non-resident fatherhood. For example, 28.1 percent of Black Africans, 14.4 percent of Indians, and 16.2 percent of White children live with their biological mothers but no fathers. In 2020, 37.3 percent of children in Gauteng lived with a biological mother and no father (Hall, 2022: 165), whereas only 4.4 percent lived with a father and no mother. As a result of these figures, South Africa has been dubbed a "*fatherless nation*" and fathers as "deadbeat dads" in the media (Grange, 2013; Independent Media, 2014). The discussion over absent fathers has also spread to social media. For example, there are hundreds of Facebook pages dedicated to fathers and fatherhood, with some calling for father engagement and others criticising deadbeat fathers. On 25 October 2017, Izinja ezingondliyo (Dogs that don't pay maintenance) was created on Facebook. The group's main goal is to

shame maintenance defaulters by uploading images of these so-called deadbeat fathers on its Facebook page, which had over 25 000 followers in 2017 (Timeslive, 2017). The frustration of women in South Africa with the perceived lack of fatherhood involvement can thus be seen in mass and social media, also indicating the extent of the problem of non-resident fatherhood in South Africa.

According to Wessels and Lesch (2014), research shows that father involvement is essential for the development of a child, and the absence of a biological father in a household often has dire consequences for both the mother and the children. Although there is no clear correlation between a father's presence and positive outcomes in a child's life, there is evidence that the absence of a father may impact negatively on the development of the child (Eddy et al., 2013: 11). In girls, a father's absence has been associated with negative sexual outcomes such as earlier menarche and pubertal timing, engaging in unsafe sex, sexual assertiveness and teenage pregnancy (Lesch & Scheffler 2016). On the other hand, boys who grow up without a father are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviours and forms of hyper-masculinity (Ratele & Nduna, 2018: 30).

Despite the alarming number of absent biological fathers in South Africa, it is worth noting that there are several factors causing father absence beyond the father's lack of interest in raising the child. These factors include, among others, the death of the father,[1] rural–urban migration, children born out of wedlock (these are children born to non-cohabiting and/or unmarried parents), delayed marriages due to *lobola* requirements (payment of the bride price to the maternal family), and increasing levels of divorce (De Wit, Louw & Louw, 2014; Posel & Rudwick, 2012). However, even with this growing literature on the concept of fatherhood, non-resident fathers are still perceived by the government, the public and to some extent researchers as a problem (Sheldon, 2009).

1.2. Research questions

Many studies, particularly in western countries, have made assumptions that fatherhood can only be exercised in the context of a nuclear family (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). However, in a South African context, the understanding of a family from a homogenous, dual-income and co-resident lens disregards the emergence and prominence of the so-called non-traditional families. Rather, Rabe (2018b: 14) maintains that co-residence is not always plausible or

[1] 11% of biological fathers are deceased, as reported by Van den Berg et al (2021:16) based on the 2019 General Household Survey data.

realistic and, as such, it should not be presented as something to aspire to. Van den Berg and Makusha (2018a: 9) argue that this ignorance tends to present other family forms (extended, same-sex and single families) in a negative light. Nduna and Khunou (2018: 65) mention that research on fatherhood in South Africa needs to go beyond co-residence to determine the factors that affect fatherhood. Based on this premise, this study will be steered by the following research question: **What caregiving roles do non-resident biological fathers play in raising their children over a life course?**

James Levine and Edwards Pitt introduced the concept of responsible fathering in 1995. The word "responsible" in this theory suggests that there needs to be a set of desired standards and norms used when evaluating a father's behaviour (Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson, 1998: 278). The term responsible fathering is used by the authors to refer to all fathers across racial lines and ethnicities, resident and non-resident (Doherty et al., 1988: 279). In 1998, Doherty et al. offered domains in addition to Levine and Pitt's original idea of the activities performed by a responsible father. These domains focused mainly on whether or not the father resided with the child and included fathers and legal paternity, non-residential father presence versus absence, non-residential fathers' payment of child support, and residential fathers' level of involvement with the child. There is consequently a need to consider indicators that constitute positive fathering within a South African context. The first subsidiary question therefore is: ***What are the indicators of responsible fathering in a South African context?***

According to Townsend, Madhavan and Garey (2006: 176), South African literature on fatherhood involvement has mainly utilised co-residence as a proxy indicator for father presence. However, the Revised White Paper on Families defines "a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence" (DSD, 2021: 10). This definition recognises that the understanding of family kin goes beyond the residence. The second subsidiary question is, therefore: ***Which and whose positive fathering roles do we exclude by assuming that father presence equals active involvement?***

Despite the increase in fatherhood research in South Africa and many countries around the world (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Patel & Mavungu, 2016, Townsend et al., 2006), little research has been conducted on the types of care men provide during periods of lone caregiving. Freeks (2017: 93) also argues that mothers generally perceive themselves as more competent in caregiving than fathers; as a result the role of fathers in households chiefly

becomes supervision, providing moral guidance and correction to children. The third subsidiary question is, therefore: ***How do non-resident fathers care for their children?***

1.3. Research objectives of the study

The overall research objective of the study is to explore, by means of the life course perspective, the role non-resident fathers' play in the upbringing of their children. The following include the specific research objectives of the study:

Objectives

- To explore the degree to which non-resident fathers are able to sustain a consistent caregiving role for the child over a life course.
- To critically explore indicators/predictors of responsible fathering in a South African context.
- To investigate which and whose positive fathering roles are excluded by assuming that father presence equals active involvement.
- To investigate how non-resident fathers parent their children.

1.4. The significance of the study

A literature review shows that our understanding of non-resident fatherhood is heavily influenced by the views and actions of social workers, courts and women, and children's conceptualisations (De Wit et al., 2014; Lobaka, 2017; Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane, 2014; Peyper, De Klerk & Spies, 2015; Lesch & Kelapile, 2015: 504). Patel and Mavungu (2016: 23) offer two possible justifications for the biased representation of absent fatherhood. Firstly, it is often difficult to find men who are willing to participate in such research studies, and secondly, children and women are the most affected by the absence of a father. Nevertheless, Madhavan, Richter and Norris (2016: 1) argue that the silence on men's voices has led to the representation of Black African men in South Africa as "deadbeats" (this is a concept used for men for are not willing to support their children). Van den Berg and Makusha (2018: 8) also contend that we do not know enough about what fathers' lack of involvement actually means. This study is important as it begins to form part of a joint effort by researchers to study non-resident fatherhood from the viewpoint of fathers themselves and helps to dispel the myth that physical presence is the only indicator of paternal involvement (see Van den Berg & Ratele, 2021).

Fatherhood and fathering are continually evolving both at an academic and a cultural awareness level (Cabrera & Tamis-Lemonda, 2013). As such, there is growing concern that research has failed to keep up with the developments in this field (De Wit et al., 2014). Research on the role played by non-resident fathers in the upbringing of their children is limited in South Africa. Khunou (2006) and Madhavan et al. (2008: 2) maintain that researchers, policymakers and courts in South Africa often overlook non-resident fathers' desire to be involved in their children's lives. The main aim of the inaugural State of South Africa's Fathers' report published in 2018 was to open conversation on the financial and emotional roles that non-resident fathers often play in childcare while redefining the concept of absent fathers (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b). The report further recommended that "the over-dominance of knowledge about absence in the current research calls for studies to go beyond the indicator of co-residence of biological fathers with children to enhance measuring the onset of fatherhood and factors that affect fatherhood" (Nduna & Khunou, 2018: 65). The current study is a direct response to this recommendation. It is hoped that this study will be significant in providing insight into the role that non-resident fathers play in their children's lives. Furthermore, the study will explore the understanding of paternal involvement beyond residence and shed some light on the lives of non-resident men as fathers.

1.5. Theoretical approach

In this study, the life course perspective, as characterised by Elder (1981), will be applied to non-resident fatherhood. Using this perspective, I will trace the caregiving roles that fathers play in the upbringing of their children over the life course. The life course perspective was chosen because through its basic principles it takes into account that an individual life course is a complex interplay of biological, psychological and social factors. The perspective also traces an individual's role transition and trajectories over the life course while examining developmental inferences of the change in environmental factors (Alwin, 2013). Finally, the theory links the one early life experiences with later life results, with the argument that transition into one area can have a cumulative advantage or disadvantage for a subsequent trajectory. This perspective is therefore suitable for analysing the role fathers play in the upbringing of their children through the life course. Furthermore, the perspective will also help us understand various factors that may have resulted in the types of father the participants of these studies became.

1.6. Research methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of the roles fathers play in the upbringing of their children. This approach also allowed me to probe into the challenges that men have experienced in their attempts to become present and responsible fathers. Face-to-face interviews were chosen as a method of collecting data from the participants, as interviews offer the researcher an opportunity to extract insight from the participants while gaining a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of participants' daily experiences (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006: 17).

The fieldwork for this study was conducted over 12 months from August 2020 to August 2021 in Tshwane. A total of 23 non-resident fathers participated in this study, and 30 interviews were conducted with these men. However, owing to the national lockdown, ten of the 23 participants were interviewed telephonically during the period March to August 2021. All interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim within a week after conducting the interviews. In order to enhance the quality of the data collected, my field notes were also incorporated into the transcriptions.

1.7. Ethical considerations

The approval to conduct this study was granted by the UNISA College of Human Sciences' Ethics Committee on 19 June 2019 (see **Appendix A**). This application was reviewed in compliance with the UNISA policy on Research Ethics and was granted on the condition that I adhere to the values and principles as espoused in the policy. The Department of Social Development (DSD) also granted permission to conduct interviews through the department's Men's Forum (see **Appendix B**)

1.7.1. Informed consent

Consent was sought from the participants at the beginning of each interview. Once granted, all participants were issued with the informed consent form, which they signed before the interview commenced. I also requested permission from the participants to utilise the tape recorder. The informed consent form was translated into Setswana and both forms are attached as **Appendix C.**

1.7.2. Anonymity and confidentiality

To maintain anonymity and protect the confidentiality of the participants, their real names were replaced with pseudonyms. During the interviews, I requested participants to choose a name that they would be most comfortable to be referred by. In the interviews, I observed participants choosing random names and only two participants chose names of personal value to them.

1.8. Limitations of the study

During the data collection process of this study, the South African government imposed a nationwide lockdown in an attempt to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This necessitated a slight revision of the methodology of the study. Accordingly, a number of interviews were conducted using telephone instead of face-face as per the original plan. The disadvantage of telephonic interviews is the fact that I was unable to analyse the non-verbal communication of the participants and this in some ways affected the extent to which I was able to probe for further details.

1.9. Operational definitions

The following terms are used with specific meaning attached to them:

Family: The word itself may conjure up memories and ideals. A family could be a large, multigenerational network of people including children, cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles who are linked by blood, marriage or ties of co-residence and who share a home (or neighbouring homes) or are spread across the country. It could be two parents and two children in a three-bedroomed house; separated parents with new partners and an assortment of biological and non-biological children who move between homes; two fathers with an adopted child; a mother with children and grandchildren; or siblings living together (Hall & Richter, 2018: 23).

Skipped-generation household: This is a family structure in which grandparents live with and care for their grandchildren (DSD, 2012).

Extended kin: A family that goes beyond the nuclear family and includes parents, their children and additional relatives such as aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins, all of whom live in the same house (Statistics South Africa, 2021).

Patriarchy refers to the personal, physical and institutional power that men exert over women (Leatham, Pillay & Dunbar-Krige, 2015: 470).

Orphan: A child under the age of 18 years whose mother, father, or both biological parents have died (including those whose living status is reported as unknown, but excluding those whose living status is unspecified) (Hall, 2019a: 217).

Rural–urban migration: This refers to the movement between rural and urban provinces or municipalities, with a focus on rural-to-urban migration. This type of movement is commonly used to search for jobs in metropolitan areas (Atkinson, 2014).

Absent father: This refers to a father who is both physical and emotionally unavailable for his children.

Non-resident father is defined as a man who is away from his family/children for four or more days per week. However, this non-resident father may still be involved in his children's lives (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018a: 4).

1.10. Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 focuses on the life course perspective and its implications for this study. Among others, the chapter outlines the historical background of the perspective, covering the work of Glen Elder based on the four key principles: human agency, historical time, linked lives, and the timing of decisions. The chapter traces the sequence of events that men undergo in their role as fathers, citing the challenges, which range from maternal gatekeeping, unemployment and post-relationship conflict to mention a few. The chapter also discusses the myriad of nuances involved when men transition into the role of fatherhood. Key to the discussion in this chapter is the historical context that shaped fatherhood (especially for Black fathers) as we know it today. In this light, this chapter will report on the influence of historical events such as colonialism, apartheid and the discovery of mineral resources on fathering and fatherhood in South Africa. Finally, the chapter deals with the application of the life course perspective to fatherhood.

Chapter 3 presents current literature on the subject of fatherhood, with a special focus on paternal involvement, non-resident fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa and the rest of the world. The chapter will begin by defining the term "fatherhood" from the body of literature

in South Africa and the world. As part of the conceptualisation of fatherhood, this chapter explores the three factors of paternal involvement, namely, fathers' interaction/engagement with their children, fathers' availability to their children, and fathers' responsibility towards their children. This chapter concludes by discussing key policy legislation that affects families in South Africa. I used this section of the chapter to indicate the strides that South African policymakers have made towards promoting paternal involvement. However, this section will also show the gaps that still exist in the country's legalisation.

Chapter 4 details the methodological approach employed in this research study. This chapter gives a short description of the research environment and the sampling method used. It explains the process I undertook during the fieldwork for this study including the challenges experienced during the in-depth interviews. Finally, the chapter covers issues of validity and anonymity, and ethical considerations. In this chapter, I also discuss my reflections and observations during the research process. This details the insider and outside positions I assumed in different interviews, at different times.

Research questions *What caregiving roles do non-resident biological fathers play in raising their children over a life course*? and *What are the indicators of responsible fathering in a South African context?* are deliberated at length in **chapter 5**. This chapter contains an analysis of participants' views of the term "responsible fathering". I asked fathers about their understanding of the term and its practical application. This definition is important as it opens the conversation on what responsible fathering means in a South African context. The chapter also elucidates the role fathers play in the upbringing of their children. The key to this discussion is to trace the role fathers play over the life course. Fatherhood is socially constructed and is often learnt from social observation; as such, a father's experience of being fathered is significant to the type of father a man becomes.

Chapter 6: In this chapter the research question *Which and whose positive fathering roles do we exclude by assuming that father presence equals active involvement?* is discussed. The chapter reports on the challenges experienced by non-resident fathers over the life course, dealing with, among other things, the relational and systemic challenges men contend with in their attempt to be caregivers

In **Chapter 7**, fathers' experience of being fathered is analysed as it plays a major role in the type of fathers men become in the future. As such, this chapter covers men's experiences of being fathered and how this has influenced the participants' own fathering roles. In this chapter, participants discuss the type of father that raised them, as well as the nature of the

relationship they had with their fathers. In their narrative, participants elucidate their own role as fathers in comparison with the fathers who raised them. This chapter also discusses the significance of extended family in childcare, especially when the father does not live with the child. In this study, the fathers acknowledge that caregiving is done in collaboration with other family members. However, because they are gone for more than three evenings a week, the participants express their experiences, feelings and anxieties regarding having their children raised by other males – notably stepfathers. Ultimately this chapter will answer the research question: *How do non-resident father care for their children?*

Chapter 8: This chapter looks at the research questions that were answered and the conclusions that were drawn. The theory that underpins the research is briefly described in relation to the findings. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the main findings of the study, outlining its sociological significance. The chapter also reports on the limitations of the study and the role of the researcher. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO
LIFE COURSE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the life course perspective has gained traction in a variety of fields, including sociology, psychology, health and anthropology (Hutchison, 2007: 11). A life course perspective, according to Mayer (2009: 1), is widely used in social research and it developed over time. However, as the life course perspective developed, issues about whether it is still a dynamic area with a degree of coherence, or if it is simply becoming monotonous and integrating fragmented disciplines, have been raised. Butz and Torrey (2006) support the more optimistic viewpoint.

Hutchison (2007: 11) highlights that the strength of the life course perspective is to understand human behaviour over time. Kok (2007: 204) defined this perspective as "the sequence of the position of a particular person over time". According to Kok (2007: 204), the life course perspective examines the frequencies and timing of these positions in one's life, including marital status, becoming a parent, divorce, changes in place of residence, etc. The perspective further argues that individuals exist within a complex link of interrelationships and therefore past behaviours and actions tend to affect other spheres of a person's life, for example family, work and education (Kalucza, 2017: 4).

This chapter will explore the principles and basic concepts of fatherhood and how each of these principles applies to fatherhood in South Africa. As men transition into fathers, there is a major shift in their lives and their roles change almost instantaneously. This chapter will explore various factors that influence the transition. Additionally, in South Africa, fatherhood occurs within a diverse context; therefore the various transitory points that men experience as a result of fathering children in a non-nuclear family will be explored. Ultimately, the chapter aims to apply the four principles of the life course perspective (historical time and place, timing lives, linked lives, and human agency) to South African fathers in general.

2.2. History of the life course perspective

Glen Elder Jnr was one of the earliest influential authors to write on the life course perspective. Elder began to analyse data from three longitudinal studies of children conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, titled the Oakland Growth Study (Elder, 1981). Using data from a retrospective life history survey, Elder noted the significant impact of the Great

Depression of the 1930s on the individual and family trajectory (Hutchison, 2007: 11). His research explored the impact of the sudden loss of family income during the Great Depression, concluding that the loss of family income has a dire impact on families and may lead to externalised problems for boys and internalised problems for girls (Goosby, 2010: 22). This study was also used to investigate the impact of military service in World War II and the Korean War on men's lives in the context of the USA (Elder, Shanahan & Jennings, 2014: 8). Following this study, Elder called for developmental research and theory to observe the effect of historical events on the social trajectories of family, education and career roles (Hutchison, 2007: 11; Elder, 1998: 2).

The life course perspective as both a theoretical and a practical theory of application has continued to develop and mature over the years (Mayer, 2009: 2). Elder (1994: 4) postulates that theoretically and in research inquiry, the life course perspective has progressed through two stages. The first stage is the pre-1940 stage, while the second is the post-1960 phase, which has also been identified with the Chicago School of Sociology. However, the life course perspective has not always been renowned for its theoretical orientation, as Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe (2003: 3) argue that early sociologists neglected the study of individuals' and/or groups' life histories and future trajectories. Green (2010: 25) posits that it was only after the British Sociology School's influence in the 1980s that sociologists began to shift their interests from the study of the life cycle to the life course.

2.3. Basic concepts of the life course perspective

Over the years, sociologists viewed life course as a more suitable perspective than life cycles because of its emphasis on historical and comprehensive transitional periods as opposed to straightforward ages and stages. Additionally, life cycle theory became almost normative and hence impractical since people's life trajectories are diverse (Mayer, 2009: 9). Five basic concepts define the life course perspective and set it apart from the life cycle perspective to some extent. The five basic concepts are cohorts, trajectories, turning points, life events, and transitions. These concepts intertwine in practice. For instance, a *trajectory* involves a change in one or multiple *transitions* and *turning points* are a result of the occurrence of *life events*. Each of these will now be explained in more detail.

2.3.1. Cohorts

Hutchison (2007: 12) defines a cohort as "a group of persons who were born at the same historical time and who experience particular social changes within a given culture in the same

sequence and at the same age". The concept of the cohort is key to the life course perspective. As indicated above, Elder (1981) utilised the lived experiences of two cohorts – one born at a prosperous time and the other born during a time of a global recession. The historical events these cohorts found themselves in shaped their family pathways in areas such as education, work and marriage (Elder, 1998: 2). The historical times in which a cohort finds itself often has a bearing on how individuals respond (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe 2003:9). The historical times relevant to this study are covered at length in section 2.4.1.

2.3.2. Trajectory

Trajectories "are the chains of social states along a particular social pathway throughout the life span" (Heard, 2007:436). "Trajectories are long in scope, charting the course of an individual's experiences over time" (Settersten, 2018). Li, Cardinal and Settersten (2009: 341) continue that life trajectories comprise social, biological and psychological positions. For example, long-term phenomena such as work, education, marriage and parenting are often referred to in terms of trajectories. Therefore, a trajectory is made up of multiple transitions in an individual's life.

2.3.3. Turning points

Turning points involve a sudden, considerable and lasting change from one state to another (Hutchison 2007: 18). A turning point is a point in the life course that represents a substantial change or discontinuity in direction; it serves as a lasting change and not just a temporary detour (Hutchison 2007: 19). A number of factors can trigger a turning point in an individual's life such as perceived threats to one's health, psychological distress, or immigration (Li et al., 2009: 343, Hutchison 2007: 19). Edin, Nelson and Rechelle (2001) identified the incarceration of men as a potential turning point in the transition to fatherhood. Relevant to this study is the fact that teenage fatherhood has also been identified as a turning point in the lives of young men (Monepya, 2017: 65).

2.3.4. Life events

"A life event is a significant occurrence involving a relatively abrupt change that may produce serious and long-lasting effects" (Hutchison, 2007: 15). An individual's life course is never static but characterised by constant change. Some of these changes are sudden and life-defining events, while others are characterised by intentional events (de Vuijst, van Ham, & Kleinhans 2016: 6). This term refers to the event itself and not the transition that will occur as

a result of the event. The sudden occurrence of life events can often be very stressful; in the late 1960s, Holmes and Rahe (1967) created the Social Readjustment Rating Scale to measure the impact of common stressors over one's life course (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). The scale characterises stress ratings according to the potential severity of the life event. For instance, events that are sudden and often negative such as the death of a spouse, divorce and the death of close relatives have a higher stress rating compared to changing one's residence, or entering a new school (Holmes, 1978).

2.3.5. Transition

Transitions are movements between social states that make up trajectories and ''give them distinctive meaning and form'' (Elder, 1998: 1). Secondly, transitions refer to or involve a change from one role to another within trajectories (Black, Holditch-Davis & Miles, 2009: 41; Li et al., 2009: 342). Within the life course perspective, sociologists use the term "transition" to describe a steady change in an individual's life experiences as they take on new roles and relinquish older ones (Black et al., 2009: 41). Elder (1998: 8) contends that the transition in one's later life is often affected by those transitions that occurred earlier, which he termed "cumulative advantage or disadvantage". For example, completion of an undergraduate qualification may chart a transition to a successful career. The opposite is also true: the death of an individual's parents at an early age may result in a life of hardship. Additionally, transitions may occur as a response to challenging situations, events or conditions such as divorce, an extramarital affair, eviction, illness, the birth of a child, and losing one's job (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009: 4). Palkovitz and Palm (2009: 4) define a transition as the outcome of positive events such as a child's graduation, promotion, or the purchase of a new home, as well as negative events such as divorce, an accident, a serious illness, or the delivery of a child with a disability.

Social scientists from a number of disciplinary backgrounds argue that the transition to adulthood has become so complex and prolonged that it is best understood as a phase in the life course (Hartmann & Swartz, 2007: 254). Likewise, the transition to parenthood has major implications for parents and the entire family (Price, McKenry & Murphy, 2000: 1). Deave, Johnson and Ingram (2008: 2) indicate that this transition is often characterised by stressful situations.

2.4. Principles of the life course perspective

The life course perspective draws on four principles: historical time and place, the timing of lives, linked lives, and human agency.

2.4.1. Historical time and place

The life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical time and place they experience over their lifetime. According to Kok (2007), this principle indicates that historical context and the specific location in which one finds oneself have a significant impact on the individual concerned. Li et al. (2009: 339) continue that these historical changes and events may prompt similar experiences for all members of the specific population.

2.4.2. Timing of lives

This principle places interest on the age at which life events and transitions happen in a person's life (Hutchison, 2007: 21; Elder, 1998: 3). Age is a prominent attribute, and hence life course scholars are interested in the age at which certain transitions occur in a person's life.

2.4.3. Linked lives

Elder (1981) argues that lives are lived interdependently and that social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships. Elder (1981) noted that, according to the life course perspective, the individual is an important element of the family and thus the transition of this individual has consequences for the family as a whole. Therefore, changes in one person's life may lead to changes in other people's lives especially other members of a family (Bar-On & Scharf, 2014: 647).

2.4.4. Human agency

Human agency posits that individuals construct their own life course through their choices and the actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance (Li et al., 2009: 338). For the interest of this study, the next sections cover the transition into parenthood and invariably into fatherhood.

2.5. Application of the life course perspective to fatherhood

This section applies the life course perspective to South African fatherhood. It will explore the various factors that are at play when men transition into the fatherhood role. Finally, this section will explore the four principles of the life course perspective outlined above and how they apply to our context in practice.

2.5.1. Transition to fatherhood

The transition to parenthood is one of the most significant role transitions in the life course of an individual (Feeney, Hohaus, Noller & Alexander, 2001: 8). Keizer, Dykstra and Poortman (2010: 5) continue that parenthood is a vital organiser of one's life course. Even more specifically, the transition to fatherhood is theorised as the most important phase in men's development (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009: 3). Therefore, parenthood requires a massive reorganisation of roles for both parents; these include, among others, lifestyle changes and task allocations (Feeney et al., 2001: 8).

"Life transitions associated with parenthood include acquiring an identity as a father, making a commitment with one's partner, and making decisions about employment and personal behaviour that affect one's parenting behaviour" (Cabrera, Fagan & Farrie, 2008: 2). Additionally, Roy (2008: 98) suggests three salient factors that may influence the transition into fatherhood, namely, the conceptualisation of motherhood, the current context of fathers, and parental conflict.

Firstly, the new conceptualisation of motherhood. The increasing participation of women in the labour market, and the decline of men as sole breadwinners may lead to new opportunities for father involvement (Cabrera, Tamis-Lemoda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000: 127; White, 1994: 121). According to Human (2018: 35), there is evidence that young fathers challenge the norm of fathers as disengaged providers by participating in household chores, thereby broadening the usual roles associated with men. Much earlier, Richter and Smith (2006: 164) stated that men's participation is not limited to doing gardening, washing the car and taking out the trash, as there is evidence within the South African context that men are increasingly sharing household chores such as doing laundry and/or helping children with schoolwork, ironing clothes, shopping for groceries, and cooking, among others (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018: 9; Richter & Smith, 2006: 164). Beyond housework and more directly related to parenting, men are increasingly beginning to attend healthcare centres for children's immunisations and driving or walking children to school (Richter, 2006: 58). Richter, Desmond,

Hosegood, Madhavan, Makiwane, Makusha, Morrel, and Swartz,et al. (2012: 7) argue that part of the reason for the increased participation in household chores by South African men can be attributed to the fact that their female partners are employed in non-standard hours of work. Van Hooff (2007) defines non-standard working hours as working beyond the contractual 40 hours a week, thus including overtime, working on weekends, and working at night.

Secondly, the current context of fathers. Contextual factors consist of a number of components including paternal unemployment, poor income, race and ethnicity, as well as cultural and social expectations (Doherty et al., 1998). The high rate of unemployment in South Africa and among men and its subsequent impact on healthy father–child relationships will be discussed in chapter 3. Cultural expectations such as the payment of *inhawulo* for impregnating a girl outside wedlock and the high lobola requirements by maternal families preceding marriage will be exhaustively discussed in the sections that follow. These contextual factors can positively or negatively influence the transition to fatherhood and ultimately influence fatherhood involvement.

The third factor that may influence fatherhood transition is parental conflict post-separation. There is a strong relationship between the quality of the relationship between non-resident fathers and mothers and the degree to which some mothers discourage or encourage their children to build bonds with their fathers (Lobaka, 2017: 43). Eddy et al. (2013: 26) also found that in conflict-ridden relationships, the desire for revenge may result in the denial of all access to the child by the mother. The transition into a father is thus largely influenced by factors such as the rate of conflict-ridden divorce and separation.

2.5.2. Diverse fatherhood transition

There are a number of transitory points that fathers experience as a result of fathering children in a different family setting (i.e. nuclear, extended, non-resident families). The first possible transitory point is associated with teenage fatherhood. La Taillade, Hofferth and Wight (2010: 103) note that the transition into fatherhood is especially difficult for young adults who make this transition earlier than expected, as this transition typically affects their romantic relationships, careers and education-related transitions into adulthood. Teenage fatherhood and teenage pregnancy in South Africa mean that a considerable number of men will have become non-resident fathers to their biological children and possible stepfathers to other children. According to Odimegwu, Amoo and De Wet (2018: 44), although the number of teenage pregnancies in South Africa is declining, approximately 30 percent of teenage girls

fall pregnant. Additionally, the unplanned pregnancy rate among youth is between 65 and 71 percent. This is mainly important because an earlier transition into parenthood may lead to a greater likelihood that the couple will experience conflict in their attempt to co-parent (La Taillade et al., 2010: 105). Beyond this classification, the earlier than expected transition into fatherhood may further limit the social and economic resources of young fathers (La Taillade et al., 2010: 103; Madiba & Nsiki, 2017: 501).

2.5.3. Union dissolution

Becker (2015) correctly notes that separation and divorce are critical events in an individual's life course and can have far-reaching repercussions for the entire family. Divorce presents a complex family structure, particularly for men. For the majority of men, divorce implies an end to their permanent residency with their children (Schnor, Vanassche & Van Bavel, 2017: 1660). According to Henslin (2008: 490), following a union dissolution that involves children (either marriage, cohabitation, or a relationship), fathers tend to remarry or re-partner quicker than mothers and once fathers remarry or re-partner, new transitions to fatherhood begin to emerge. This leads to fathers playing multiple fathering roles towards their biological children and the children in the new relationship. Henslin (2008: 490) defines a concept known as serial fatherhood. This is a pattern whereby a father maintains a close relationship with his children for the first few years following a union dissolution. However, once a new partner enters his life, he begins to play a fathering role to the children of this woman and reduces contact with his biological children. The rate of divorce (and other relationship dynamics) in South Africa suggests that a considerable number of men are going through this transitory point and many will in the future. As such, Sonke Gender Justice (2014) argues that the number of single parents (in particular female-headed households) has increased considerably as a result of the high divorce rates. This is mainly because females tend to remain unmarried longer after a divorce than their male counterparts. Evidence from the marriage and divorce publication by Statistics South Africa also points to this fact. The publication shows that there were 23 170 divorces in South Africa in 2019 and that 13 264 (55.9%) involved children younger than 18 (Statistics South Africa, 2020: 39). Of these, 60.9 percent of divorces involved Black South Africans who had children under the age of 18. The remarriage trend outlined in this section suggests that a majority of these men will remarry before their female counterparts, thus entering into a possible serial pattern. Therefore, "as men enter in and out of marriages, intimate relationships, and family-supportive employment with increasing frequency during their lives, family involvement is often characterised as transitory" (Roy, 2006: 31).

2.5.4. History and social context

The principle of time and place emphasises that the life course of individuals or groups is embedded in and shaped by the historical time and place they experience over their lifetime (Li et al., 2009: 339). The notion of historical times is based mainly on Cabrera et al.'s (2000: 127) conception that "social and historical context shape both popular and scholarly conceptions of children, families, and parenting, so it is important to view our contemporary understanding of the family relationship in light of recent history".

In South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, men's work and family roles and responsibilities have been shaped by histories of social and economic oppression, as well as racial conflicts and segregation (Roy, 2008: 96). During the 19th and 20th centuries, social and historical changes occurred that affected the norms and expectations of good fathering. In the USA, for example, men left their farms and small businesses in order to seek employment in an emerging industrial economy, usually far away from home (Helman, 2015; Cabrera et al., 2000: 127).

The same reality existed in South Africa's historical background, with the discovery of gold and other minerals towards the end of the 19th century. This emergence of gold mining and other mining industries in South Africa was significant for two reasons, changing the South African landscape and the economy as well as reshaping men's work and family roles (Rabe 2006; Roy, 2008). The White colonial system did this by passing three categories of laws, which invariably coerced Black men to join this capitalist system (Rabe, 2006: 21). Firstly, the Mine and Works Act of 1911 was established. This Act defined colour bars for different positions, ensuring that Black men could not occupy senior-level positions within the mining system. Additionally, in a bid to recruit more Black African males, the South African state imposed taxes on Black families, requiring every adult man to pay taxes regardless of their employment status (Rabe, 2006: 21; Morrell & Richter, 2006). This new requirement forced many Black males to leave their families and take up work as migrant labours (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Secondly, the Land Act of 1913 was passed into law, this act specified that Black Africans could only buy land in their homelands, which constituted only eight percent of the country. In 1923 and later in 1952, the Urban Act and the Pass Laws Act, respectively, were passed to regulate the movement of Black South Africans. Consequently, Black Africans were only allowed to travel between their homestead and workplaces (Rabe, 2006:21). These repressive laws and legislation were passed by the White colonial system to increase the supply of migrant workers by reducing the availability of land and freedom for Black Africans (Walker, 1995).

Following World War II, which lasted from 1939 to 1945, the Afrikaner-led government codified a system to segregate South Africans along racial lines; this system was known as apartheid (Roy, 2008: 95). The development of apartheid was characterised by the White minority implementing oppressive laws against the black majority (Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2011). This system is a significant historical event for fatherhood, as it explicitly divided men and families by privilege based on race. This forced migration became the beginning of large-scale non-resident father households, because Black African fathers were separated from their families and at times only allowed annual visits in terms of the migrant contracts (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Owing to these circumstances, fathers regularly neglected and abandoned their children (Ramphele & Richter, 2006).

The disruption to family life was intensified during the 1960s and 1970s with the establishment of Bantustans and pass laws, and the implementation of the Group Areas Act (Act No. 41 of 1950) (Rabe, 2006). Many of these policies and laws meant intensified state control over the Black population and facilitated the implementation of separate development programmes for the various territorially segregated population groups, with White people as a priority. Black African people were forcibly moved to places without adequate food, shelter and the provision of services such as clean water, sanitation, health services and recreational facilities. Black African communities were forcibly removed from their homes and forced to resettle in homelands, those in urban areas lived in townships far from any town or city and were required by law to carry passes. For many Black African people, these laws destroyed communities and social networks. They meant more or less permanent separation of families, with devastating effects on children (Wilson, 2006). According to Hunter (2006), laws such as the Group Areas Act, pass laws and restricted hiring practices continued to limit the opportunities for men to live with their children.

The demand for cheap labour within the mining industries kept growing over the years (Rabe 2018a: 18). As such, the number of migrant workers was increasing as well. According to Rabe (2018a: 18), in 1893 in the former Transvaal province,[2] there were approximately 30 000 men employed as migrant mineworkers; by 1977 this number had grown to 600 000. The reasons why men opted for labour migration at the time varied from the accumulation of capital to buying rifles in preparation for the significant external threat from the military, paying lobola and paying for agricultural implements (Kok,., 2007: 210). Whatever their reasons, fathers were separated from their families for longer periods. These historical events in South Africa

[2] The Transvaal was one of the provinces of South Africa from 1910 until 1994. The province no longer exists, and its territory now forms all, or part of, the provinces of Gauteng, North West, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga.

have shaped fatherhood among Black Africans. Non-resident fathers continue to exist to this day as a result of the legacies left by the migrant system and the repressive laws of apartheid. Although many of these conditions have changed, many South Africans continue to work as migrant mineworkers and, although the labour laws have been changed, some men cannot afford to live with their families in the mining towns and therefore only occasionally visit their families in rural homesteads (Rabe, 2006; 2018a: 18).

In the 21st century, the concept of fatherhood has started to change with some fathers beginning to play a more caring role in their children's lives (Rabe, 2018b: 22; Meyer 2018: 3). According to Morrell (2006: 20), there is an emergence of a "new father" model. This model of fatherhood is defined as a man who is involved in his family and the general well-being of his children (Rabe, 2006; Troilo, 2014). The concept originated from the perception of men in the middle socioeconomic class in countries such as the USA during the 1920s (Griswold, 1993). The new fatherhood model can be located within various historical events, including the rise in feminism during the 1920s, which is a major contributory factor to masculine domesticity (Smit, 2008: 56). Other factors include the entrance of women to the labour market (Cabrera et al., 2000: 127), the decline in marriage rates, and cultural expectations as mentioned under section 1.2. According to Morrell (2006: 32), there is evidence that young, Black, professional males are developing patterns of what a "new father" should be. In a study conducted among young adult women in Tlokwe Local Municipality, participants expressed the importance of historical context concerning fathering. Many felt that younger fathers are exposed to many programmes that encourage responsible and involved fathering as opposed to older fathers who grew up at a time when expressing emotions was a sign of weakness (Lobaka, 2017: 81). The historical context we find ourselves in today encourages fatherhood involvement far more than previous generations.

2.5.5. Timing lives

The life course perspective focuses on significance and context as a way of understanding life transitions such as fathering, marriage and divorce (Elder et al., 2003). Timing of lives concerns itself with three constructs: the historical time surrounding the occurrence of a particular event, the innate expectation of when a particular event or transition should occur, and how the occurrence of a particular event or transition affects an individual over their life course (Elder, 1998; Edmonston, 2013; Kok, 2007). Firstly, the historical time within which events occur is very significant. In South Africa, father involvement takes place in a time heavily affected by factors such as high unemployment levels, migrant labour, poverty and

inequalities (Lesch & Kelapile, 2015: 507). Therefore, individuals' life courses are influenced by the historical settings they find themselves in.

The second construct (timing lives) mainly considers biological, chronological and social ages as important indicators in the timing of lives (Kalule-Sabiti, Palamuleni, Makiwane & Amoateng 2007). Events and transitions such as marriage, parenting and entering the labour force are expected to occur during certain age ranges in an individual's life course (Edmonston, 2013: 3). Mortimer, Oesterle and Kruger (2005: 176) argue that failure to abide by these age norms may leave an individual feeling they are too early or too late to transition into certain stages in the life course and seek to conform. This implies that people are aware of social clocks and to what extent they are conforming or deviating from the roles they set out. Johnson, Berg and Sirotzki (2007: 290) posit that deviating from the social clocks might make one feel older or younger than their chronological age. Among the Xhosa and Zulu people, initiation schools are considered an important marker of transition into adulthood, and failure to conform to this social construct implies that one is considered a boy regardless of chronological age (Mavundla et al. 2017: 935). Mortimer et al. (2005: 176) explain further that adherence to institutional age determination, such as when to start school and the legal age of employment, also affect the pathways to other transitions. A South African case (Madhavan et al., 2008: 4) postulates that the timing of household establishment in South Africa is influenced by cultural expectations, thus contributing to high levels of non-resident fatherhood.

The third construct of life timing is based on when a certain transition occurs in an individual's life course (Almeida & Wong, 2009: 156). Elder (1998: 8) continues that the timing at which transition takes place can have a cumulative advantage or disadvantage over one's life course. Khan (2017: 2) postulates that positive father involvement from birth to adolescence to adulthood is extremely beneficial for children. When studying father involvement, Higgs, Gomez-Vidal and Austin (2018: 112) argue that the presence of the father at childbirth is an important predictor of continued involvement in a child's life. Moreover, Lindberg, Kost and Maddow-Zimet (2017), as well as Makusha and Richter (2018: 51), argue that a father's involvement in the prenatal period is an even stronger predictor of father involvement over the child's life course.

2.5.6. Interdependence of transitions (linked lives)

Linked lives refers to the interdependency of individual lives (Li et al., 2009: 338). According to Kok (2007: 205), the principle of linked lives highlights that life courses are interdependent and that the transitions of one family member may have direct and indirect consequences for

entire families. Indirect consequences imply that a member's success or failure may affect other members (e.g. retrenchment, serious illness, or job promotion). Bengston and Allen (1980: 500) and Roy (2006: 33) also argue that the role transition of parents in the work and family setting directly influences the role transition of children. Consequently, it is possible that transitions or turning points such as divorce, unemployment and/or job loss will, in turn, affect children's individual life courses by influencing identity formation, entry into the workforce and the establishment of families. In a study on family role transition among African American women, Burton (1996: 201) found that the timing of childbearing has a significant impact on the mother and the grandmother alike, especially when the expectant mother still lives with the parents. Burton maintains that the stressors and transitionary roles associated with childbearing extend to the entire family.

The life course perspective also relates to the intergenerational transmission of father–child relationships (Bar-On & Scharf, 2014: 647). As a result, "one generation can transmit the impact of the historical circumstances that shaped its life history ('linked lives') to the next generation" (Bar-On & Scharf, 2014: 647). The concept of the intergenerational link between parents and their children, which often persists throughout the life course, is central to the principle of linked lives (Macmillan & Copher, 2005). "Parenting is performed in the context of past experiences" (East, Hutchinson, Power & Jackson, 2018: 2). As such, in order to understand men's construction of and attitude towards fathering, one needs to draw on these men's own experiences of being fathered. Bar-On and Scharf (2014: 650) allude to two approaches on intergenerational links, namely the modelling and the compensatory approaches. The modelling approach suggests that fathers tend to replicate their experiences of being fathered in their relationships with their own children. Children do this by observing their father's behaviour over time and imitating the learnt behaviour as they grow up (Bar-On & Scharf, 2014: 650). Thus, studies in the USA have found that men who are raised by nurturing and involved fathers tend to be more involved in the lives of their children (Cabrera et al., 2000: 131).

On the other hand, the compensatory approach suggests that fathers make a deliberate effort not to repeat their negative experience of being fathered. According to this approach, fathers who experienced little or no father involvement during their childhood, tend to be more involved with their children as a way of compensating for their perceived lack of caring and involvement from their own fathers (Kulik & Sadeh, 2015: 21). However, findings from a study conducted in the United Kingdom show that despite their best attempts, fatherless fathers tend to feel unprepared to undertake the role of fathering largely because they did not have father figures to model parental skills (East et al., 2018: 3). For these men, fathering skills were learnt

through a number of sources such as television, movies, books, and drawing on mothers' parenting skills (East et al., 2018: 7). Kalucza (2017: 7) offers a third approach – social contagion – which suggests that how we construct our families is not only learnt from our parents but also from other people with whom our lives are linked such as peers.

Popenoe (1996) concedes that most fatherless children have difficulty raising their own children and often maintain relationships with their spouses over a long period. Lesch and Ismail (2014: 39) argue, however, that it is important to explore both the possible negatives and positives related to father absence. According to Swartz and Bhana (2009), teenage fathers raised in fatherless households tend to use the discomfort of being raised in such homes as the motivation for being present in their children's lives. Chideya and Williams (2013: 219) also maintain that fathers often use the negative experiences of their childhood as a way of not making the same mistakes as their fathers made. The above-cited South African research thus supports the modelling and compensatory approaches discussed above.

The trajectories of one individual in the family may also affect other members in other areas; for example family resource material (e.g. income) and cultural capital (e.g. education) may construct possibilities and opportunities for other individuals in the family (Kalucza, 2017: 5). As such, in low-income communities, a father's presence or absence in a household is most likely to be linked to the financial well-being of that household. The absence of a father in a household can thus be thought of as one indicator of household poverty (Mkhize, 2006). Research in South Africa has further found that households with a father are characterised by higher expenditure, improved access to resources, and better protection when compared to father-absent homes (Desmond & Desmond, 2006; Redpath, Morrell, Jewkes & Peacock, 2008). Additionally, parental education, income and wealth might provide children with better opportunities and options, while the unavailability of these resources might limit children's options (Kalucza, 2017: 5).

2.5.7. Human agency

Human agency is based on a presumption that human beings are not passive recipients of life events but they make decisions that shape their lives (Black et al., 2009: 40; Elder et al., 2003: 11). Therefore, individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances (Li et al., 2009: 338). Thus, Macmillan (2007: 13) correctly points out that the ability to choose one path from another forms the core of human agency. The notion of human agency thus forms one of the guiding ideologies of life course inquiry (Macmillan, 2007: 4). However, an ongoing

philosophical and empirical debate exists on what agency actually is. What role does it play in human experience and to what degree is it significant to our understanding of individuals' capacity to shape their own futures? (Macmillan, 2007: 5). Elder et al. (2003) argue that at every stage in the transitory phase, children, adolescents and adults make decisions. For example, children make decisions of which extramural activities to engage in, while adolescents tend to choose the company they keep, and the person to date. Adulthood has its own array of choices, from which city to live in, who to marry and when, which career path to follow, when to have children, and so forth.

Carpenter (2010: 159) distinguishes between four kinds of agency that help to sustain and create the self. These include *existential agency, identity agency*, *pragmatic agency* and *life course agency.* Existential agency is the capacity for self-directed action that underlies all other types of agencies. Kristiansen (2014: 22) defines existential agency as "the individual's belief in his or her ability to influence his or her life over the life course". The second kind of agency is identity agency, which is exercised when people put into practice their everyday roles such as that of husband, father or employee. Thirdly, pragmatic agency (as opposed to identity agency) refers to random responses guided by the self, biography, and the values that people choose when their habitual ones break down. Hitlin and Elder (2007: 176–178) continue that pragmatic agency entails one's ability to make judgements and decisions relating to circumstances that require immediate responses within the flow of activities. Finally, *life course agency* refers to attempts by individuals to shape their life trajectories coupled with a belief in their abilities to achieve set goals. Therefore, human agency deals with these four things:

> a) The human capacity to make a choice, that is, to be intentional; b) the resources within the individual or at the command of the individual that can be brought to bear in intentional or agentic behaviour; c) behaviour of individuals that reflects intention; and d) the social and physical structuring of choices (Marshall, 2005: 67).

According to Roy (2006: 33), studies have traced men's agency through the ongoing construction of paternal identity. As such, fathers can choose to model traditional roles of fatherhood or create new models. The essence of human agency is the notion that human beings from the same background may be faced with similar situations but choose to respond differently.

2.6. Conclusion

The life course perspective recognises the significance of the life timing through which various live events occur. It focuses on the patterns and transitions of an individual's life and the historical, societal and political conditions that influence them. It is therefore evident that transition and major life events such as the death of a spouse, divorce, losing employment, and career change greatly affect our life course.

There are a number of core concepts within the life course perspective, namely, cohorts, trajectories, turning points, life events, and transitions. However, the focus in this chapter has been on the transition to fatherhood. Transition to fatherhood remains one of the most significant role transitions in the life course of many men. The chapter discussed the salient factors that influence men's transition into fatherhood at length, highlighting that this transition is not always clear-cut. In addition, the diverse fatherhood transitions were also scrutinised.

The life course perspective has four central principles; that is, historical time and place, timing lives, linked lives, and human agency. The significance of these four principles to the life course and how they relate to fatherhood in South Africa was delineated, tracing how historical events such as the emergence of gold mining shaped and continue to shape men's roles within families. Finally, the theoretical reasons why fathers may or may not be assuming the role of caregivers to their children was discussed under the principle of linked lives. The next chapter will focus on a review of the literature on the subject of fatherhood.

CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will cover the literature collected on the subject of fatherhood in South Africa and selected parts of the world. The concept of fatherhood and the understanding of when and how a man becomes a father often differs in western and non-western countries, for instance in Europe and North America family scholars emphasise that a man becomes a father at the birth of his first child. However, in most African countries a man does not necessarily become a father at the birth of his first child; rather the fatherhood role extends to extended kin such as his sister's children or his siblings (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b: 74).

The chapter begins by outlining recent policies and legislative developments that affect and/or inform fatherhood and families in South Africa. The enactment of family-friendly policies and the appropriate implementation thereof is beneficial for family preservation. This chapter will therefore discuss the implications of these policies and legislation for South African families, as well as explore some of the programmes implemented by government and civil society organisations (CSOs) in line with these policies. The chapter continues by defining fatherhood from a western and Southern African perspective, citing different conceptualisations of fatherhood found in the literature. The chapter will continue by defining fatherhood and masculinity within a South African context. Pleck's Paternal Involvement Model, which he proposed in 1985, remains crucial to our knowledge of fatherhood involvement. Therefore, in order to effectively study fatherhood involvement and all its concepts, it is prudent to understand this model. This chapter will therefore outline the precepts of this model.

In addition, non-resident fatherhood as a phenomenon is often complex and somewhat misunderstood. Hence, this chapter will explicate the phenomenon of non-resident fatherhood in South Africa and the changing roles of fatherhood. The role a father plays in the family has changed from fathers as providers and protectors to include their role as caregivers. Since non-resident fathers' involvement in their children's lives is important to this study, previous literature on this role will be covered. Finally, the role men play in the lives of their children, the challenge they face in their attempt to play this role, and the perceived determinants of paternal contact will conclude this chapter, which focuses on the literature review.

3.2. Defining fatherhood

The term “father” in itself carries multiple meanings, conceptualisations and patterns. This term is derived from the Latin word *pater*, which means a male parent who carries the responsibility for protecting, caring for and nurturing a child (International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family, 2008). Morrell (2006: 13) continues that defining a father as merely a man who impregnates a woman is limiting our understanding of fatherhood. Many researchers in South Africa argue that fatherhood goes beyond the reproductive functions that men perform (Nathane, 2018: 19; Morrell, 2006: 25; Posel & Devey, 2006: 41). As stated, fatherhood does not necessarily begin at conception but is inclusive of other males in the extended kin (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b: 74). Non-biological fathers are especially relevant in instances where biological fathers are absent owing to death, migrant labour, divorce, incarceration, or parental separation (Mkhize, 2006; Hatch & Posel, 2018; Nathane, 2018; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b; Rabe, 2006). Furthermore, this conceptualisation opens a space for non-resident fathers to fulfil the role of fathering.

Makusha Richter, Knight, Van Rooyen, Bhana, D. (2013a: 140) also argue that different groups of people hold different conceptualisations of fatherhood based on culture, ethnicity, race and religion. Lobaka (2017: 20) continues that the emergence of concepts such as non-resident fatherhood and social fatherhood problematises the traditional conceptualisation of fatherhood. For example, children are more likely to experience fathering from a male family member or a non-relative than from their biological fathers (Patel and Mavungu, 2016: 22). These men are known as social fathers, defined as a male relative (uncle, grandfather, stepfather, brother) or a family associate or community member (pastor, teacher) who undertakes the role of the father in the absence of the biological father (Lobaka, 2017: 8; Makusha Richter & Bhana, 2012: 130). Richter and Morrell (2006: 14) found that social fathers may fulfil the same role as biological fathers.

In keeping with the complexity of fatherhood in South Africa, Madhavan and Roy (2012: 814) coined the phrase "flexible father" to describe the situation where a father is both a biological and a social father. The participants in their study fell within the following categories of flexible fathering: non-resident fathers who are biological fathers, social fathers to their lovers’ children, and being social fathers to their nieces and nephews. This makes the point clear when defining fatherhood, namely that all the various roles that men play throughout the life course need to be considered.

There are different types of fathers in South Africa. In his study, titled “Exploring the experience of young adult women raised by non-resident fathers”, Lobaka (2017) found that there are six types of fathers in South Africa. This is consistent with the following literature: Makusha et al. (2013), De Wit et al. (2014), Mavungu et al. (2013) and Heartlines (2020). These categories are as follows:

a. Present but absent

This refers to a father who is physically present in the household but emotionally distant or absent from his children.

b. Present but uninvolved

This refers to a father who is physically present in the household but fails to be involved in activities and events that are key to his children such as schoolwork, attending meetings or sporting events.

c. Absent but involved

This refers to non-resident fathers who are actively involved in the upbringing of their children.

d. Present and involved

These are fathers who are physically present, and actively and emotionally involved in the lives of their children.

e. Absent and uninvolved

This refers to fathers who are physically and emotionally absent from their children’s lives. These fathers have also been named “deadbeat fathers” among other things.

f. Social fathers

A male relative (uncle, grandfather, stepfather, brother) or a family associate or community member (pastor, teacher) who undertakes the role of the father in the absence of the biological father.

These nuanced conceptualisations of fatherhood affirm that a father can be absent from a household but still play an active role in the lives of his children. The converse is also true; a father can be physically present in the household but play no active role in the lives of his children.

3.3. Conceptualising paternal involvement

One of the earliest and most widely used conceptualisations of fatherhood is a model developed by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1985), also known as the Lamb-Pleck conceptualisation. During the mid-seventies and early eighties, psychologists and other

researchers in the USA started to pay attention to the role and importance of a father in the family (Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000). The involvement of men in the general upbringing of the child and child development came under scrutiny (Carrillo, Bermudez & Delgado, 2016: 102). Beyond just residence, researchers began to probe the extent of paternal involvement. Lamb et al. (1985: 883) began focusing on the amount of time a father spent doing activities that involved a child; thus a father's involvement was defined by more than his ability to provide financially. Several studies were undertaken, which provided valuable information on fathers (Lamb et al., 1985; Pleck, 1983; Robinson, 1977; Russell, 1983). Paternal involvement is a complex concept, particularly because the pattern of contact and involvement between fathers and children has changed drastically over the past few years. De Wit et al. (2014: 116) define paternal involvement as a "multidimensional construct that involves affective, cognitive and ethical components, inclusive of indirect forms of involvement". There is consensus in the literature that paternal involvement goes beyond just co-residence. Three components of paternal involvement emerged from these studies: interaction/engagement, availability and responsibility.

In pre-colonial times in Africa, paternal involvement took place within an extended family relationship, with clear role differences between fathers and mothers (Rabe, 2018a: 17: Mwoma, 2015: 420). Mothers generally assumed the role of providing primary care for children, while fathers played a provision and protector role (Hatch & Posel, 2018: 267). In an African context, the term "father" includes uncles (from both the maternal and paternal side of the family), grandfathers, and at times older brothers (Hunter, 2006: 101; Siegel, 1996: 7; Nathane, 2018: 19). According to Mwoma (2015: 420), Kenyan fathers did not play a direct role in the education and socialisation of children, especially girl-children; this function was left to the mother and the extended family. As such, a father was mainly viewed as an "emotionally distant disciplinarian" the family should obey and respect unconditionally (Siegel, 1996: 9). However, fathers played the role of preparing boys to be esteemed men in the community, and the passing on of skills such as herding, hunting, welding and building structures began when a boy turned seven (Mwoma, 2015: 421).

3.3.1. Fathers' interaction/engagement with their children

Interaction/engagement refers to the father's direct contact with his child, his participation in caregiving, and various collective undertakings (Lamb et al., 1985: 884; Carrillo et al., 2016: 106). Recent research in the USA reveals that father involvement is increasing (Olmstead, Futris & Pasley, 2010), some of the explanations given include maternal entry into the work environment (Edin & Kefalas, 2005), the rise in househusbands, and the emergence of the

"new father" phenomenon (Coleman & Ganong, 2015). A key predictor of the level of father interaction/engagement is his ability to participate in the caregiving of his child (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Troilo (2014) posits that about 90 percent of men in the USA are now present in the delivery rooms and playing an active caregiving role. Other predictors of engagement are participation in shared activities such as helping the child with homework, playing with the child, feeding, etc. (Olmstead et al., 2010). However, various factors often affect fathers' level of engagement with their children; these factors include maternal gatekeepers and an unfavourable work environment (Hosking, 2006; De Luccie, 1995).

3.3.2. Fathers' availability to their children

Availability refers to the accessibility of the father to his children (Quesenberry, Ostrosky & Corso, 2007). Accessibility differs slightly from engagement, as a father can be absent but accessible (Pleck, 2008). Engagement is measured by the amount of time a father and a child spend in direct contact, engaged in joint activities, while availability is measured by the amount of time a father and child are in the same location where they are involved, but not engaged, in the same activity (Rane & McBride, 2000). According to Quesenberry et al. (2007), availability refers to both emotional and physical presence. Olmstead et al. (2010) continue that a father can only be considered available if he and the child share the same location; telephone contact (and in modern times, different forms of social media contact) is excluded from this conceptualisation. However, as already shown, availability extends beyond direct contact, thus it is possible for a father to be physically absent but available to the child (Lamb et al., 1985: 884).

3.3.3. Fathers' responsibility towards their children

Responsibility refers to the role a father plays in taking care of his child (Lamb et al., 1985: 884). Pleck (2008) posits that responsibility is the least studied component of father involvement and is often confused with a responsible fathering framework. Lamb (2000) adds that this component is also the most difficult to define, but it is important in determining the level of responsibility a father has in the well-being and the care of a child (Lamb, 2000). Responsibility involves parenting in the absence of the mother, ensuring the child has clothing, setting appointments with paediatricians and the like (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985; Lamb, 2000). Lamb (200) argues that one of the reasons responsibility is neglected by researchers is because the time spent being a responsible father does not require direct contact. A father can arrange for a sick child to consult a doctor without necessarily being in the same location. Based on this argument, it is possible to be a non-resident father and still

play a responsible fathering role in the life of your child. The responsibility component also includes subjective aspects such as anxiety, worry, decision-making and planning, and expectations of the child's needs (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 2008). These aspects are hard to measure, thus making it difficult to accurately measure a father's responsibility towards a child.

3.4. Non-resident fathers' involvement

Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley and Buehler (1995: 58) define non-resident father involvement as "a behaviour [by a father] that promotes interaction with and reflects a commitment to a child, including among other activities, face to face contact, phoning or writing, physical caregiving and providing financial support". Additionally, Seltzer (1991) developed a model of non-residential father involvement, citing three roles that involved non-resident fathers play: financial support measured by payment of child support, social involvement that is measured by the frequency of contact, and authority defined by the influence a non-resident father has over the child. Statistics South Africa defines a non-resident father as a person who has spent four days per week away from their family for a period of six weeks consecutively (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

According to Hosegood and Madhavan (2012: 259), there are a number of South African qualitative studies where men report fulfilling traditional and non-traditional fathering roles such as caring for children's physical, educational and emotional needs. Madhavan, Townsend and Garey (2008) conducted one such study in South African rural areas. This study found that fathers are usually involved in the upbringing of their children, despite living and working in cities like Johannesburg. This is an important study for our understanding and definition of non-resident father involvement, mainly because it makes two main conclusions: a father's physical absence does not necessarily mean abandonment and some non-resident fathers continue to support their children.

Van den Berg and Makusha (2018b: 9) conclude therefore that there is a distinction between involved non-resident fathers and absent fathers, i.e. complete non-involvement. An involved non-resident father attempts in good faith to contribute to the financial, social, educational, and psychological well-being of the child (DSD, 2013). However, in South Africa, the role of nurturing and physical caregiving is largely conceived as a feminine role while the role of men is socially constructed as a financial one (Sikweyiya Shai, Gibbs, Mahlangu, Jewkes, 2017: 132). Failure to live up to this provider construction is one of the main reasons non-resident fathers are denied access to their children and invariably denied the opportunity for paternal involvement beyond residence (Mavungu et al., 2013: 13; Human, 2018: 35).

South Africa has the second-highest rate of non-resident fathers in Africa after Namibia (Richter & Makusha, 2015: 1). Of the 19.7 million South African children under the age of 18 years, 12 million do not have daily contact with their fathers. This constitutes 50 to 55 percent of South African fathers. Approximately 3.98 million children live with neither a mother nor a father; this constitutes 21.4 percent of minor children (Hall, 2019b). The percentage of children living in father-only households increased by 0.2 percent from 3.1 percent in 2002 to 3.3 percent in 2019 (Hall, 2019a: 217). The rural provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and North West have the highest percentages of children living in a mother-only household, while Gauteng and the Western Cape have the highest number of children living in households with both parents (Hall, 2019b).

As mentioned above, the number of absent biological Black African fathers is higher than other racial groups in South Africa. It would therefore appear that Black African fathers are disappearing in large numbers, leaving women and children to fend for themselves. According to Bradshaw (1999), there are three routes to which one becomes a non-resident father; these are fathering a child out of wedlock, through a divorce that involves children, and separation between cohabitating parents with children involved.

The number of paternal orphans in South Africa may also be used to explain father absence. According to Hall (2019a: 218), an estimated 2.7 million children are orphans in South Africa, with 8.6 million and 2.6 million being paternal and maternal orphans respectively (Hall, 2019a: 218). A staggering 96.3 percent of orphans in South Africa are Black (Statistics South Africa, 2016: 21–22). Previous research has shown that an increase in maternal orphans also increases the number of children raised without a single biological parent because, although living, fathers often disappear from their children's lives (Meintjies & Hall, 2012). The number of female-headed households is another indicator of the prevalence of father absence in South Africa. In 2015, of the 80.4 percent of households headed by Black Africans, 42.7 percent were female-headed households (Statistics South Africa, 2015: 10). However, one should take cognisance of Budlender's (2003) criticism of South Africa's household surveys, as she argues that enumerators tend to have different conceptualisations of household heads. This is as a result of the ambiguity of the enumerator's manual in its definition of the concept.[3] Nevertheless, it is clear that in South Africa an extremely high number of biological fathers do not live with their children on a daily basis.

[3] Although newer surveys and censuses in South Africa are more sophisticated in this regard.

3.5. Determinants of non-resident father involvement

According to Köppen, Kreyenfeld and Trappe (2018: 1163), fathers in Germany have expressed a desire to be more involved with their children; this desire stretches beyond parental separation. The same is expressed by Kopano and Nduna (2018: 27) in a South African context. However, there are a number of factors affecting paternal contact after parental separation; these include, amongst others, the education level of the father (Padi et al., 2014), payment of child support or lack thereof (Khunou, 2006), remarriage (Madhavan et al. (2016), the age and sex of the child (Clark, Cotton & Marteleto, 2015) and co-residence (Seepamore, 2016: 4). The following section covers these predictors of paternal contact at length.

3.5.1 Payment of child support

A father's inability to provide financially for their children has been hailed as one of the strongest determinants of non-resident father involvement or non-involvement (Eddy et al., 2013: 22). South African fathers have a belief that the conceptualisation of fathers as financial providers has in many ways reduced them to automatic teller machines (ATMs). However, in light of the high unemployment rate, it is not always possible for fathers to pay child support to the satisfaction of the mothers and maternal families. Unemployment is widespread in South Africa, with the current unemployment rate in the country standing at 35.3 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2022: 6) and the expanded unemployment rate (people who have given up searching for employment) being much higher. This is particularly concerning since numerous studies have found that fathers who are unable to provide for their children as a result of unemployment tend to withdraw from their children (Ramphele & Richter, 2006; Mavungu et al., 2013: 22; Wilson, 2006). Ramphele (2002: 158) captures this as follows:

> Desertion by fathers is often prompted by their inability to bear the burden of being primary providers. The burden of failure becomes intolerable for those who lack the capacity to generate enough income as uneducated and unskilled laborers. Desertion is not always physical, it can also be emotional. Many men "die" as parents and husbands by indulging in alcohol, drugs, or becoming unresponsive to their families.

In South Africa, traditional practices such as the payment of *inhawulo* and *lobola*[4] add further

[4] *Lobola:* sometimes referred to as "bride price" or "bride wealth", is property in cash or kind, which a prospective husband or head of his family undertakes to give the head of the prospective wife's family in consideration of a customary marriage (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b: 75).

restrictions to paternal contact. Mavungu et al. (2013: 24) and Makusha and Richter (2015) found that a father's failure to pay the set amount to the maternal family in recognition and acceptance of the child born out of wedlock may lead to the family denying him any access to the child. Another dynamic that may influence a father's ability to pay child support is their responsibilities to the new family (Cheadle, Amato & King, 2010: 206). A father's responsibility to the new family may often impose time constraints on and interfere with the financial support historically provided by the father (Köppen et al., 2018: 1164).

Conversely, Eddy et al. (2013: 27) argue that there are fathers who tend to withhold payment of child support as a retaliatory response. This simply means that a father deliberately withholds maintenance as a way of retaliating against the mother for denying him access to the child, or punishing the mother for the break-up or even re-partnering. A study conducted by Madhavan et al. (2014: 458) found that of 690 children who experienced union dissolution at some point in their lives, 457 were not receiving financial support. Madhavan, Richter, Norris and Hosegood (2014: 452) also refer to the portrayal of the Black African fathers as "deadbeat dads"; this refers to men who are disinclined to support their children financially especially following the termination of a relationship with the mother of the child. Mavungu et al. (2013: 27) contend that the high number of maintenance defaulting fathers in South Africa may be an indication of parental conflict among ex-partners. Khunou (2012: 9) argues that "[m]oney has been found to hold a more direct, undisguised source of power for men than for women". Therefore, the notion that men naturally want to provide for their children is not completely true, especially in a society that teaches men to expect a reward for their provision (Khunou, 2012: 9).

It is worth noting that despite the challenges cited above, the enforcement of the maintenance court and the emergence of a responsible father in South Africa, co-residence is no longer the sole predictor of fathers' payment of child support (Madhavan et al., 2008). Richter et al. (2012) argue that many fathers pay child support even though they do not reside with their children. Madhavan et al. (2008) further argue that location and support are separate dimensions. Rabe (2007) found that mineworkers who cherished their roles as fathers, worked hard as migrant workers to provide financially for their families by sending money every month, even though they were away for 11 months.

3.5.2 Marital versus non-marital birth

According to Aquilino (2006), in the USA divorced fathers tend to maintain more contact with their children compared to never-married fathers. Laughlin, Farrie and Fagan (2009: 229) add that ex-husbands tend to maintain more contact with their non-resident children post-divorce than cohabitation fathers following a relationship breakdown. Köppen et al. (2018: 1164) also state that fathers who have never co-resided with their children often remain absent altogether; part of this can be attributed to the presumption that fathers never spent enough time with children to develop a strong paternal identity. Additionally, Nielson (2012) contends that the depth of the father–child relationship during the marriage is an important predictor of the level of contact a father will have with the child post-marital breakdown. She argues that if the relationship between the father and the child was weak during the marriage, divorce will further damage this relationship. On the other hand, unmarried fathers, especially those who have never cohabited, lack the opportunity to develop a bond with children and may find it difficult to maintain contact with their children after the relationship breakdown (Cheadle et al., 2010: 208).

3.5.3 Remarriage and/or re-partnering

A remarriage or re-partnering trajectory is an important predictor of fathers' ability to maintain frequent contact with their children. Research has found that the frequency of father–child contact tends to decrease when the mother or father re-partners (Köppen et al., 2018: 1164; Madhavan et al., 2016; Steward, 2010: 1079). Additionally, Nielson (2006) found that in the USA fathers usually remarry before mothers. This is consistent with South African statistics; for example, 4950 bridegrooms were divorcees compared to 3111 brides in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2020: 25). When fathers remarry, they often try to foster a relationship between their new wives and their biological children. If they fail in this endeavour, they feel discouraged, despondent and frustrated and this places a strain on their relationship with their biological children (Nielson, 2012). In addition, a failure to foster this relationship normally leaves fathers caught between their desire to have healthy relationships with their biological children while, simultaneously, trying to strengthen the bonds with their new wives and stepchildren. In the main, the failure to establish these bonds may lead to conflict between the stepmother and the stepchild, thus putting the father in the awkward position of having to choose sides. This strain is perpetuated by the fact that fathers' financial investments are often transferred to the new family following a union dissolution (Madhavan et al., 2014: 454). Swiss and Le Bourdais (2009) further articulate that mothers are likely to limit the father–child relationship subsequent to the non-resident father re-partnering, particularly because they are

hesitant to allow their children to spend time with the father's new partner. On the other hand, Madhavan et al. (2016) contend that a mother's entry into a new relationship more than triples the level of no contact between the biological fathers and children. The father's level of contact with the children also tends to decrease when the mother remarries or gets involved in another relationship (Madhavan et al., 2016).

3.5.4 Age and sex

The age of the father at the time of the child's birth and the age of the child at the time of the parental dissolution are both predictors of paternal contact. According to Parke (1996), younger fathers tend to be less involved in the lives of their children when compared to older fathers. Clark et al. (2015: 2) postulate that the age of the father at the time of the child's birth has a bearing on the frequency of contact between the father and child, as well as the financial support the father provides. Furthermore, Cheadle et al. (2010: 207) and Clark et al. (2015: 2) argue that young fathers are less likely to be involved in their children's lives because they are emotionally immature, financially unstable, and possibly still studying. In addition, the high level of unemployment among young men makes it difficult for them to enter into marriage or cohabit (Clark et al., 2015: 2). However, contrary to the findings cited above, there is emerging research that points to the fact that young South African fathers have the desire to be active parents (Swartz, Bhana, Richter & Versveld, 2013: 30). Furthermore, Swartz et al. (2013) found that fatherhood tends to make young men more responsible. When asked what fatherhood entailed, adolescent fathers in Cape Town emphasised the role of a father as a provider, a nurturer and acting as a role model for his children (Chideya & Williams, 2013: 215). That being said, Bhana and Nkani (2014: 338) and Swartz and Bhana (2009: 3) acknowledge that employment status, cultural expectation, and father–mother or father–maternal family relational challenges tend to hinder young fathers from being involved in their children's lives. Madhavan et al. (2014: 458) further found that the age of the mother at the time of the child's birth seems to have a negative effect on children receiving paternal support.

The age and sex of the child are other determinants of paternal involvement. It is worth noting that there is no consensus in the literature on whether the sex of the child promotes paternal involvement. Wood and Repetti (2004: 238) found that fathers tend to be more involved with sons than with daughters, while Lamb (1997) found higher levels of paternal involvement in caring for daughters. Wood and Repetti (2004: 238) and Harris and Morgan (1991) maintain that fathers tend to invest more time in boys in order to socialise them into traditional roles such as autonomy and independence. This investment in boys often leads to infrequent father–daughter interaction. Studies have also found that daughters and sons tend to respond

differently to parental divorce or union dissolution (Nielson, 2011). Owing to the mother–daughter relationship, daughters are predisposed to empathise with the mother and become withdrawn from the father, especially if the parents are hostile (Haaz, Kneavel & Browning, 2014). As a result daughters tend to reject the father and identify with the mother (Lesch & Scheffler, 2016).

A study conducted by Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean and Hofferth (2001: 138) in the USA found that fathers in two-parent families tend to be more involved with older children than with younger children (infants and toddlers). The reason for this trend may be because fathers feel comfortable with older children who do not require extensive caregiving such as feeding and changing of diapers. Similarly, in South Africa, Madhavan et al. (2014) found that non-resident fathers tend to be more involved with their adolescent children than their younger children. Additionally, if interaction between fathers and younger children does occur, it is normally centred on play and caretaking tasks (Kulik & Sadeh, 2015: 22). However, Madhavan et al. (2014: 454) also found that children between the ages of 0 and 2 at the time of parental separation tend to experience more paternal contact than older children. This trend could be attributed to the fact that fathers tend to perceive younger children as fragile and in need of more nurturing than older children.

3.5.5 Education status of the father

The father's level of education is also a predictor of paternal contact. Swiss and Le Bourdias (2009) argue that fathers who are highly educated, resourceful and employed are more likely to stay in contact with children post-separation compared to their counterparts who lack these traits. Fathers with higher levels of education are inclined to be involved in their children's educational outcomes and as such spend more time with children in achievement-related activities (Yeung, Sandberg & Davis-Kean, 2001: 138). Wessels and Lesch (2014) conducted a study among young South African daughters to assess their perceptions of paternal involvement and nurturance. Using self-administered questionnaires, the Father Involvement Scale (FIS) and Nurturant Fathering Scales (NFS), the study found that daughters whose fathers had a high level of education experienced a relatively higher level of father involvement. However, fathers in senior positions often find themselves in a dilemma in balancing work and parenting (Hosking, 2006: 216). In the USA, fathers categorised long hours and demanding work as a man's reason for low levels of paternal involvement (Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2006). Fathers who work long hours are likely to feel overloaded and this affects the quality of the father–child relationship (Crouter, Bumpass, Head & McHale, 2001).

3.6 Importance of men in their role as fathers

The importance of a father to a child's wellbeing has been widely studied in both the west and in non-western countries (Amato, 1994; Lamb, 2000; Laughlin et al., 2009; Khan, 2017; Heartlines, 2020). Cano, Perales and Baxter (2019: 164–165) postulate that fathers' involvement has a binary importance in childcare. Firstly, it can increase gender equality in the family by giving mothers a chance to focus on improving their skills and consequently re-enter the labour market. Secondly, theoretical perspectives stemming from sociology and psychology, among others, suggest that father involvement in childcare is concomitant with positive child development. Hunter (2006) dates the importance of fathers to the 19th century, while Popenoe (1997: 4) contends that fathers have been considered important figures in the family across history. Nešporová (2019: 144) argues that initial studies on fatherhood focused mainly on father absence and its consequences for the well-being of the entire family. These studies found that family members of an actively involved father are more likely to achieve individual and family goals. Additionally, paternal presence and involvement have been found to be important in the socioeconomic and psychological wellbeing of children, starting from birth and continuing into adulthood (Haaz et al., 2014: 167, Amato 1994; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999; Desmond & Desmond, 2006). Research in high-income countries has also found that father involvement in caregiving is linked to the cognitive and socio-emotional developmental outcome for children (Mercer, Gareth, Jewkes, Esser, MacNab, Patrick, Buxt, Bettinger & Julie., 2018: 21). However, Cano et al. (2019: 165) argue that not all time spent with children is beneficial but rather the content of the activities needs to be cognitively stimulating for the child. A study by Huston Duncan, Johannes, McLoyd, Rashmita, Crosby, Gibson, Magnuson, Ventura, (2001) in the USA, who used the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) scale to measure the characteristics of the home environment, suggest that a lower quality of informal care may be harmful to the cognitive outcomes of a child.

Father involvement yields different developmental outcome for boys and girls. Richter et al. (2011: 2) conclude this as follows:

> Supportive fathers give girls self-confidence and help boys develop healthy masculinity and clear identity. One of the biggest impacts of an involved father is that he gives credibility to school work. Children stay at school longer if their fathers support them in education. Children benefit from the financial support, care, and protection of men. A man can make all the difference to a child's life by preventing or stopping abuse perpetrated by other men.

Khan (2017: 4) further postulates that father involvement is associated with lower levels of impulsivity and higher levels of inhibitory control in both boys and girls. Regardless of residence (resident or non-resident), continuous father involvement has been positively associated with children's intellectual development, social competence, internal locus of control, ability to empathise and lower levels of young adult distress (Khan, 2017: 6; Erhabor, Keatlaretse & Mokoena, 2016: 65). In the daughter's development, father involvement contributes towards promoting order through the application of rules and the provision of guidance (Lesejane, 2006: 179). Rosenberg and Bradford-Wilcox (2006) add that children of involved fathers have a higher IQ and better linguistic capabilities. Unfortunately, similar studies are limited in the Southern African context. Verschueren and Marcoen (1999) maintain that girls with an actively involved father tend to be better able to successfully form and maintain relationships (both platonic and romantic) and adjust better to school stressors. Nielson (2012) adds that it is not just the presence of a father in a household that yields positive psychosocial benefits but the active involvement in daily activities that children are engaged in. Desmond and Desmond (2006: 226) report that households with a father in residence are likely to have better nutrition and healthcare. Research in South Africa has also found that female children raised by a loving and caring father tend to avoid risky behaviour (Richter, 2011: 2), while those that lack father involvement may be prone to risky sexual behaviours such as early sexual debut and risk of teenage pregnancy (Ratele, 2018: 30). In addition, fathers play an important role as a protective shield against the manifestation of eating disorders among adolescent girls, as well as the use and abuse of drugs.

Fathers play a very important role in families and communities (Mkhize, 2006: 183) with literature attributing the presence of the father to positive developmental outcomes in a child (Swartz et al., 2013). Research in South Africa has also found that father involvement and nurturance are positively associated with a daughter's ability to be self-reliant, self-confident, and empathetic, and to display greater life satisfaction than may otherwise have been the case (Lesch and Ismail, 2014: 39; Secunda, 1992; Rabe, 2018b: 4). Khan (2017: 4) postulates that in families with low socioeconomic status, father involvement is found to reduce the occurrence of behavioural problems and decrease acts of delinquency in boys. Khewu and Adu (2015: 4) and Makusha et al. (2013: 78) also found that involved fathers contribute to boys developing healthy masculinity and a strong sense of identity. South African studies conducted by Richter (2006), Morrell, Posel and Devey (2003), Mboya and Nesengani (1999), among others, indicate that children's access to their fathers is essential for education and emotional well-being. Rabe (2018b: 4) adds that children of involved and supportive fathers tend to stay in school longer.

Father involvement is also important for mothers. Makusha and Richter (2018: 51) postulate that women in stable relationships with men have lower levels of stress and are less likely to suffer from mental health problems. Importantly, a man's investment in his family tends to protect women from being disheartened and overburdened by the effects of parenting (Richter et al. 2012: 2; Khewu & Adu, 2015: 6). Lamb and Lewis (2010) and Khan (2017: 2) concur that increased father involvement in childcare indirectly improves the quality of the mother–child relationship.

Involved fathering is also beneficial for fathers themselves (Magruder, 2010: 11). Allen and Daly (2007: 12) postulate that men who assume an involved fathering role preserve steady employment. Allen and Daly (2007: 11–12) add that involved fathers tend to display greater psychosocial maturity, feel less psychological distress and be more content with their lives. Involved fathers are less likely to engage in risky behaviour (Mavungu et al., 2013: 10), report far less fortuitous and premature death. Analogously, research in South Africa found that young and unmarried fathers from low-income communities with a high prevalence of violence tend to adopt pro-social behaviours when becoming a father for the first time (Swartz & Bhana, 2009).

3.7 Maternal gatekeeping and its consequences for father involvement

Schoppe-Sullivan, Altenburger, Lee, Bower, Kamp and Dush (2015: 166) define maternal gatekeeping as behaviours and attitudes that women engage in that may either aid or limit a father's role in raising their child. Puhlman and Pasley (2013: 177) also define maternal gatekeeping as "a set of complex behavioural interactions between parents, where mothers influence father involvement through their use of controlling, restrictive, and facilitative behaviours, directed at father's childrearing and interaction with children on a regular and consistent basis". Kulik and Tsoref (2010: 264) describe maternal gatekeeping by likening the household and the family to a maternal garden encircled by a brick wall and a tightly locked gate, implying that fathers can be locked out. Many scholars have linked maternal gatekeeping to father involvement or lack thereof (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2015; Gaunt, 2008). Two strands of research on maternal gatekeeping developed, with the earliest focusing on the role mothers possibly play to inhibit positive father–child relationships (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). The second research strand is in its early stage and focuses on the mother's role in promoting the father's caregiving (Sano, Richards & Zvonkovic, 2008). Trinder (2008: 1299) mentions that a third strand of research has emerged in developmental psychology which examines the extent to which parents reinforce and/or undermine each

other's parenting roles and their effects on the child's development.

Key to the principle of gatekeeping is the notion that mothers are actively engaging in activities that encourage or discourage paternal involvement (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2015: 168). Maternal gatekeeping occurs in a different context, for instance among married co-resident couples, in unmarried non-resident parents who are separated, and in unmarried non-resident parents who are still romantically involved. Allen and Hawkins (1999: 204–205) conceptualised three dimensions of maternal gatekeeping from their study of mostly White middle-class, dual-earner families in the USA, with dependent children living in one household. The first dimension is called *standard and responsibility* and refers to the mother's conscious or unconscious resistance to surrender responsibilities to allow the father to be involved in "family work". Mothers do this by taking charge of tasks, setting higher standards, criticising and/or redoing the husband's tasks even though they are performing at an adequate level. Allen and Hawkins (1999: 204) classify these mothers as household managers, where fathers are reduced to helpers. The manager–helper dynamic influences the level of paternal involvement. The second dimension is *maternal identity confirmation* which refers to the desire for external validation of the maternal role. Women tend to internalise cultural expectations of mothering and this has an impact on attitudes about maternal and paternal involvement in family work. In a similar vein, a study conducted by Makusha and Richter (2015: 2) in KwaZulu-Natal found maternal gatekeeping evident among married couples where mothers exclude fathers from child-rearing, care and household work as a way to validate their maternal identity. The third dimension is *differentiated family roles*, which refers to the mother's expectations for a clear division of labour and a set of distinct spheres for men and women.

The South African perspective has many similarities to other parts of the world. However, the literature suggests a number of factors that lead to maternal gatekeeping from a Southern African perspective, which is somewhat contrary to other parts of the world. Firstly, Makusha and Richter (2015: 2) argue, in abusive families or relationships maternal gatekeeping may be used as a measure for protecting children from the father's violent behaviour. This is especially true in a country like South Africa with high levels of domestic violence. For example, literature shows a relationship between domestic violence and father absence (Manyatshe, 2016). For example, when women leave abusive relationships, they tend to alienate the fathers as a measure to protect the children. It is estimated that, on a monthly basis, approximately 60 000 women and children in South Africa are victims of physical violence at the hands of the mother's intimate partner (Bower & Dawes, 2014). In a survey conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013), 22 percent of adolescent respondents reported having witnessed intimate partner violence perpetrated against their mothers at home. Van den Berg et al. (2013)

conclude that a mother's choice to restrict the father's involvement in a child's life may be to protect the child from violence. Secondly, in relationships characterised by conflict, mothers tend to make it difficult for fathers to remain in contact with children if the relationship breaks down (Roy, 2008). Nielson (2011) further argues that the quality of a father–child relationship depends on how well parents can keep a child out of her marital/relationship issues post-divorce or separation. Lesch and Kelapile (2015: 3) agree with these findings, arguing that a positive relationship between parents post-separation enhances father involvement. In contrast, in a conflicted relationship fathers tend to feel like children are used as weapons and victims, and those mothers may overlook children's rights and interests to develop relationships with their fathers. Rather, they may punish fathers by refusing them access to their children (Mavungu et al., 2013). The third reason for maternal gatekeeping is fathers' inability to fulfil certain expectations, termed cultural or circumstantial gatekeeping (Makusha & Richter, 2018: 55). Marinho (2017: 291) argues that the cultural and circumstantial setting includes, among other things, a father's inability to pay *inhlawulo,* a mother's distrust of the father's ability and/or competence as a parent, and dissatisfaction with financial contributions or lack thereof. She continues that there is research to suggest that mothers exclude fathers' involvement by limiting contact and this maternal gatekeeping behaviour often occurs when the mother does not value the father's significance to the children's wellbeing.

There is an ongoing academic debate in South Africa and other parts of the world on whether or not maternal gatekeeping as defined above really exists (Makusha & Richter, 2018; Sano et al., 2008). However, in their study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, Makusha and Richter (2015) found that maternal gatekeeping is evident especially in situations where a mother is not satisfied with the involvement role a father plays in the lives of his children. According to Sano et al. (2008: 1702), contextual factors surrounding the perceived maternal gatekeeping behaviour, such as socioeconomic status and geographic location likely to influence even co-parental dynamics, are often ignored.

3.8. Fatherhood and masculinity in the South African context

Masculinity is socially and historically constructed and involves contestation between competing understandings of what being a man should involve (Richter, 2001: 7; Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005: 16). Social constructions are always complex; here it involves firstly the fact that there are many ways to be a man, not just a singular rigid way. Secondly, masculinity (like most social constructs) changes over time; as such, it is neither automatic nor biological (Hadebe, 2010: 12; Morrell, 2006: 14). To this end, Makusha, Richter and Chikovore (2013) argue that the understanding of fatherhood and masculinity is often shaped by the political,

social, economic and cultural climate of the time. Richter and Morrell (2006: 8) also note that there is a close link between fatherhood expressions and conceptions of masculinity in the socioeconomic history of the country. For instance, in South African history, the displacement of men from their homes through migrant labour compromised the role men play in families, causing many fathers to be absent in households and directly influencing the construction of Black South African masculinities (Morrell & Richter, 2006). For fathers who remained in contact and involved with their families beyond the residence, the term "stretched family" was conceptualised by Spiegel, Watson and Wilkinson (1996: 12) in an attempt to classify those family members who do not live in the same geographic location but somehow contribute to the household (implying a form of economic cooperation). As alluded to in the first section of this research, stretched families are included in the definition of families in the White Paper on Families.

There are many pathways to manhood conceptualised in Africa. Becker and Richardo (2005: 2) posit that being a man is chiefly linked to the fulfilment of three salient stages, namely, obtaining a certain level of financial independence, entering into a marriage union, and having children. This view thus suggests that fatherhood is closely linked with manhood and it is an important component in the definition of masculinity (Makusha et al., 2013; Morrell, 2006; Shefer, Steven & Clowes, 2010). Morrell (2006) focuses on two aspects when drawing a link between fatherhood and manhood: the act of impregnating a woman and the process of accepting the responsibility and providing necessary resources in the care of the child. Having a child is not a qualifier of manhood; it goes beyond conception and includes the ability to provide for the child, not only monetary resources but also aspects such as protection, care and emotional support (Makusha et al., 2013).

There is also a clear intersection between masculinity, culture and sexuality (Lynch & Clayton, 2016). Male circumcision exercised by most cultures in South Africa is also considered as a passage to manhood (Mayatula & Mavundla, 1997). Mavundla et al. (2010: 392) define male circumcision as the partial or full removal of the penis foreskin. Among the Xhosa and Zulu people, a circumcised male is considered a man – *indoda* – and an uncircumcised male regardless of their age is considered a boy – *inkwenkwe* (Muvundla et al. 2017: 935). Mfecane (2016) posits that *indoda* is a respected form of masculinity in the Xhosa tradition. Beyond just the physical exercise of circumcision, the ritual takes place on the basis that a boy is socialised on how to be a real man (Barker & Richardo, 2005). Vincent (2006: 362) further argues that the socialisation in these initiation schools reinforces the patriarchal notion of male dominance. Lynch and Clayton (2016) investigated gay and bisexual men in Xhosa-speaking communities who align themselves with circumcision traditions to fit into the idealised forms of masculinity

and to prove to heterosexual males that they are also men. Homosexual participants in Lynch and Clayton's (2016) study contended that failure to conform to society's notion of heterosexuality compromises one's masculinity and social acceptance, and thus they felt compelled to undergo cultural circumcisions to achieve social manhood. In their conclusion, Lynch and Clayton (2016) argue that the focus then is on restoring masculinity and not sexuality. This is mainly because participants' identification as gay remains unchanged when they undergo traditional circumcision. However, it creates an opportunity to repair their social and cultural credibility by achieving and gaining respect as men in their communities as a result of undergoing traditional circumcision.

3.9. Changing roles of fatherhood

Fatherhood can be described as a social, cultural and human role that men undertake to care for their children (Morrell et al., 2006: 18). Consequently, Coleman and Ganong (2015) assert that the conceptualisation of fatherhood has changed over the past 30 to 40 years. This transition has led to a decline in the consensus on what fatherhood should entail and has left men to define their own identity and meaning (Chideya & Williams, 2013: 209). The role expectation of fathers has changed in the last few decades from fathers as patriarchs or disciplinarians to the notion of fathers as breadwinners, to the current construction of fathers as carers (Rabe, 2006; East et al., 2018: 1; Eddy et al., 2013; Yeung et al., 2001: 136).

Worth noting is that the role expectations of fathers differ depending on the social and cultural contexts (Khan, 2017: 2). To comprehend the changing role of fathers in the family and/or the household, we need first to define these two concepts. The concepts of household and family are often used interchangeably even though they do not mean the same thing. Makiwane, Khalema, Gumede and Nduna (2016) define a household as "people who share a physical space and jointly provide themselves with food and other essentials of living. The individuals may pool their incomes and share some budget and may be related or unrelated or a combination of both". Makiwane et al. (2016) also define family as *"persons who are related to a specific degree, through blood, adoption or socially approved sexual union".* Within specific time periods in western countries, the family structures have also transmuted from a household with the father as the main breadwinner to a dual-earner structure with both partners earning an income and now, in some cases, the emerging notion of househusbands with women being the main breadwinners (Kulik & Sadeh, 2015: 20; Madlambayan & Calma, 2015: 305). However, throughout history fathers have been considered a vital component of the family (Popenoe, 1996).

In the past, a father was conceptualised as a moral teacher and a guide (Mavungu et al., 2013: 13). In Southern Africa, the father, as the patriarch, was at the apex of the hierarchical system (Lesejane, 2006: 174). Clowes, Ratele and Shefer (2013: 261) add that "embedded in the construction of men as household heads and leaders across public terrain are notions of strength, independence, and self-sufficiency, dominance and control". Clowes et al. (2013) continue that the notion of patriarchy suggests that masculinity is powerful and that men are in control of women and children. Thus, the father, as the head of the family, had to be told everything happening within the family. The task of providing moral guidance fell to the father and, in his absence, to the eldest son. Importantly, African societies embraced the concept of collective fathering (Mkhize, 2006: 188; Rabe, 2018a: 17). However, socio-cultural and political changes stripped the man of this authority and in turn changed the conception of fatherhood in many Southern African cultures (Lesejane, 2006: 176). Townsend et al. (2006: 173–174) summarise the effect of colonialism and apartheid on Black African families as follows:

> Over the preceding 150 years Black South Africans families have been moulded and reshaped by conquest; colonisation; colonialism; removal and resettlement; racial segregation; the labour needs of White-owned industry; and policies grounded in European family ideals.

The discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa during the 1800s resulted in the need for cheap labour and thus the mining industry employed black migrant workers on a large scale (Rabe, 2006). This led to Black African males being pressured to leave their families and work as migrant labourers (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Consequently, the mass movement of men to the cities to search for employment in gold mines disrupted African kinship (Mkhize, 2006: 189). Rabe (2006) maintains that this period is significant as it firmly established the migrant labour system and this practice intensified over time. This was further entrenched by the apartheid system that forced Africans into Bantustans and led men to migrate to the cities as labourers while their wives (and other kin) were left to take care of the homes and children (Rabe, 2018a: 17).

According to Mathews et al. (2011), the arrival of apartheid was characterised by the White minority implementing oppressive laws against the Black African majority to force them into new commercial labour relations. These laws, among others, required Black African people to work and pay taxes, thus forcing many Black African men to seek employment in the gold reef mines and other large labour sectors. The increase in the gold price owing to global regulation of a fixed gold price meant higher wages and longer contracts for migrant labourers from the

1970s onwards (Rabe, 2006). Most of these migrant labourers only saw their families once a year (Kaufman, Maharaj & Richter, 1998; Lesejane, 2006; Rabe, 2006). The migrant labour system in South Africa is thus one of the biggest contributors of non-resident fathers. It continues to affect families even in democratic South Africa largely because it has become institutionalised and the precarious working conditions prevent families from relocating to more expensive urban areas (Makusha et al.; 2015; Rabe, 2006; 2018a). The labour migration as brought on by the colonial system, and later the apartheid system, left women with the responsibility of raising the children. The construction of fathers as moral teachers and guides had shifted drastically, particularly because fathers no longer had daily contact with their children and thus could no longer actively assume the role of moral guide.

Subsequently, the breadwinner conceptualisation of fatherhood began to take form. Rabe (2006; 2016) maintains that the construction of fathers as financial providers is the most significant role associated with fatherhood in many communities in South Africa. Therefore, as Kelly (2013: 69) states, employment and the ability to provide for their families and children became central to men's construction of fatherhood. In African cultures, there is a belief that "a man is a man because he can provide for his family" (Mkhize, 2006: 186). Clowes et al. (2013) and Heartlines (2020: 31) reflect that a good father is viewed as a man who can provide financially and effectively protect the family from economic turmoil. However, high unemployment rates, poverty and HIV/AIDS have disempowered most men and denied them the possibility of meeting their expectations as providers (Hunter, 2006; Rabe, 2016; Wessels & Lesch, 2014).

Carpenter (2002: 176) maintains that the 20th-century media and social media constantly portray men as pushing prams, playing with children and carrying babies. Patel et al. (2016: 21) argue that this conceptualisation can be linked to a father's access to and interaction with the child, and taking responsibility for the well-being of the child. Rabe (2006: 71) and Patel et al. (2016: 24) add that this emerging conceptualisation of fatherhood goes beyond the role of fathers as breadwinners or financial providers. This concept is known as "new fatherhood". The importance of the above roles has changed over time. These changes in the concept of fatherhood have increased our understanding and, ultimately, our construction of what and who a father should be. Paschal, Lewis-Moss and Hsiao (2011) further argue that these changes also provide fathers with a multiplicity of ways in which they may be fathers, thus allowing them to construct fatherhood from their viewpoints.

Sanders (1996) refers to the new fatherhood in South Africa as emerging from the emphasis of feminism in the 1980s and the concentration on equality in post-apartheid South Africa. The role of the father in the household has shifted over the past few decades. The first wave of

new fatherhood began in the 1920s in countries such as Sweden and the USA (Griswold, 1993). Central to this wave was promoting fathering behaviour that is expressive and nurturing in the lives of children. The second wave in non-western countries began in the 1970s (Smit, 2008). During this time, the focus shifted from fathers as mere disciplinarians and breadwinners to a new conception known as “new father” and in terms of which fathers were more involved in the well-being of their children than previous generations of fathers (Richter et al., 2012; Rabe, 2006; Lamb, 2000).

There is existing literature in South Africa showing that men are beginning to embrace this concept of new fatherhood. According to Morrell (2001), there is evidence that young, Black African professional males are developing patterns of what a “new father” should be. Richter et al. (2012) contend that fathers are beginning to share household chores with their partners and participating in the active upbringing of the children. Men are increasingly beginning to attend healthcare centres for children’s immunisations and taking an active role in the day-to-day lives of their children, from driving them to school to caring for them at home (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Although great strides have been made in an attempt to expand new fatherhood in South Africa, Morrell and Richter (2004: 40) maintain that “hegemonic constructions of masculinity do not centrally include loving and responsible discharge of the fatherhood role”, this partly because masculinity is still constructed based on what other men think. Hunter, Riggs and Augoustinos (2017: 3) continue that “hegemonic masculinity informs all aspects of men's lives but is particularly relevant regarding fathering as it informs understanding of what fathers are expected to be and what a good father should be”. These understandings of hegemonic masculinity have largely categorised fathers as overly authoritarian, disinterested, and physically and emotionally absent (Ammari & Schoenebeck, 2015). Walker (1995) has attributed this shift in men’s roles to the new conceptualisation of motherhood. The rate at which women are entering the workforce has increased significantly and this is changing gender roles and responsibilities. White (1994) and Roy (2008: 98) are of the view that this is creating new opportunities for father involvement. On the other hand, Edin and Kefalas (2005) argue that many working women in low-income families depend less on men for assistance, realising the inability or limitation of their partners to provide for the family.

3.10. Recent policy developments on fatherhood and families in South Africa

I conclude this chapter by looking at recent policy developments in South Africa. In South Africa, such policy developments have been geared to changing family dynamics and enhancing interactions between family members. These policy shifts include the enactment of new legislation and the amendments to already existing legislation. This section examines key

policy and legislative developments over a ten-year period (2009–2019). I will in particular consider how these legislative reforms promote paternal involvement in South Africa. For the interest of this study, I will focus on the following relevant legislation: the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended, the White Paper on South African Families 2012, the Maintenance Amendment Act 9 of 2015 and the Labour Laws Amendment Act 10 of 2018 (with special reference to paid paternity leave).

3.10.1. Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended in 2007

The Children's Act was promulgated in June of 2006 after the repealing of the Child Care Act of 1983 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2005). The main aim of the Act is to ensure the protection of the rights of children in South Africa. The Act seeks to ensure that the principle of the "best interest of a child" is prioritised. The Act is divided into 22 chapters and 315 sections; of importance to this study, is chapter 3, and particularly sections 20 to 24. Sections 20 and 21 outline the parental rights of married and unmarried fathers, respectively, while section 23 specifies the procedure that should be followed when claiming the paternity of a child (RSA, 2005). The Children's Act was an important legislative reform because it allowed unmarried fathers an inherent right of access to their children which they did not previously have (Beyl, 2013: 2).

According to section 20, two components qualify a father to have full parental responsibilities and rights. These are first if the biological father is married to the child's mother or secondly if he was married to the mother at the time of the child's conception, birth or between the child's conception and birth (RSA, 2005: 41). Matthias (2017: 97) terms these components under section 20 as automatic parental responsibilities and rights. Section 21 of the Act outlines criteria for unmarried biological fathers who do not meet the criteria as set out in section 20. To acquire full parental rights, a father must have been living with the mother in a life-partnership at the time of the child's birth (section 21(1)(a)) (RSA, 2015: 41). Otherwise, if the couple were not co-residing at the time of the child's birth, the father needs to satisfy certain requirements in order to acquire full parental rights. Firstly, the father needs to consent to be identified as a father, either by adding his name to the child's birth certificate or by taking a paternity test ordered by the court (section 26) or paying *inhlawulo*[5] in terms of customary law. Secondly, the father must be willing to contribute to the child's upbringing and towards the daily expenses.

[5] *Inhawulo:* A cultural practice whereby payment, usually offered in the form of cattle or money, is tendered by the father to the girl's or woman's family for impregnating her outside of marriage (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b: 75).

The introduction of the Children's Act has made great strides in promoting fatherhood involvement beyond the residence. For a long time, a perception existed in South Africa that the legal system through the family court makes it difficult for a father to sustain good relationships with his children. A study on the experiences of fathers denied paternity found that despite the amendment to the Children's Act, fathers are still largely denied access to their children (Matjila, 2019: 90). Khunou (2006) in her study "Fathers don't stand a chance" also found that all ten of the respondents of this study had attempted to gain access to their children, in some cases even through litigation. However, almost all respondents felt like they did not stand a chance, partly because officials of the family court never suspected women of lying and always questioned men's integrity and honesty. However, the South African government through the Children's Act recognises that co-parenting is extremely beneficial for children when it occurs in a non-violent parenting relationship. The Children's Act continues to be amended; in January 2017, the Children's Amendment Bill and Children's second Amendment Bill were assented to and published for public comment, and in 2018 Children's Third Amendment Bill was developed (DSD, 2018: 31; 2019: 31). Among other things, the amendment Bills were intended to regulate the position of the unmarried father.

3.10.2. White Paper on Families, 2012

The White Paper on Families (herein referred to as the White Paper) was approved by Parliament in 2013 and launched in October 2014 (Rabe, 2017: 1189). The Draft National Policy Framework for Families developed by the DSD in 2001 preceded the development of the White Paper (DSD, 2012: 7). From the outset, the Policy Framework on Families acknowledges the need to protect and support families through effective and efficient service delivery (Knijn & Patel, 2018; DSD, 2012: 7). In September 2011, Cabinet approved the Green Paper on Families and in October of the same year, the Paper was released for public comments and consultations with relevant stakeholders (DSD, 2012: 8). The Green Paper highlighted the need to strengthen families in South Africa while promoting family life. The Green Paper culminated in a White Paper on Families. This Policy was a significant milestone in the history of the country; among other things it recognised the diversity of family structures and the consequent needs of families (Rabe & Naidoo, 2015: 2). Significant to this study is the definition of family as outlined by the White Paper. The Paper defines a family as follows:

> A societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence (DSD, 2012: 11)

The latter part of this definition is particularly important because it recognises that it is possible for family relations to go beyond a residence (Rabe, 2018: 14) and as such, includes paternal involvement beyond the residence. Rabe (2018: 14.) captures it as follows: “it is clear that fatherhood in South Africa cannot be understood as mainly flowing from a nuclear family household where a married, heterosexual couple lives with their offspring.”

Section 4.3 of the White Paper outlines three strategic priorities and actions that government should embark on to support the family. The priority is “*Promotion of Healthy Family Life”;* action seven of this priority outlines the importance of encouraging father involvement in the upbringing of the child. The White Paper proposes to achieve this by a revision of the current law and social policy that limit fathers from actively participating in their children’s lives and replacing them with an environment that gives men an opportunity to provide care and support for their children. In response to this, the DSD has implemented a number of programmes, such as the Fatherhood Strategy, which were designed to revive and promote the role of fathers within families because parenting is the role of both parents. The White Paper also advocates for amendments to labour laws to include paternity leave and maintenance laws to enforce payment of child support grants by absent fathers. Finally, the White Paper wants to ensure equitable treatment of fathers in custody battles. Various policy developments in South Africa were created based on the recommendations of the White Paper on Families. Although the DSD has been criticised for failing to conduct widespread consultation on the White Paper, many academics, activists, and policymakers agree that this policy has changed the landscape of families in South Africa (Charles, 2013: 11).

3.10.3. Maintenance Amendment Act of 2015

In 1998, the South African government assented to the Maintenance Act after repealing the Maintenance Act of 1963 which was highly racialised (Khunou, 2006: 257). The Act is based on the parent’s duty to provide support. The Act aimed to prescribe parental rights and responsibilities, which include the responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of the child (Proudlock & Rohrs, 2018: 10). Therefore, it is through this Act that the maintenance system of South Africa was formed (RSA, 1998). According to Coutts (2014: 12–13), Khunou (2006: 2) and Proudlock and Rohrs (2018: 10), the South African maintenance system is based on two pillars, the grant system (public), and the legal duty to support (private judicial). The role of the public system is to provide child support grants to poor children under the age of 16 in accordance with the Social Assistance Act of 2004 (as amended), while the private judicial

system emphasises the obligation by both parents (emphasis on both) to pay for accommodation, food and other essentials for their children.

The South African judicial system has been heavily criticised over the last 20 years for, among other things, its neglect in tracking and tracing absent fathers who do not pay regular maintenance, leading poor women to resort to the public grant system for support (Coutts, 2014: 12). Secondly, the shortage of capable, well-trained and skilled maintenance officers and investigators (Proudlock & Rohrs, 2018: 10). Khunou (2006: 2) also asserts systemic challenges such as delays in the finalisation of cases and files getting lost. Following the amendment process, in September 2015, Parliament approved the Maintenance Amendment Act of 2015 (Proudlock & Rohrs, 2018: 10). The Amendment Act is tailored to address the systemic challenges stated above and grants maintenance officers the right to submit details of maintenance defaulters to the credit bureau. Thirdly, in order to trace maintenance defaulters whose whereabouts are unknown, the courts can now approach network providers to obtain the cell phone numbers of these defaulters (RSA, 2015). If implemented effectively, the maintenance system has the potential to drastically reduce the number of maintenance defaulters in South Africa, reduce child poverty, and provide relief to the state's grant system. The functioning of the mother-only household could fare better if employed maintenance defaulters are successfully tracked down and payment is enforced.

3.10.4. Labour Laws Amendment Act, 10 of 2018 (Paternity Leave)

The call for South Africa to include in its labour laws paternity leave for new fathers has been ongoing for a number of years. Extensive research has been conducted in South Africa and many other countries around the world on the positive impact that paternity leave will have on fatherhood and fatherhood involvement, the wife/partners and older children (MenCare, 2014; Heilman et al., 2017; Levtov et al., 2015). According to Levtov et al. (2015: 107), based on data on paternity leave collected in 141 countries across the world in 1994, only 41 made provision for paternity leave; this constitutes 29 percent. In 2013, about 78 of 167 sampled countries made provision for paternity leave (this constitutes 47%). Paternity leave is defined as *"a short-term entitlement for fathers only that enables them to take time out from work immediately after the birth or adoption of a child. This period is generally intended to enable the father to spend time with and assist his partner, new child and older children (emphasis added)"* (MenCare, 2014: 3). Until recently, fathers in South Africa were not granted paternity leave; they only had three days of family responsibility leave (Roodt, 2018). In November 2018, the new Labour Law Amendment Act was signed into law; under this Act new fathers are entitled to 10 days of paid paternity leave (RSA, 2018).

As stated, paternity leave has many benefits for fathers and families in general. Martin, Hall and Lake (2018: 119) argue that the introduction of paid paternity leave could give fathers a sense of the legislative value of the role they play in the upbringing of their children and this could promote father involvement. Evidence also suggests that a well-designed leave structure is one of the crucial steps toward achieving gender equality in care work (Heilman, et al., 2017: 52).

3.11. Conclusion

There are a number of realities that affect father factors; for the interest of this study I have outlined three; the father's experience of being fathered, father's employment status and commitment to fathering. Swartz and Bhana (2009) claim that young fathers' experience of being fathered is an important predictor of how they turn out as fathers themselves. However, Swartz et al. (2009) also found that young fathers growing up with non-resident fathers are likely to use this as a motivation to be present in their children's lives. Lobaka (2017) also argued that the historical times in which we live make it favourable for fathers to play an active role in their children's upbringing. A father's employment status is another aspect that may affect the father–child relationship, with a number of studies having found that men often feel emasculated when they are unable to fulfil the provider expectation and as a result alienate themselves from the children (Eddy et al., 2013; Richter et al., 2010). Children also feel frustrated when their father fails to live up to the provider expectation (Lobaka, 2017).

The important role that fathers play in the general upbringing of their children is evident from the research conducted across the globe. Literature suggests that the role fathers play in the lives of their children is essential for a child's cognitive development. Therefore, it is undeniable that fathers matter for child development. This chapter has also shown that fathers are becoming more involved in unpaid care work than ever before in history. Furthermore, South Africa has joined other countries in the world in developing policies that support and promote the health of families. These include the Children's Act, the White Paper on South African Families and Maintenance Act, as well as the recent and notable policy development is the Labour Laws Act, which grants fathers ten days paternity leave at the birth or adoption of their children. This is important because it encourages father involvement from an early age and takes into consideration the role of a father in the child's well-being. This chapter also elucidated on the constant changes in the concept of fatherhood over time. As noted above, fathers' roles have changed from being moral guides to being protectors and providers and now fathers are assuming a more caring role. It is therefore important to qualitatively unpack

and understand the quality of care provided by fathers from different settings, backgrounds and ethnicities, as well as the factors that hinder contact between fathers and children. The next section outlines the methodology followed in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion on the qualitative methodological approach employed in this study which is embedded within the life course perspective. This approach is essential as it focuses on an actor's meanings by providing information, personal stories and lived experiences; it also provides a description and emphasis on context (Gray, 2004; Becker & Bryman, 2009). Furthermore, I chose the life course perspective to examine the role of non-resident fathers in, and their contribution to, raising children over the life course. The research design is outlined by focusing on the sampling and population of the study, describing the research method, giving an overview of the data collection techniques utilised and discussing issues related to validity. This chapter will be concluded by providing a summary of the research settings, inclusive of the demographic details of the participants and the possible impact of my personal values, principles, and judgement on the results of the study using a reflexive account.

4.2. Research design

"The plan of how to proceed in identifying the nature of the relationship between variables is called a study design" (Maree, 2008: 291). It is critical that the design chosen is suitable for answering the research questions posed (Imas & Rist, 2009). The main goal of a research design is to provide an in-depth understanding of the sampled group, the distribution of the research areas, and the events that occur before, during and after the research is concluded (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

4.2.1. Orientation to the research sites

A number of organisations that work with fathers and families were identified as potential agents for the recruitment of the participants for this study and I subsequently approached them. These organisations included the National and Pretoria offices of the Families of South Africa (FAMSA), Sonke Gender Justice, the Pretoria Magistrate's Offices, the Children's court division, Office of the Family Advocate, and the local and National Department of Social Development (DSD). In order to gain access to non-resident fathers, the managers of men and fathers who were clients and/or beneficiaries of these organisations were approached. The first point of contact in most of these organisations was with the personal assistants to the managers. The initial contact was conducted through a telephone call to the

establishments followed by an email containing the recruitment letter and the UNISA ethical clearance document. In cases where I received a favourable response, I would then organise a meeting with the managers in charge of the assigned personnel. Unfortunately, not all organisations approached replied favourably, for instance, despite repeated contact with the Pretoria Magistrate's Court, I failed to gain access. Similarly, in the local FAMSA offices, I was referred to the National FAMSA offices as a point of entry and I was taken back and forth between the two offices with no commitment from the officials to assist. The DSD assigned a social worker responsible for the Families Unit and the coordination of the department's Men Forum to assist with the recruitment. The official provided some useful advice and a number of leads of potential participants. However, during the meetings with this social worker it was clear that he was overburdened with work, to the extent that he was reluctant to assist with the research. Additionally, to assist with the recruitment the department sent an email circular to the entire staff requesting those eligible to participate in the study. The email included a recruitment letter detailing the objectives of the study and the targeted population, as well as the approved letter signed by the Director-General permitting me to recruit participants within the Department (see Appendixes B and C respectively).

Following our meeting with the assigned social worker in Social Development, we engaged in an informal discussion, where he took me through some of the challenges that he experiences being a non-resident father himself. This was one of the many informal discussions I had with fathers across the country. Men seemed willing to share their experiences of being non-resident fathers and others provided advice on the direction in which I should take this study.

4.2.2. Research population and sampling

In order to gain a rich set of descriptive data on the role of non-resident fathers in the upbringing of their children, a sample of men that cut across different ages, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic groups had to be selected. A total of 23 men participated in this study over 12 months, seven of whom were invited for follow-up interviews, bringing the total to 30 interviews conducted.[6] The population of men who participated in this study was non-resident Black African fathers[7] between the ages of 24 and 54 years residing in six townships around

[6] It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown implemented from March to September 2020 had a major impact to this study. Among other things, some planned face-to-face interviews were postponed while others were converted to telephonic or MS Teams interviews.

[7] Worth noting is that a number of non-resident White South African fathers felt excluded in this study and many expressed an interest of being included in such studies in the future. Such a recommendation is made in the recommendation section for future researchers to consider.

Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Although I was able to make some key inferences from this population, the findings cannot be generalised beyond the research sample (Imas & Rist, 2009. Fatherhood has been widely studied both in western and non-western countries, however the voices of men seem to be missing in many cases. Furthermore, owing to the large number of potential participants falling within the identified population, it would not be plausible to include all the fathers within the identified age group. I chose an exploratory qualitative approach to allow the participants of this study to actively reflect on their role in the upbringing of their children as non-resident fathers and their experiences of fathering in light of the circumstances surrounding paternal involvement beyond the residence.

I used non-probability purposive and snowball sampling. The purpose of this sampling method was to select units of analysis based on the research and the aims of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The recruitment was conducted with the assistance of the management of the identified institutions. Purposive sampling was extremely beneficial to the overall aim of the study because it made it possible to deliberately recruit men from various backgrounds. In addition, snowball sampling had the advantage that I could reach other fathers not associated with the identified organisations. Accordingly, at the conclusion of every interview I asked participants to recommend a person or persons they might know who would fit the selection criteria discussed above. In all interviews, participants were more than willing to refer at least one potential participant. In the end, more than half of the participants of this study were recruited through snowball sampling. One participant with the pseudonym “Amazing Dad” even invited me to join their WhatsApp group named PACE 50/50.[8] I was able to recruit three participants from this group and was invited to join a men’s dialogue on the challenges fathers face in gaining access to their children. Through this dialogue, I would be allowed to explain the purpose of my study to the attendees and recruit those falling within the targeted population. However, this session was cancelled owing to the country’s national lockdown.

Statistics show that the number of people on social media platforms such as Facebook has increased tremendously over the past few years. For example, according to Ornico (2019), the number of Facebook users stands at 21 million in South Africa, with Pretoria users standing at 3.2 million. This makes social media platforms a great source of recruitment in social science research. I used social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp as part of the recruitment. On each platform, I called on persons interested in joining the study to

[8] PACE 50/50 is a WhatsApp group of men and women who fight for shared custody of children regardless of the parent’s circumstances. The participants of these group are fathers of different races, from different backgrounds and ethnic groups but have one thing in common – they are all fighting custody of their children

contact me, and I created a post detailing the purpose of the study and the profile of the participants required. Additionally, I requested permission to recruit participants from the group administrators of the following Facebook groups: The Fathers' Rights Movement, Child Welfare South Africa, Father's Right South Africa and Dads in the Picture; and from the WhatsApp groups: PACE 50/50 and Young African Leadership Institute (YALI) Men Dialogue. These groups were approached mainly because they promote advocacy for the rights of non-resident fathers; as such, members of the groups are mainly men who fit the research profile. Of these, three groups granted me permission to post on their walls. These posts were shared, liked and forwarded, but participants were only recruited from WhatsApp; the majority of men who showed interest in joining the study were outside the identified research areas. However, in an attempt to narrow down the study to Gauteng province, as per the original conceptualisation, potential participants who lived outside the identified areas were excluded.

4.2.3. In-depth interviews

The research method utilised in this study was in-depth interviews, mainly because as Lavrakas (2008) argues, these types of interview are the best method for minimising the non-response normally associated with the issuing of questionnaires and soliciting sensitive information from participants. The interviews were semi-structured which made it possible to probe the research questions while allowing the participants to convey their personal situations on some of the key issues. Rabe (2006: 89) clarifies that in-depth interviews often appear as an informal dialogue but the researcher needs to have the research objectives in mind at all times. Mayan (2001: 21) adds that in interviews a researcher must observe patterns in the data, ask questions of those patterns, construct conjectures, deliberately collect data on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, then continue analysis, asking additional questions, seeking more data, furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, constructing and testing conjectures, and so forth. I used the interview schedule (see Appendix D) and found it an apt tool in this regard; using the schedule, I was able to address key research questions while probing other related issues.

A total of 30 interviews with 23 participants were conducted over 12 months starting from August 2019 to August 2020. However, by the 17th interview data saturation was reached. I realised from the 15th interview onwards that the number of new and emerging themes was declining, and by the 17th interview no new theme emerged. In a bid to ascertain that saturation was reached, I conducted an additional four interviews with participants who were completely different in terms of age, cultural background, and economic and academic achievements (Saunders et al., 2018: 1893). However, these four interviews did not yield new

data either. The remaining nine interviews were dedicated to follow-up interviews meant to close some of the gaps identified during the initial interviews.

I used an interview schedule as a guide for all the interviews conducted, with the allocated time for each interview being between 30 and 45 minutes. While some interviews lasted less than 30 minutes, most lasted an hour and, in one case, two hours. One of the major factors for interviews going beyond the allocated time was the leeway I gave participants to go into detail about some of the challenges they experienced as non-resident fathers.

All interviews were audiotaped and field notes were taken as I observed distinctive aspects (such as changes in posture, heightened emotions on certain subjects, and the general mood in the room) that added to the verbal communication. These non-verbal cues were later incorporated in the transcriptions. In order to gain rich descriptive data, I asked participants to use the language of their choice. Accordingly, 20 of the 21 participants preferred to use English with the occasional addition of their home language, and only one person used Sesotho alone. Since I am Tswana speaking, it made it easier to follow the conversation with the participants and to probe using his chosen language.

In March of 2020, the country went into a nationwide lockdown as a measure of preventing the spread of COVID-19. This meant that all forms of physical contact were prevented during this time. This necessitated the use of different approaches to the in-depth interviews; as a result, the bulk of the interviews (ten in total) conducted between March and August 2020 were conducted virtually either through the use of Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp calls, or telephone calls. In order to ensure that the participants were able to follow the interview, I emailed a copy of the interview schedule an hour before the interview. Even though participants had access to the interview schedule, to allow for more spontaneity I ensured that the discussions were engaging and flowing rather than following the schedule rigidly. I conducted four follow-up interviews for the following reasons: In one interview, one of the participants raised a critical point, which was vital for this study at the end of the discussion. However, I was unable to probe further because of time, and so we arranged a follow-up interview. The second and the third follow-up interviews were on the request of the participants. The former requested the interview because he wanted to discuss the challenges of the maintenance system in South Africa. Although this was not directly related to this study, the discussion proved essential in understanding some of the frustrations some fathers experience. The last participant requested a follow-up interview in order to discuss some of the nuances of his relationship with his daughter that were not sufficiently covered in the first interview. Thirdly, in some instances, while I was analysing the transcripts, gaps were identified that required further

probing. Thus, participants were contacted telephonically to set up follow-up interviews. Finally, I was unable to complete one interview because the participant realised during the session that he was double-booked so the session had to be cut short. The advantage of this session is that the first interview was already transcribed, thus I was able to use the session to close some of the gaps identified.

4.2.4. Data analysis and interpretation

All interviews were transcribed within the first week after they were conducted. I appointed an assistant to help with transcripts; this measure was employed to expedite the transcribing process. In order to exercise oversight, I reviewed all transcripts and made the necessary corrections. Outsourcing the transcription process allowed me to focus on executing as many interviews as possible in an efficient manner. Transcripts are written verbatim, including the grammatical errors that the participants may have made, and the phraseology they used.[9] Audiotapes became an important tool in ensuring the effectiveness of the transcription. The process was tedious but important; I had to play, listen and pause the tapes and then transcribe the participants' exact words (Lester, Cho, & Lochmiller 2020). An open coding process followed this. In this process, I reviewed, interpreted and summarised the data without distorting it (Williman, 2011: 88). As such, during this process, the transcripts were carefully studied to identify recurring themes. This was followed by attaching brief notes to each code (Braun & Clark 2006). Once identified, these themes were compared with the themes outlined in the research schedule and the research proposal. This process aimed to verify the extent to which the two were similar and find a way to merge the two during the reporting phase. In the next step, the open codes were reduced to more specific and focused themes, also known as selective coding. Axial coding was finally used; in this coding process I was able to identify and select final themes and sub-themes.

4.3. Validity of measurements

According to Bernard (2011: 41–42), validity refers to the trustworthiness of the instruments, data and findings in research. This section embarks on a discussion of the process undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study.

[9] In most of the interviews, participants used what is commonly known in South Africa as "tsotsitaal". This is a type of slang used in townships around South Africa. It is derived from a combination of vernacular languages and is commonly used by Black South African men. I interpreted the use of this language in the interviews to suggest that participants were at ease and as such considered me a "bra" (a tsotsitaal word meaning "brother").

4.3.1. Trustworthiness

The term “trustworthiness” refers to the measure to which the quality of the research convinces the audience that the research study is worth paying attention to (Maree, 2008). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1981: 114) propose that four strategies can be used when testing for trustworthiness; these are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Credibility measures whether the data collected are believable, and transferability is concerned with whether the findings of one research study are relevant in a different setting to the one they were conducted in (Becker & Bryman, 2009; Maree, 2008). Dependability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which the reader is certain and convinced that the reported findings occur as the researcher says they occurred. Finally, conformability is the measure to which the researcher’s personal values interfered with the findings of the research (Becker & Bryman, 2009).

To establish the trustworthiness of the research findings, following the transcription process participants were provided with a copy of their transcripts to verify the correctness of the information captured. Only seven of the thirty transcripts were returned with corrections, while the other participants indicated their approval of the information captured. The seven transcripts had no major changes only correction of grammatical errors.[10] In order to ensure that transferability is established, detailed accounts of the research setting will be kept for a period of five years after the study is published as recommended by Becker and Bryman (2009). This includes all audio tapes and transcripts. Additionally, the entire process of this research has been recorded and will be kept in a safe repository for a period of five years. In order to enhance confirmability, I have documented the process of collecting and analysing the data in such a way that the reader may follow and understand the research process. Finally, in order to ensure dependability, I strived to distance my personal feelings and opinions from the study so that my personal values did not invade the research process. However, as a non-resident father, it was not easy to keep the research devoid of my personal feelings. This aspect will be discussed at length in the reflexivity section.

[10] Most of the participants were not keen on receiving the transcript for them to verify and many indicated at the end of the interview that they would rather read the full thesis. Some said casually, “I trust you will not misrepresent me”. This may be one of the reasons that only seven transcripts came back with comments.

4.3.2. Authenticity

According to Mogalakwe (2006: 224), “authenticity refers to whether the evidence is genuine and from impeccable sources”. There are five categories of authenticity, namely fairness, and ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical authenticity (Schwandt, 1997: 7; Johnson & Rasulova, 2016: 13). Fairness relates to the extent to which participants’ constructions and values are solicited, exposed and taken into account and that all viewpoints are represented even-handedly (Schwandt, 1997: 7). Ontological authenticity refers to the extent to which participants’ constructions are improved or have become more informed through their participation in the research (Johnson & Rasulova, 2016: 13). Schwandt, (1997: 7) defines educative authenticity as the extent to which participants develop understanding and appreciation of others. Catalytic authenticity refers to how participants’ behaviours are stimulated and facilitated through the research process. Finally, tactical authenticity refers to the extent to which participants are empowered to act (Schwandt, 1997: 7).

A number of measures were used to ensure the study's authenticity, the most important of which was continuous consultation with my supervisor. All of the transcriptions were sent to her for review and advice. This procedure allowed an outsider to examine the data and offer criticism, recommendations and insight. Second, during all interviews, field notes were gathered, which were examined and integrated into the transcriptions. Fairness was achieved by allowing participants to share their concerns without fear of stigma or judgement, and the participants were also informed that their real names would not be exposed in the study findings, as recommended by Schwandt (1997). These methods allowed individuals to share their opinions, no matter how contentious they may seem. The inquiry process involves the development of an effective grounded theory approach based on the formation of dialogical interactions among all participants in order to achieve ontological and educative authenticity. Catalytic and tactical authenticity are challenging to achieve since they require determining whether the interviews prompted participants to take action. During the interviews, however, participants were informed about the many options available to them for obtaining parental rights and responsibilities in line with the appropriate legislation.

4.4. Research ethics

In social research, it is important that before conducting a study all the participants must be fully informed of the study and that the necessary procedures and protocols be followed in obtaining the sample. General agreements between the researcher and the participants should be established before the data collection can commence. Research ethics places

interest in the humane and sensitive treatment of participants; it also helps prevent abuse of the participants by the researchers. There are a number of ethical considerations that social sciences consider important and the following are relevant for this study.

4.4.1. Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was granted by the University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Human Science on 19 June 2019. This application was reviewed in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and was granted on condition that I adhere to the values, principles and provisions set out in the policy. The DSD also issued a letter permitting me to recruit officials in the Department that fit the criteria. These letters are attached as Appendix A and B respectively. For organisations approached on social media, permission was granted through Facebook Messenger.

4.4.2. Anonymity and confidentiality

The principle of anonymity is largely linked with confidentiality. The difference between the two is that in anonymity, the researcher cannot identify a given response with a certain participant; confidentiality on the other hand implies that the researcher can identify the person giving the responses but promises not to do so publicly. In order to ensure that the principle of anonymity and confidentiality was upheld; I conducted all interviews on my own, and ensured that the participant did not mention their full names on tape. This also guarded against the transcriber's ability to identify the real names of the participants. Subsequently, the audiotape files were named using the participants' pseudonyms, and throughout the transcription process participants were referred by their chosen names. Additionally, the information was only shared with persons directly linked to the research. It is also worth noting that ten of the thirty interviews were conducted by cell phone, and three were conducted using Microsoft Teams software. In these cases, even I cannot physically identify the participants. The real names of the participants were also replaced with pseudonyms. I reserved the process of choosing pseudonyms for the participants. At the beginning of each interview, I requested participants to choose a name they would prefer to be referred to in this study. This was an easier exercise for some than it was for others. Most participants chose the first names they could think of, while others chose names of their favourite author and many simply wanted to be called by their names. Thus, in the case of a participant who chose to be referred to by the name of his favourite author, I simply used the first name of the author as his pseudonym; while for those who choose their own names, I later changed these names to a different pseudonym.

4.4.3. Informed consent

Informed consent implies that the research participants should be fully aware of the procedures of the research and the risk and benefits involved. In addition, it is essential that the participants know that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they choose to do so (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006: 142).

The research participants were given informed consent forms before the beginning of each interview (**Appendix E**). For telephonic interviews, the informed consent forms were sent via email along with the interview schedules. I insisted that where possible the forms were emailed back before the interview began, but this unfortunately did not always happen. In the latter case, I sought verbal consent at the beginning of the interview and requested that the form be forwarded at the participant's convenience. In all interviews, I explained the contents of the consent form to the participants in detail, assuring them that all information shared during the interview would be treated with the highest level of confidentiality, that their responses would not be linked to them, and that their real names would be replaced by the chosen pseudonyms.[11] I also made it clear to the participants that they had the right to either refuse to participate in the study or they could withdraw at any point in the interview without any negative consequences. This information was especially key for those participants recruited through the various organisations mentioned above. I ensured that no interview began without a signed consent form or verbal consent in the case of cell phone interviews.

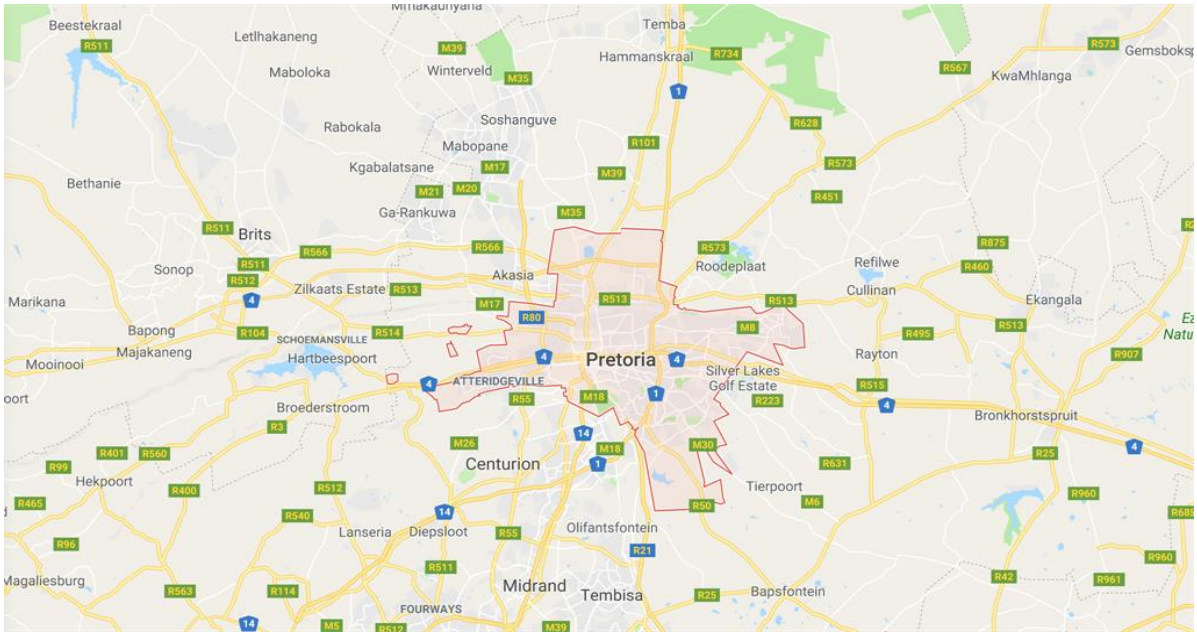
4.5. Description of the research sites

The research was conducted in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, commonly known as Tshwane, one of three metropolitan municipal areas in Gauteng. According to Raper (2004), Pretoria was founded in 1855 and in 1860 became the capital of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR; the South African Republic), consisting of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In 1961, on the declaration of a republic, Pretoria became the capital of the Republic of South Africa. On 5 December 2000, Pretoria municipality was renamed Tshwane following the amalgamation of local authorities in the surrounding areas. According to Statistics South Africa (2018), the population of Gauteng is 13 399 724, with Tshwane making up 3.2 million of the

[11] I found it interesting that on more than three occasions, participants were concerned about the protection of their information even before the interview commenced. In fact, in some instances the protection of the information was the condition of participants' participation. It was only on one occasion that the participant wanted to be referred to by his real name and surname because he wanted to further his cause.

population. Participants were sought from six townships across the Tshwane districts of Atteridgeville, Lotus Gardens, Hammanskraal, Mamelodi, Soshanguve and Silverton.

Figure 1: Pretoria Map



According to the Community Survey of 2016, 50.5 percent of the city's population is female, while 49 percent is between the age 20 and 49 years. Of note is the fact that roughly 63 percent of the population is working age (Statistics South Africa, 2018: 12). However, the Community Survey also reports that the unemployment rate in the city stood at 16 percent, with three percent falling into the discouraging work-seeker category. The key to the current study is the fact that the City of Tshwane had 3762 child-headed households and 37.5 percent female-headed households. The number of children and female-headed households justifies conducting this study in these chosen areas. The fact that fathers seem to be missing from the picture provides men with an opportunity to outline the role they play in the upbringing of their children beyond the residence. Nevertheless, as stated above, a number of men who participated in this study reported that their children are located outside Gauteng province.

4.6. Reflexivity

Polit and Beck (2012: 589) define reflexivity as a process of critically reflecting on oneself as a researcher by analysing one's personal values and principles that have the potential to interfere or affect the data collection and interpretation of the data. I am a non-resident father as well; as such, during the interview process, I firstly had to concede that one of my motivations for studying this topic emerged from my own frustration and experience as a non-

resident father. In lieu of this, I constantly had to guard against imposing my opinions, frustrations and experiences as a non-resident father on those of the participants. In doing this, I allowed the participants to lead their narratives and I followed their lead. It should be noted though, that my experience as a non-resident father greatly benefitted the discussions when talking to fathers who were uneasy, as I used the process of self-disclosure to encourage some participants to open up. This process was used minimally and with extreme caution to prevent abuse. Through self-disclosure, some participants perceived me as an insider.

In the process of conducting the interviews, I took for granted that being a Black South African non-resident father would automatically make me an insider. To show that the participants considered me to be an insider, they constantly referred to me as "*Bra*". Bra is a term of endearment used among friends to refer to each other as brothers. Furthermore, using this term suggested that the participants considered me either as one of their own or as having equal status. This allowed participants to be relaxed, open and engaged. However, in my case, I constantly navigated between being an insider and in some cases an outsider. Rabe (2003: 150) notes that

> The status of the social researcher as outsider or insider is neither static nor one-dimensional. To be an insider or an outsider is a fluid status [and] as a researcher you may initially be an outsider to a particular group, but as you spend more time with them, you become more an insider [the opposite is also true].

One of the key factors that made me an insider was the fact that I (like all my participants) am a non-resident father. I identified with some of the challenges, experiences and frustrations they felt raising children beyond the residence. My status as a non-resident father made me an insider, but I can also be seen as an outsider in some interviews because I was young enough to be some of the participants' son. I felt like a complete outsider in the interviews with many of the older participants in the study, mainly because despite the fact that I am a PhD candidate, these men had more experience of life. Rabe (2003: 154) terms this emic accounts. Additionally, it was extremely difficult discussing issues of fatherhood with these older men considering that some had fathered children through infidelity. Hence, I had to contend with my own feelings during some of the interviews. For instance, I found it extremely difficult to sit across from some of these men who were old enough to be my father and discuss the most intimate part of their lives. It was awkward because, to an extent, it felt like I was discussing my own father's infidelity which, after 17 years, I still have not dared to discuss with him. Some literature on qualitative research indicates that the researcher should remain objective, however, Perry, Thurston and Green (2014) maintain that researchers are human beings; as such their personal experiences and emotions will inevitably form part of the subject of the

study. I faced the difficult task of remaining unbiased and had to avoid projecting my own feelings onto the participant's narrative.

I also found that some responded to the question "*how did you become a non-resident father?"* with some level of difficulty because it meant they were divulging these intimate details with a "child" (me as the researcher compared to older participants). To a certain extent, the age and the educational difference were detrimental to the participants sharing information and/or asking for information. As mentioned above, some of the older participants in this study responded to some questions with scepticism, noting my age. Some participants enjoyed explaining to the "naïve researcher" but for others, the idea of cultural taboos inhibited the discussion. After all, it is unheard of in some traditions for a child to ask an older person about issues such as infidelity, fathering out of wedlock, and promiscuity. In this regard, one of the shortest interviews I had was with an older participant in this study; he simply responded to the questions disclosing as little information as possible. Moreover, some older participants perceived this as a teaching moment, using the interviews to guide me on things to avoid as a non-resident father.

4.7. Demographic characteristics of participants

A total of 23 fathers participated in these in-depth interviews across the six townships of Pretoria indicated above. In order to explore the diverse views of South African fathers on fatherhood beyond the residence, the age groups ranged from 24 to 62. Of these, 13 fathers were between the ages of 25 and 65; followed by 10 who were between 24 and 34 years old. In line with the inclusion criteria all participants satisfied the following criteria;

- They were all Black South African fathers.
- One or more of these men's children resided in a different household.
- All the participants are based in Pretoria.

Table 1 (see, **Table 1 in appendices**) shows that the majority of the study participants referred to their marital status as being single, while three indicated they were single but cohabitating. However, it should be noted that all the participants indicated being in some sort of romantic relationship. Other participants (5) reported being married with one reporting remarriage. The re-partnering phenomena and its impact on the lives of some of these men will be discussed at length in later chapters. Five of the six participants who are married either fathered a child before marriage or during their current marriages. In only one case was the father still married to the mother, but the family had decided that the children should remain with their maternal

grandparents. The motivator for this decision was so that the parents could advance their careers in Gauteng.

Table 1 also shows that the majority of the study participants were diverse in their academic and career accomplishments in their various fields. The most academically accomplished participant has a PhD in Mathematical Science and is a former lecturer. The other participants' qualifications ranged from master's degrees to matriculation certificates. Equally, among the participants were government managers, architects and drivers, as well as those who were self-employed and unemployed. This variety makes for an interesting comparison of fathers to provide insight into non-resident fatherhood in Tshwane.

The question was posed on the movements of children since birth. This was to explore the extent to which fathers have been physically present in the lives of their children over a prolonged period. Furthermore, the question was meant to discover the primary caregivers of the children. Most fathers reported that their children had always lived with the same primary caregivers. Primary caregivers are in most cases the mother and/or the maternal grandparents (**see Table 2, in Appendices**). It was only in three instances where the paternal grandparents were primary caregivers and in two of the three cases, the mother was deemed unfit by the court to care for the children, thus the father was granted full custody. In both cases, the mother lives and works in a different city (Durban[12] and Ottosdal[13] respectively). In the final case, the child was born on the paternal family's side while the couple was still cohabitating; following the separation, the paternal grandmother refused to grant custody back to the mother. At the time of this study, the child was 12 years old and still residing with the grandmother.

In almost all the cases of younger fathers in this study (between 20 and 34), their children resided outside Gauteng province. The provinces where the children of the participants lived included rural areas in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and North West. This is consistent with Statistics South Africa's report on migrant populations which states that Gauteng is a hub for internal migrants from Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and North West (Statistics South Africa, 2019b: 10). Many of these fathers travel in search of employment, business opportunities or tertiary education. Many reported having fathered their children while they were still young and thus came to Pretoria in search of better lives for themselves and their children.

[12] Durban is a coastal city in the eastern part of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal. The city is commonly known by its metropolitan city name eThekwini.
[13] Ottosdal is a small town in the centre of the North West province in South Africa.

One of the contact persons mentioned that male social workers who are non-resident fathers and working for the DSD fear possible reputational damage if their ex-partners were to report them for poor child support. The contact person was himself a non-resident father and in this discussion, many interesting dynamics of non-resident fatherhood emerged. It is unfortunate that being the contact person, I could not request the social worker to participate in the study. However, I used his perspective as that of an expert and the information shared was useful for how I framed my question in subsequent interviews. Two other experts approached me, hoping to provide their expert opinions on the subject; one was a custody lawyer in the PACE 50/50 group, and the other was the author of a book. The advice of some of these experts was beneficial in assisting me with the interviews that followed. However, since many were experts in a particular field, i.e. maintenance cases, I had to guard against allowing their influence to guide the discussions I would later have with the participants.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter outlined in depth the methodological orientation and research design employed in this study. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of challenges were encountered, which this chapter discussed at length. The chapter also discussed the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the study. A full profile of both the participants of the study and the geographic location where the study was conducted was given. The chapter also contained an honest reflection of my experiences and observations throughout the data collection process. The next three chapters will provide an analysis of the data collected through a number of identified themes. The first of the three chapters will cover the challenges fathers experience in their bid to be involved in the raising of their children.

CHAPTER FIVE
Responsible fathering and caregiving role

> *"I came to understand the importance of fatherhood through its absence – both in my life and in the lives of others. I came to understand that the hole a man leaves when he abandons his responsibility to his children is one that no government can fill. We can do everything possible to provide good jobs and good schools and safe streets for our kids, but it will never be enough to fully make up the difference."* – President Barack Obama, June 19, 2009

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 5, I seek to understand the caregiving roles that fathers play in the upbringing of their children throughout the life course. Various studies define father presence as the ability and deliberate intention of a father to be physically and emotionally present (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b; Lobaka, 2017). Human (2018) posits that this includes the father's ability to be responsive to the child's physical and emotional needs. This, amongst other things, implies the ability to adapt to the maturational changes in the child. However, the strongest indicator of father presence includes the quality and quantity of father–child interactions (National Center on Father and Families, 2001: 9). To this end, this chapter responds to the main question of the study, which is: *What caregiving roles do non-resident biological fathers play in raising their children over a life course*? The chapter explores the positive and/or negative roles that fathers play in the raising of their children. In keeping with the theory and main question of this study, the role fathers play in their children's upbringing over the life course of the child will be explored. This will include the activities that fathers engage in with their children, especially when they spend time alone with them. This element of parenting is key, because it explores whether non-resident fathers are able to participate in other areas of their children's lives beyond monetary provision.

The life course perspective will be emphasised in this chapter, by among other things tracing the participants' involvement in their children's lives from the fathers' perspective, from birth until the time when this study was conducted. The chapter continues with an analysis of the characteristics of the men in this study, including their employment status and academic qualifications. Furthermore, this chapter will elucidate the economic status of the participants of this study, mainly because financial, employment and educational status are regarded as key factors for non-resident and/or absent fatherhood in South Africa (Mavungu et al., 2013; Ramphele & Richter, 2006).

The next section of this chapter will cover the participants' conceptualisations of the term "responsible fathering". The aim of this study is to contribute to the growing literature on responsible fathering in a southern African context. A working definition for responsible fatherhood includes providing social capital, emotional support and caregiving roles to the child and/or the mother (Morrell, 2006). As such, participants were approached with a conceptualised definition of responsible fatherhood based on wide previous research on the subject. The main aim of this approach was to examine the differences and/or similarities in the participants' definitions and the widely accepted definition in the literature. This section of the chapter responds to the second subsidiary question of this study, which is: *What are the indicators of responsible fathering in a South African context?* In order to define responsible fathering in a South African context three questions were asked during the interviews:

1. *What is your understanding of the term "responsible father*?"
2. *In your view what constitutes a responsible father*? And
3. *Do you consider yourself a responsible father*?

5.2. Background information on the fathers

The section below covers background information on the participants of this study. It outlines the ages of the participants, their highest qualifications and their employment status. This background is meant to reflect the inclusivity criteria discussed in the methodology chapter.

5.2.1. Participants' characteristics

As indicated in the methodology chapter, a total of 23 fathers participated in this study whose ages ranged from 24 to 62 years old. Ten of the 23 men in this study had a postgraduate degree (honours, BTech, master's or of PhD), while six men had a diploma and two men a first degree. The remaining four men indicated having completed their matriculation (Grade 12). During the data collection phase of this study, twenty of the 23 men were employed in the formal sector, either as blue-collar or white-collar workers. The remaining three were neither in education nor in formal employment or training. Some of participants occupied entry-level posts such as an internship, administrative work or middle and senior management. All the fathers reported having left their home provinces to seek employment in Gauteng province.

5.2.2. Children fathered by the participants

Key to the background information on the men was to ascertain the number of biological children fathers had and to determine the primary caregivers of these children. I also

questioned men on the number of women they had children with. The aim of the questions was to explore the dynamics surrounding each child fathered by a different father. A total of 49 children were fathered by the 23 men in this study, with 42 mothers (the table below depicts the age groups of children fathered by the participants of the study). Of these only seven children co-resided with the father. The study also shows that of the 49 children, only nine were conceived within a marital union. Some participants indicated that their children were either living with their mothers (in some instance with the mother's new spouse). In three cases (Zamile, Pat and Etsile), the children resided with the maternal grandparents. These configurations are not unexpected as the General Household Survey of 2017 found that approximately 59.3 percent of South African families live in an extended or three generational form.

The majority of the participants in this study fathered a child who were under the age of 12 years old at the time of the study. A number of children fathered by the men in this study were of legal age (18 years and above). The study found that the age of the child plays a role in father involvement. In the case of maternal gatekeeping, older children are more likely than younger children to develop a relationship with their fathers despite the mother's disapproval. Additionally, telephonic contact tends to increase as the child gets older.

5.2.3. Frequency of contact

In their study, Lesch and Kelapile (2015: 3) argued that mothers are often seen as possessing the power to restrict their ex-partners from having frequent contact with their children. Lesch and Kelapile (2015: 3) continue that the restriction of the father–child relationship by mothers is believed to be more prevalent in children younger than 18. The findings of the current study indicate two extremes in the question of fathers' frequency of contact with their children; the first being that there are fathers who have not been in physical or telephonic contact with their children for a number of years. On the other hand, there are fathers who have frequent contact with their children. These fathers reported having contact with their children either through physical visits or through telephone conversations. For instance, Itu reported visiting his child in Limpopo once month and he had frequent telephonic contact with the child, while Benny spoke to his child almost every day on the phone and also collected the child every weekend for a visit. This is similar to Cedric who spoke to his children every day using telephonic and video calling, he also visited his children every second weekend. However, fathers like Amazing Dad for example did not have contact with particular children for extended periods. Fathers also reported the distance between where they currently reside and where their children reside as one of the reasons they are unable to maintain consistent physical contact

with their children. Molefe explained that he struggled to visit one of his children as often as he would like because the child lives in Bloemfontein, Free State province; a five-hour drive from Centurion, Gauteng province, where Molefe lives.

Fathers like Tumelo were granted access to their children through the drawing up of a parental plan.[14] This plan allowed Tumelo's daughter to visit every second weekend, while Khumo had access to his child every weekend but had to collect and return the child every Friday and Saturday. In the case of most fathers, children were unable to go to Pretoria to visit, firstly because some fathers were neither married nor cohabiting, and were thus unable to care for their children during the week because of work commitments. Secondly, considering that most of the fathers in this study had children under the ages of 12, it was difficult for children to travel long distances without adult supervision. In addition, as illustrated in the case of Tumza, some mothers tend to be reluctant to allow their children to visit when the father has entered into a new relationship. However, as children become older they begin to make their own decisions; this worked in the favour of Zondo. When I questioned him about the frequency of contact now that all his children were either teenagers or young adults, he responded as follows:

> **Zondo***: My daughter from my first marriage and I try to make time to also see each other whenever we can. It helps me now because she is grown up. When she was young… ey I struggled because I didn't have access.*

This was unfortunately not the case for fathers like Sello and Johnny who reported that the conflict with their ex-partners had spilled over into their relationships with their children. As such, their daughters had taken the decision to live within the boundaries set by the mothers.

5.2.4. Residential arrangements

The family dynamics of the participants, with a particular focus on their living arrangements, their marital status and the number of residential and non-residential children, also received attention. The majority of the men in this study live and work in Pretoria with a few working in

[14] Mahlobongwane (2013: 218) defines a parenting plan as plan that is agreed upon by two parents who have parental responsibility and rights in respect of their child. He continues that there is no obligation for parties who have the rights and responsibility to the child to agree to a parenting plan. Section 33(1) of the children court explicitly states that both parents [may] agree on a parenting plan. Finally, South Africa introduced the concept of a parenting plan mainly to move away from the child-custody system that seems to favour women over men.

nearby cities such Johannesburg. However, most participants indicated that their children reside in other provinces and the distance tends to affect frequent physical father–child contact. Children's places of residence included the following provinces: Limpopo, North West, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape. Owing to the distances between some of the towns in the rural areas in which some of the children live, it is especially difficult for fathers who have to rely on public transport to visit their children. Fathers of children older than five years alluded to having a certain level of telephonic contact, while fathers of adolescents and young adults, such as France and Zondo, reported that their contact with their children (physical or telephonic) had improved as their children grew older.

5.3. Indicators of responsible fatherhood

Levine and Pitt (1995) offer four major elements of responsible fathering, namely: 1) delaying the process of fathering a child until one is emotionally mature, has financial stability and physically ready; 2) seeking to establish the paternity of the child when finding out one has impregnated someone; 3) providing continuous emotional and physical support to the mother during and after pregnancy; and 4) sharing with the mother the financial responsibility for raising the child. In addition, the first White Paper on Families in South Africa makes reference to four readiness continua, namely emotional readiness, physical readiness, financial readiness and structural readiness (DSD, 2013: 40). These four factors are defined as follows:

> *Emotional readiness* refers to the ability of the prospective parents to cope with the demands of a new baby.
> *Physical readiness* refers to the ability of the prospective parents' bodies to withstand the stress of pregnancy as well as the stress of caring for a newborn.
> *Financial readiness* refers to the prospective parents' ability to meet the expenses involved in the birth of a child.
> *Structural readiness* refers to the prospective parents' ability to raise their child in a home that is close to a clinic or hospital, as well as to provide care and educational resources.

However, these are not always practical in South Africa and in many other contexts the world over, especially in developing countries, mainly because in these countries children are born out of wedlock and from teenage fathers, establishing the paternity of a child is too expensive for fathers to afford, relationships tend to end before the child is born thus fathers are unable to get involved in the pregnancy, and poverty and unemployment make it difficult for fathers to provide financially for their children(Langa & Smith 2012; Madiba & Nsiki).

Many South African men (as elsewhere in the world) have fathered children despite these"readiness" checks. Therefore, there is a need to unpack the indicators that constitute positive or responsible fathering from a South African context. This section addresses the research question: *"What are the indicators of responsible fathering in a South African context?* Three sub-questions were asked during the interview with the aim of determining participants' general understanding of the term "responsible fathering", their views on the indicators of a responsible father, and whether or not they considered themselves to be responsible fathers.

5.4. Types of father

The participants' responses suggested that men's understanding of what constitutes a responsible father in the South African context is very different from the one defined above. Participants in this study seemed to have a general understanding of what constitutes a responsible father. Accordingly, the responses are divided into three categories of fathers, which I have termed the financial provider, Santa Claus and the involved father.

5.4.1. The financial provider

Some participants believed that the most essential role a father should play in his child's development is as a financial provider. In almost all of the responses, financial provision was cited as one of the primary role indicators pointing to responsible fatherhood, with fathers also believing that their role extended beyond financial responsibility. This supports the findings of the Commission for Gender Equality, (2021) and Heartlines (2020) studies, which show that men's perceptions of fathers as breadwinners are still strongly ingrained. This coincides with Rabe's (2006) argument that in South Africa, the construction of fathers as financial providers is still a dominant role linked to fatherhood. However, the timing of fatherhood has diversified over the life course (Cabrera, et al., 2000: 132). This implies that the link between the timing of employment and the timing of parenting has weakened over time. Men continue to enter into fatherhood regardless of their employment status. This can be seen in the prevalence of teenage fatherhood in South Africa (Hendricks, Swartz & Bhana, 2014).

The current study found that the men's ability to be providers is still regarded as one of the key activities that a father should perform. Men define their fatherhood based on the financial support they are able to provide to their children – activities such as paying school fees, buying clothes and medical expense were outlined vividly. Itu, Benny, Cedric and Tumelo all had a

similar story of what a father should do to be considered a responsible father. The four participants believed that a father's primary responsibility is to provide for his child's financial requirements. Itu referred to this as providing for a child's physical requirements such as clothing and food. Cedric broadened the financial duty of the father to include the ability to meet the child's medical and educational needs, and Tumelo felt that a father should be capable of caring for his family in general.

> **Itu:** *I think a father, who is responsible is someone who is taking care of child; catering for child needs such as clothes and food.*
>
> **Benny:** *First and foremost, a father should always make sure that he provides for his children, that is what I am doing. I am always there for my child financially.*
>
> **Cedric:** *A father should be involved financially, in terms of the financial needs of his kids. Financial needs obviously for me, he is able to provide money for groceries, money for medical aid, money for schooling or any other need they require.*
>
> **Tumelo:** *Involvement is a rather broad term. However, in this context it means being there for your child financially and providing for her and the family.*

The provision of financial resources is critical to the child's upbringing. However, in low-income countries like South Africa, defining responsible fatherhood solely on the basis of a father's financial provision poses a challenge, especially because the country has a high unemployment rate, which often limits a father's ability to provide for his children over the course of their lives. For example, according to the third quarter labour force survey, South Africa's unemployment rate has grown to 35.3 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2022: 6). Of interest to this study is the fact that the unemployment rate among men stands at 32.8 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2022: 31). To this end, research in South Africa reveals that in instances where a father cannot provide financially for his children, he may feel left embarrassed and may disengage from his children (Madhavan et al., 2014: 453).

5.4.2. The Santa Claus father

The research revealed a particular kind of father who disappears from his children's lives for months or even years, and when he reappears, he brings gifts to compensate for his absence, much like the mythic creature Santa Claus. Santa Claus is a mythical figure commonly known in some parts of the world as “Father Christmas”. Many legends, stories and fairy tales told to

children by adults suggest that Santa Claus lives in the North Pole and only comes to town once every year to deliver gifts to children. Santa Claus type fathers try to compensate for their absence by buying expensive gifts for their children or utilising the time with their children for games, movies and malls. The Santa Claus father refers to fathers who attempt to make up for time lost with their children by giving them gifts and buying everything their children ask for. According the findings of this study, such non-resident fathers spend the majority of their time with their children buying gifts, ordering takeout, or doing enjoyable activities. Children also appear to expect expensive items from their fathers when they are gone for long periods of time. Mothers, according to the participants, are friendlier to non-resident fathers when it comes to salary dates and when maintenance payments are made. As a result, the Santa Claus father appears in three ways: first, as a result of the father's need to make up for his extended absences from the child's life; second, by children taking advantage of their father's absence to obtain financial goods; and third, by women who only acknowledge that men are parents near the end of the month when it is time to pay child maintenance.

> **Cedric:** *My children seem to approach me only when they want nice stuff like [such as] takeaways or to the movies and I find it difficult to say no, because I am not with them all the time. So, when they ask, I feel obliged to give them what they ask.*

The children's maternal grandparents raise Cedric's children while he and his wife pursue their careers in Pretoria. He posits that his absence makes it difficult for him to connect with his children on all levels, because they are only comfortable asking him to take them to fun activities. What stood out from this conversation is the fact that Cedric feels obligated to give in to his children's requests because he is absent during the week. Amongst other things, Cedric mentioned during the interview that the only child he seems to be close to is his last child who is three years old. Cedric defines this closeness based on the time he spends with his son in conversation. The Santa Claus type father continually feels the need to satisfy his children's needs for material things as a compensatory measure. It would appear from the interview that Cedric did not make a sustained attempt to connect with his other children; rather he waited for them to interact with him. Amongst other things, he mentioned that when his children need things such as school uniforms, or want to go out with friends, they ask for his permission through their mother.

> **Pat:** *He constantly wants nice things from me, but when I say come wash my car, he refuses. When I tell him that since you do not want to wash my car, I do not owe you anything, he sees this a lack of love from me and I am trying to instil in him the thing of working for your earnings.*

Pat, like Cedric, believes that his child takes advantage of the fact that he is mostly absent to wants to extort unreasonable material resources from him. Failure to supply these items is frequently interpreted as a lack of affection or love. He observed that his son frequently misinterpreted his efforts to instil a work ethic as a lack of affection. This was exacerbated by the fact that Pat's son lived in Limpopo with his maternal grandmother, and Pat was unable to visit him on a regular basis. He also mentioned that his son and his wife were constantly at odds, and that his son rarely visited Pretoria. In this situation, his son thought of Pat as a Santa Claus-like father. Pat's inability to return home on a regular basis appears to have been used by the son, who appeared to demand expensive clothes.

> **Peter:** *The kids can love you only because you give them money, so in a way wena ekare [it seems like] you buy love, so their love is linked to the money you give. My kids see me as a lovable guy, because I give them money or buy them stuff.*

Peter believed that his children only love a father when he gives them money, and he stated that it seemed like he was buying his children's love. Mavungu et al. (2013) classify this type of father as "ATM fathers". These fathers are viewed purely as financial and material providers.

5.4.3. The involved father

The psychosocial benefits of early father involvement for both children and mothers are well documented in literature (Adebiyi, Goldschmidt, Benjamin, Sonn & Roman, 2021: 3; Cabrera & Tamis-Lemonda, 2013; Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020). The field of psychology research shows that father involvement is essential for the child's cognitive and emotional development (Adebiyi et al., 2021, p. 12; Cano et al., 2019; Hsin, 2009). The education field posits that father involvement is essential for children's positive educational outcomes and linguistic development (Khewu & Adu, 2015: 6; Hebrard, 2017). In this study, fathers acknowledged that their role far exceeded merely providing financial support, but most admitted that they were unable to perform all fathering roles because they are non-resident fathers. Participants focused on the need for a responsible father to support the child emotionally and physically. Furthermore, participants were keen to spend more quality and quantity time with their children and many lamented the fact that being non-resident fathers limited their ability to bond with their children. These fathers were spending more time engaging in activities with their children, although these activities usually consisted of play and leisure activities. The findings also show that South African fathers are beginning to embrace the "new father" conceptualisation (see section 3.7). Fathers in this study shared stories of the caring role they played in raising their

children. Part of this was being involved in care work that would traditionally be reserved for women such as bathing children, taking children to school, and spending time in conversation with children regardless of the age. Fathers also sought to rectify the mistakes of their own fathers by being good fathers to their children.

> **France:** *I took a conscious decision that I would not want my children to have the same type of relationship I had with my father. I taught my son how to drive. My son and I still kiss when we meet, the excitement, the hugs and we can hang out together, have a glass of wine. We are basically friends, something very different from my father and this happens with my daughters as well.*

France mentioned the challenging relationship he had with his own father, and he made a commitment to be a better father to his children. France told of the activities that he continues to undertake in his role as a father, such as passing driving skills onto his children. He also indicated the display of affection he and his son engage in every time they meet. France regards himself as his child's friend which is very different from his relationship with his own father. In their study on fatherhood, the Commission for Gender Equality found that fathers are beginning to embrace the emotional role in the upbringing of their children (Commission for Gender Equality, 2021: 33), as is clearly illustrated in the case of France. Specifically, Morrell (2006: 32) found evidence that young, Black professionals are developing patterns of new fatherhood. In this study, instances of close bonds were not only found with older children (like France), but also young children:

> **Khumo:** *When I am with him and we spend a lot of time in conversation. Although it is difficult because he is a child and cannot make proper sentences, but I have been intentional in trying to have him construct sentences, we spend significant time talking and engaging. We also spend time doing what he wants, he likes YouTube videos so we listen to music he likes, we dance, we play together a lot.*

Khumo indicated one of the key indicators of responsible fathering is the ability and willingness to listen attentively to children when they talk. Khumo mentioned that he invested the majority of his time in conversation with his son. This is interesting considering his son was only a year old at the time of the study and was too young to construct proper sentences, but Khumo used the time to help the child to develop his speech. Kamaruddin, Omar, Hassan, Hassan, Mee and D'Silva (2012) argue that the quality of time a parent spends with his children is essential to enhance parent-child relationship. Quality time refers to the concentrated, uninterrupted time a father spends with his children in meaningful conversation (Kamaruddin et al., 2012)

as Khumo indicated he tried to do. Similarly, a wide range of activities are demonstrated in Mike's father–child interactions:

> **Mike:** *I do everything, like changing diapers, feeding them, clothing them. I also play with my children, we watch TV together, and we read a book, go out for movies, go outside, play soccer, and ride bikes.*

Mike is involved in care work that is usually predominantly performed by mothers. However, it is worth noting that Mike mainly engaged in these activities in the absence of his wife or the mother of his other children. Although this is a breakthrough, it should be noted that mothers still spend more time than fathers in care work activities such as monitoring, rule setting, changing diapers and feeding of children. Time series studies in South Africa and other parts of the world confirm this as a general trend (Heilman et al., 2017: 19). Mkhwanazi and Manderson (2020) argue that there is an assumption entrenched in various population groups in South Africa that a mother will and/or should assume the role of primary caregiver for her children.

Another significant feature from Mike's response is his interest and involvement in the child's cognitive and linguistic development, such as reading to the child. Zamile shows other supportive roles fathers take on:

> **Zamile:** *A father must be present in all aspects of the child's life; my child knows that I am there. I try to attend her netball matches and her athletics. I also attend two training sessions prior to the games. I am a netball father, cheering her on from the stands. My Bra [my brother], school concerts, graduations, and teacher learner sessions, you name it; I am there.*

Zamile posits that a father should be present in all areas of his child's life. In the extract above, he describes his involvement in his daughter's extramural activities. This response is in line with another key indicator of responsible fathering which is expressing interest in the child's schoolwork and interests. Zamile maintains that he has never a missed teacher–learner feedback session. Sapungan and Sapungan (2014: 45) argue that a parent–teacher relationship is beneficial for children's education and can promote academic performance at school. Moreover, children tend to be focused at school when they see the parent taking an interest in their school work (Kwatubana & Makhalemele, 2015: 315).

> **Molefe:** *Responsible fathering… I think it is having a relationship with your child. You know what? I think society out there is confusing fathering with resources. Because they think if you do not have resources, you are not a father. In addition, resources are not a requirement to be a father. Uhm… a lot of… for example… I feel fathers like mine somehow thought money is everything and they feel "small" when they can't provide.*

Molefe describes a responsible father as one who develops a relationship with his children. Molefe did not have a relationship with his biological father and he believes that fathers tend to confuse a child's need to be fathered with the need for material resources. Molefe is of the view that fathers tend to feel insignificant and insecure when they are unable to provide for their families. He continues that this notion could be the reason why his father chose to be absent in his life. A number of studies in South Africa have pointed to the fact that a father's inability to provide financially may limit him from participating in other areas of a child's well-being such as on a physical or emotional level (Human, 2018: 35; Malinga, 2021: 74; Madhavan et al., 2014).

Molefe emphasised that a man does not need to have financial resources for him to be a father. His narrative begins to emphasise the importance of moving beyond the father as provider expectation in order to include roles such as developing an emotional connection with children. The human agency principle of the life course perspective underscores that individuals have the ability to choose, in this case either modelling traditional roles of fatherhood and/or creating new ones. Recognising his father's financial position and the subsequent choices that his father made, Molefe chose to create a new model of fatherhood.

> **Amazing Dad:** *A responsible father is someone who is willing to attend to issues concerning the child's well-being, education, clothing, showing love and affection, understanding, listening, spending time, playing, identifying the things the child is capable of doing and the things the child is not capable of doing, the health of the child. Always being there for upbringing of your child that really plays a major role.*

Amazing Dad outlines a comprehensive description of the key responsibilities and activities that a father should execute. He outlines that a responsible father should be able to attend to the child's needs; this includes being aware of the child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Amazing Dad believes a responsible father should show interest in his children's education and be able to identify areas that a child might be struggling in with the aim of providing assistance. This is consistent with the revised White Paper on Families which posits that a present and actively involved father makes a positive contribution to the child's

academic, socio-emotional and cognitive functioning (DSD, 2021: 201). Finally, Amazing Dad adds that a responsible father is expected to provide for the physical needs of the child such as clothing.

> **Benny:** *I think the word responsible father as loosely translated, simply means a father who is there, plays or who are fulfilling their fatherhood roles in the lives of their children, be it financially, emotionally and other aspects of the kids' lives.*
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you mean by other aspects?
>
> **Benny:** *First and foremost a child needs to spend time with the parents and then so I believe our time is the most important aspect of our role as fathers. So, I would simply say by spending as much time as possible with the child.*

Benny believes time is the most important commodity a father can offer to his children. His belief is that a father should make every effort to spend as much time as possible with his children. Benny emphasises that the quality of the time matters; in discussion, he indicated he spends time teaching his daughter what he calls "*family values*".

> **Prince:** …*being there means that you see how the child grows, to guide them through the stages of growing up, you are there for them, and you have this father–son relationship.*

One of the key elements of an involved father is his interest and involvement throughout the child's developmental stages. Makusha and Richter (2018) argue that father involvement in the first 1000 days of a child's life plays a significant role. Makusha and Richter (2018) continue that a father's involvement in the first 1000 days promotes intact father–infant attachment; it also promotes tangibles such as early registration of the birth and duration of breastfeeding to mention a few. Moreover, a father's involvement in the first 1000 days has been proven to be beneficial to the emotional well-being of the mother during and after pregnancy (Makusha & Richter 2018). Prince believes that a responsible father should be able to monitor the child's development and guide the child through the various stages. The stages of development include, among others, cognitive, social and language development. Studies have indicated that the father–child relationship is key to the child's development. For example, Southwood (2010) conducted research among Afrikaans-speaking children between the ages of 3 years 11 months and 10 years. In the study, a total of 343 children took a language test and the results showed that children with a male primary caregiver scored in the higher percentile than their counterparts with an absent father. However, research has also shown that children

raised in two-parent families are more likely to have more material resources than those raised in single-parent households. This, in turn, allows children in two-parent households to perform better than their counterparts perform (Desmond & Desmond 2006; Redpath et al., 2008).

> **Nkosi:** *In my view, I think a responsible father is someone who takes care of the kids, not only financially, but be there physically from a very early age on the day-to-day basics of the child, calling, playing with your child, yah I think that's being responsible.*

Similar to Prince, Nkosi alludes to a father's ability to get involved in his children's lives from an early age. Although financial provision is important, Nkosi believes that there is more to fathering than a man's ability to provide. He reports that a father should be involved in the "*basics*" which include constant contact and investing time playing with the child. The paternal involvement model defines playing with the child as one of the activities in children's development (Marsiglio, Day & Lamb, 2008).

Questions such as: *What constitutes a good or a bad father? What are the positive or negative fathering roles that men perform?* continue to dominate literature (Mkhize, 2004; Hosegood & Madhavan, 2012; Makusha et al., 2013). Participants provided their portrayals of what an ideal father looks like. However, the concepts used by the participants are not new to the study of fathering and fatherhood in South Africa. The extracts below display the understanding of what an ideal father is according to the participants and these understandings match theoretical understandings of ideal fathers:

- **Amazing dad:** *For me, an ideal father is a protector, is a guide, someone who always wants to provide, also be here present for the children.*
- **Zondo***: [He is] someone who takes care of his kids, in every aspect.*
- **Cedric:***… [Ideal fatherhood entails] passing on your values, and principles onto them [children].*
- **Itu***: First of all, you need to be physically present to indicate that indeed you're a good father, and also be supportive.*
- **France:** *He takes care of his child.*
- **Pat***: Acknowledging the child.*
- **Peter***: For me, as a father you need to be present every day in the life of your child.*
- **Tumza:** *Fighting for your kids and doing anything in your power to provide.*
- **Chauke:** *An ideal father finds time for his children, no matter how busy he might be.*

In all cases, men understood the importance of participating in a child's life beyond financial provision. While a father's ability to provide financially features strongly, the depictions above point to an emotionally involved father. Participants believed an ideal father to be someone who concerns himself with the physical, emotional, economic, and social well-being of his child(ren). An ideal father should be able and willing to transmit some of the values, beliefs, and principles he has learnt to his children. This is in line with the principle of linked lives, which posits that one generation has the ability to transmit values and principles to the next generation – commonly referred to as an intergenerational link (Macmillan & Copher, 2005: 647).

Pat added that a responsible father should acknowledge his children; this statement carries a number of nuances in South Africa. Firstly, when a child is born out of wedlock, it is customary for the biological father and his family to pay *inhlawulo* as a measure of acknowledging and accepting responsibility for the child, failing which he will be regarded as an illegitimate father (Langa & Smith, 2012; Lubbe, 2020). On the other hand, the acknowledgment of the child in some traditions is through a ceremony called *imbeleko.*[15] According to Mrwebi (2018), this ceremony is conducted as a way of detaching the umbilical cord connection from the mother and introducing the child to the ancestors of both families. In some cultures, as I experienced and observed in my own and related cultures, acknowledging the child means once informed of the child's birth, the paternal family (usually the aunt and the child's grandparents) visits the maternal family to identify the child and perform certain rituals such as shaving the child's hair and/or burying the umbilical cord.

The Children's Act also sets out the legal process within which the father can acknowledge paternity of the child. To this end, acknowledgement of a child in the Children's Act is established when a man consents to be recognised as a father and attempts to contribute to the upbringing of the child (Republic of South Africa, 2005), as well as when a father's name appears on the child's birth certificate.

5.5. Discussion

Participants accentuated that the role of a responsible and/or involved father involves a sustained attempt by a father to spend quality time with his children. This means spending time in conversation with the child even if the child's vocabulary is not fully developed. Participants also emphasise that it is important for a father to invest time in stimulating the

[15] Loosely translated *imbeleko* means an act of giving birth or to carry on your back.

child's cognitive, linguistic and intellectual development. This can be achieved by expressing an interest in the child's schoolwork, including but not limited to reading to the child, attending teacher–parent sessions and being involved in extramural activities. The term "being there" was used a number of times in this section. This term from the participants' perspective means that a father must be emotionally and financially available to the child. The term was also used to imply that a father should be physically present. However, while participants were of the opinion that a father's role far exceeds merely being a financial provider, studies in South Africa indicate that some mothers, children, and maternal grandparents hold a different view (see Mavungu et al., 2013; Commission for Gender Equality, 2021).

Participants hailed emotional involvement as one of the key indicators of responsible fathering as identified within the life course perspective. This is an important contribution considering the current historical place and time, as the current social context is shaping fathers' view of fatherhood from that of a silent provider to an emotionally involved father. Drawing a comparison between the modern-day father and the 1960s type father, Van der Walt (2007) argues that in some South African communities the modern-day father has a greater opportunity to express his emotions without fear of being ridiculed by his peers. Therefore, historical time and place make it is easier for fathers to be emotionally involved with their children. This is also encouraged by a number of initiatives such as the HSRC Fatherhood project (https://hsrc.ac.za), Sonke Gender Justice and Father for Justice (https://genderjustice.org.za*),* which advocate for father involvement in child development. As such, men seem to be breaking ties with the past generations represented by their own fathers, whom they believe to be engaging in archaic forms of paternal involvement. Men act as generational bridges that reconstruct parenting patterns throughout time and sustain persistent intergenerational mechanisms of socialisation to parenthood in this way.

Gender ideology and role identity are significant factors that influence fatherhood experiences over the life course. Men who consider their status as a father to be a significant aspect of their identity are more likely to be involved in the raising of their children (Rane & McBride 2000). The current study showed that a father's experiences with his children may be influenced by his role identity. Men who see fatherhood as a vital part of their identity are more likely to have positive outcomes from active fathering. Fathers who do not closely identify with the paternal role, but are involved for other reasons, may not have a pleasant experience with involved fathering. Men who are categorised as involved fathers recognise and value their participation in their children's lives. Santa Claus-type fathers and financial providers, on the other hand, are more concerned with the conventional notion of fathers as breadwinners.

5.6. Fathers' personal reflections as responsible fathers

In the previous section the focus was on the father's theoretical and abstract understanding of what a responsible father is and the activities a man ought to do to be referred to as such. Here the focus is on fathers' practical implementation of their knowledge. Participants gave a general definition of what they regarded as an ideal type of father, providing a myriad of descriptions of a father and a responsible father, as described in section 6.3.1. It should be noted that the majority of descriptions are consistent with the literature on responsible fathering and involved fatherhood in South Africa (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b; Heartlines, 2020; Langa & Smith, 2012). However, I requested participants to turn a mirror on themselves and answer the question of whether they considered themselves to be responsible fathers. Interestingly, participants used their responses to the first question on what constitutes a responsible father as a lens to judge their own role as father. Therefore, a father's interaction with and his accessibility and availability to his children are addressed in the men's reflections on their role as fathers.

5.6.1. Men's views of themselves as fathers

Participants expressed their views of what constitutes a good, responsible, ideal father. They articulated their understanding of the positive roles a father should play in the upbringing of their children as well as indicators of good fathering. However, the study would be incomplete without fathers turning a mirror on themselves and answering whether or not they live up to the standards of fatherhood they have set. The responses can be grouped into three categories: Firstly, those fathers who are confident in the role they play and activities they perform in their children's lives and then believe this qualifies them to be considered as responsible father. Secondly, those fathers that do not regard themselves as responsible fathers because of reasons such as their extended absence from their children's lives. Thirdly, some participants articulated that despite the various challenges they face, they try their best to be responsible fathers.

- *I am not a responsible father*

This first group of fathers believe that they do not live up to the standards defined above of the ideal or responsible father. In almost all the cases, participants measured their role as fathers against their own definition.

Benny: *I am not a responsible father*

Interviewer: *Why not?*

> **Benny:** *I haven't been there entirely for my child due to various factors and also she finds herself not living with any of the parents. Also, I believe if I had done things differently, her situation would have been different and she would be enjoying the comfort of being raised by both her parents*.

Benny does not think of himself as a responsible father mainly because he believes residing with your child is the main indicator of responsible fathering. Benny also laments the decisions that he made that led to his child being raised by her maternal grandparents. However, it worth noting that skipped generation households[16] are prevalent in South Africa (DSD, 2021: 188). As outlined in section 6.5, Benny believes that a father should make every effort to spend quality and quantity time with his children. It is therefore not surprising that he perceives himself as a "*not responsible father*" based on the limited time he spends with his child. He also expresses as a major challenge the fact that his child does not enjoy the security of being raised by either of her parents.

> **Prince**: *I am saying no because I don't see him often, I am not staying with my child full time and because we don't have that relationship, is like we are strangers*.

Prince does not regard himself as a responsible father either, mainly because he does not co-reside with his child. As mentioned above, Prince resides in Pretoria and his child in Limpopo; he reported that he seldom went home because of work commitments. He also lamented that because of the distance and the time apart from his child, he often feels like he is a stranger to his child. Prince believes himself not to be a responsible father because he is unable to develop a bond with his child as they live in separate provinces. He outlined that although he undertakes some financial responsibility, the fact that every time he meets his child they feel like strangers to each other disqualifies him as a responsible father. This is one of the rarest personal identifications from a Black father, mainly because as outlined above in the theme "*fathers as providers*" there is a belief among some fathers in this study that financial provision alone is sometimes enough for one to be considered a responsible father.

> **Sello:** *To be honest, I have somewhat failed to be a responsible father with my first daughter. We were young when we had her [our daughter] and we were in constant conflict with the mother*[17] *that I eventually stopped fighting for custody and access. She is older now and it is difficult to establish a relationship. This has not only had an impact on me, but my daughters do not have a relationship with their older sister.*

[16] A skipped generation household is a household structure where the children are cared for by their grandparents and the parents do not live in the same household for various reasons, although the death of parents also contributes to the prevalence of this household structure in South Africa.
[17] The transcripts were written verbatim.

Sello believes that he has failed to be a responsible father to his first daughter. Like Prince, Sello explains that his physical absence has affected the relationship between him and his daughter. Sello tells of the struggles he encountered with access when his child was younger, to the point that he stopped fighting with the mother for access to his child. Sello explains that despite his attempts to establish a relationship with his child who was in her mid-20s at the time of the interview, the relationship remained deeply estranged. However, another dynamic according to Sello was being unable to facilitate a relationship between his daughter from a previous relationship and his two daughters born from his current marital relationship. Therefore, denied access not only affected the father but also his new family. The interdependence of individual lives manifests itself in a unique way in Sello's case. Denied access not only affected Sello's relationship with his child, but it extended to others whose lives are linked with his (in this case his three daughters). While the three are siblings, their ability, or lack thereof, to form a relationship was affected by their parents' choices. It is also interesting to note that although Sello was denied access by the mother of the child, he still regards himself as an irresponsible father.

Benny, Prince and Sello gave honest reflections on the shortcomings they experienced in their attempt to execute their role as fathers. What I found interesting is that none of these participants outlined financial provision as one of the reasons why they did not consider themselves as responsible fathers. Their reasons are centred on emotional availability, living arrangements and their own failure as fathers. Additionally, participants recognised and acknowledged personal agency in influencing and/or leading to their status as non-resident fathers.

- *I am a responsible father*

This category of father expressed with a greater level of certainty that they meet all the requirements of a responsible father. These fathers acknowledged that challenges exist in their role as non-resident fathers, but were confident that their attempts and efforts qualified them to be regarded as responsible fathers.

> **Zamile[18]:** *ngwanaka ke e godiseditse ene, a ka beya di excuse. Nkabe ke nkile di decision tse ngata, decision tse di ka etseng ke mobaele. Empa, everything e ke etsa everything e ke nahanang ntho ya pele ho ena e tlo mo affecter yang, elo changer life ya hae jwang kaosane. Ha ke tshaba o tlo nahang eng ka banna because of nna (I*

[18] Zamile's style of language is consistent with people raised in a town like Potchefstroom. In one sentence he speaks three languages. In this extract, he switches from Setswana, to Sesotho and to English. In this extract the switch includes English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. However, being an insider raised in the same town, it was easy to follow the conversation, respond and probe using his chosen language as he transitioned.

raised my child on my own, I did not come up with excuses. I could have taken a lot of decisions that would have led me to abandon her. But everything that I do, I think of her first and how it will influence or change her life in the future. If I run away from her, what will she think about men because of me [my actions])?

Zamile maintains that he took the decision to be a present and responsible father. He believes the fact that he raised his daughter on his own with little or no assistance from the mother qualifies him to be a responsible father. The second qualifier he mentions is the fact that he does everything for his daughter including securing a future for her. The extract shows that there are fathers who believe that how they treat their daughters is a predictor of how they will relate to other men. This is consistent with a study by Lobaka (2017) which found that the father–daughter relationship has the potential to affect a girl's relationship with other men. One of the participants in Peyper et al.'s (2015: 130) study expressed that as a result of her father's absence, she took the decision to only date men who were unavailable; she defined unavailability as a man who was either married or in a committed relationship. Zamile makes the assertion that he took a conscious decision to be present in his child's life. This is in line with the human agency principle of the life course perspective which states that individuals have the potential to construct their own life course by shaping their own decisions and choices. Zamile also recognised that his and his daughter's lives are linked, thus the choices he makes will inherently affect his daughter's view of society, men and herself.

Tumza: *Yes, I think am best one because everything I do for my boy and girl, everything I do, I do for them.*

Like Zamile, Tumza cites the fact that he does everything for the benefit and well-being of his children as a reason he considers himself a responsible father.

Tumelo: *I make it a point that I get involved in all the activities that my children go through. When my daughter was born I was still in relationship with her mother and I was present in all the major parts of her life, such as when she spoke her first word and took her first step and so on. Although this decreased over time because her mother and I separated, I still did my very best to be involved. I have never missed my child's school play, when I am home, I do my best to fetch her from school and take her to my place. I attend all events she is involved in and financially, I pay for her school fees and all extramural activities. I make sure she does not feel my absence. I am doing the same with my son, I am involved in all the activities, and in fact I took a month off when he was born so that I could bond with him.*

Tumelo's extract sums up the theme *"I am a responsible father"* by addressing all the key elements of the narratives above; that is, that a responsible father should be involved in all activities of the child's upbringing, including but not limited to being involved in the child's emotional, social, cognitive and educational development; spending quality and quantity time with the child; and being present for events such as school plays, graduation, extramural activities etc. This is similar to a number of reflections shared by participants such as Zamile and Tumza. Tumelo also concedes that while he sees himself as a responsible father, his involvement in his children's lives has reduced over the life course, which he attributes to the break-up between him and his child's mother. Tumelo's narrative implies that he believes he would have spent more time with his daughter if he were still in a relationship with the child's mother, a viewpoint held by many of the study participants.

- *I try my best*

The third category of fathers regard themselves as responsible fathers with the main reason lying in the fact that despite the constant challenges they experience in their attempt to be emotionally and physically available for their children, they "*try their best*" to navigate the challenges and have their children's best interests at heart.

> **France:** *No, absolutely, I have been, although there are challenges with my third daughter in terms of accessibility, because of the separation with the mother, but I try my level best whenever I am given an opportunity to be there. So school wise, yes it's been my responsibility throughout. However, everything else that pertains to my children we split the responsibilities with their mothers.*

France acknowledges that it has not always been easy fathering his third daughter after the relationship ended with his ex-partner. However, he expresses that despite some challenges experienced, he continues to use every opportunity given with his children to play the role of an active and present father. Activities that he undertakes in his bid to be a present father include providing for the child's financial needs such as paying for school fees. He also indicates that he has an agreement with the mother that all other activities with a monetary requirement are to be shared between them.

> **Pat:** *I call myself a responsible father because I do try my best to guard him, I do try to talk to him when things are wrong without violence or anything like that, just to show*

him the dangers of irresponsible behaviour, so lastly I do try my best for all of my children, to treat them equally which I think is one indicator of responsible fatherhood, treating your kids equally, I do try to.

Pat expresses his attempt to be a good father by providing guidance with regard to his teenage son's needs. He argues that he tries his best to be a father who instils good morals in his son without using violence. Pat expresses the importance of talking to his teenage son about irresponsible and dangerous behaviours. Various studies have pointed to father absence or non-residence as being one of the key predictors of boys' involvement in dangerous behaviour such as excessive drinking, drug abuse and involvement in crime and drugs (Bojowore & Akpan, 2009; Khewu & Adu, 2015).

Etsile: *yah, yah, yah I would say I am a responsible father because I try my best to be there for my child, I provide for everything, also I do go and visit when I am at home. I do call also when I am here you know, he does know I am the father, and I am present.*

Etsile articulates that he tries his best to be a responsible father to his child by, among other things, calling and visiting the child as often as he can. He also mentions that he tries to make sure that his child knows that he is a present father.

Jeremiah: *I take every opportunity to breach the gap of being away from home. So I am trying my best to build a relationship with my child. I go home during the holidays so we can spend time together and so forth.*

Jeremiah acknowledges that being a non-resident father makes it difficult to build a relationship with your child. In his view, a father's absence in the household breaks the continuity of father–child relationships. This is especially a challenge in Jeremiah's case, because he is only able to visit his child for long periods during vacations i.e. festive seasons.

Johnny: *After gore rekgaogane le mamaga Mapule, ke lekile ka bojotlhe baka go lwanele ngwanake, mare mamage a ntwantsa. Morago a be a nkisa court are o batla madi a kana ka R3 500, ke kraya ka madi a makalo ke sa bereke? (After I broke up*

with Mapule's[19] mother, I tried my best to fight for the custody of my child, but the mother denied me access. Eventually, she took me to court demanding maintenance of R3500. Where do I get the R3500 when I am unemployed?)

Johnny relates that after his break-up with the mother of his child, he tried his best to fight for his child, but he was denied access. Johnny indicates that as a measure to deter him from requesting access the mother made a maintenance claim for an amount that Johnny could not afford. Failure to pay this amount further alienated him from his child, showing again that being an economic provider continues to be central in some father–child relationships.

5.7. Discussion

For fathers, ex-partners and the children involved, the end of a relationship, migration to a different province and remarriage are all important transitions. As stated earlier in this chapter, for fathers this transition entails the sometimes difficult task of remaining actively involved in their children's upbringing despite opposition from the mother.

The discussion above shows that while many non-resident fathers attempt to play the role of an active father, certain circumstances tend to limit them. One of the key findings in this section is the fact that for some non-resident fathers, building a relationship with their children remains a challenge owing to factors such as denied access and the distance between the father's location and that of the child. The study also shows that when a father is denied access to his children, this tends to affect others who are linked to him such as his children from other relationships. However, despite these many challenges, there are fathers who express that they are doing their best to weather the storm, with the ultimate aim of being responsible fathers. These fathers navigate the complexities of their relationships with their ex-partners and children with the intention of becoming involved fathers. It was interesting to see fathers turning a mirror on themselves and honestly reflecting on their successes and shortcomings. Fathers also recognised the possible psychological impact their absence can have on their children. Their narratives also indicate that most fathers longed for closer relationships with their children and some expressed sadness regarding the time they spend away from their

[19] The name of the child as mentioned by Johnny during the interview was changed.

children. In some cases, fathers seemed bothered by the fact that another man such as the mother's current lover or maternal grandparent raises their children.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter answered crucial questions on who is a responsible father and what constitutes a good father from the viewpoint of fathers themselves. As outlined from the outset, the indicators of responsible fatherhood have been defined by researchers in western countries many of which do not appreciate the complexities and dynamics of fathers in the Global South. Therefore, this chapter makes a meaningful contribution to the literature on fatherhood in South Africa. Non-resident fatherhood remains fairly high in South Africa but the men in this study reaffirmed the assertions by Van den Berg and Makusha (2018b) that a father's absence from the household does not necessarily mean he is not involved in the upbringing of his children. The majority of the men in this study had fathered children out of wedlock, but had found ways to be involved in their children's lives. To this end, the types of role that fathers play in the raising of their children were identified. I classified these three types of fathers as

- fathers as financial providers
- the Santa Claus father
- the involved father

It should be noted that Africa in general and South Africa in particular has other types of father, such as the absent father, the co-resident father, and the present-absent father, to mention but a few (see Lobaka, 2017; Heartlines, 2020). However, the three types of father identified above are unique to the participants of this study. Fathers as financial providers refers to fathers who maintain that their primary responsibility is to provide for the material needs of their children. These fathers define fatherhood purely in terms of the financial contributions they are able to make in the raising of their children. Interestingly, some of the fathers believed that if a father failed in this primary role, he has failed as a father. Therefore, the financial contribution was used as an entry point without which a father could not progress to developing an emotional connection with his children. Some fathers felt that their financial contributions were sufficient and made little or no attempt to develop a relationship with their children.

The Santa Claus father can also be referred to as the material father; unlike the financial provider father, these fathers exercise their role by attempting to buy their children's love. The financial provider father tends to pay maintenance directly to the mother, while the Santa Claus

father is concerned with his child's image of him and thus they dedicate the time spent with their children to buying expensive gifts, taking children out to malls and movies. This type of father is a Santa Claus because like the mythical figure "Santa Claus", he is only thought of when the child needs to have fun. In most cases these fathers tend to be absent for long periods and only appear once a year or every few years.

The final type of father is the involved father. This type of father believes that a father's role extends beyond financial provision. This concurs with Van den Berg and Makusha's (2018a: 7) assertion that there are Black non-resident fathers in South Africa who are involved in the upbringing of their children beyond their residence. Rabe (2018a: 22) adds that fathers in the 21st century are considerably more involved in caregiving than their fathers. These findings somewhat dispel the myth that almost all Black fathers are irresponsible. The men in this study expressed the role they play in the caregiving of their children when responding to the research question *what caregiving roles do non-resident biological fathers play in the raising of their children over the life course*? One of the main aims of this question was to explore 'the consistence displayed by fathers raising their children from the birth of the child until to date and the caregiving activities fathers performed during lone parenting. The activities that fathers reported performing included, among others, bathing children, changing diapers, cooking, reading to the child, helping children with schoolwork and in the case of older children teaching them how to drive. However, in almost all cases fathers reported that they were not consistent in these activities. Many performed these activities occasionally when there was no other female caregiver.

Global research indicates that men spend a small percentage of their time caring for their children, although some men are expanding their involvement in childcare. For example, men spend nearly a third of their time caring for children in Guatemala (Heilman et al., 2017). According to data from the United States, fathers' availability to their children has increased from approximately half that of mothers in the 1980s to over two-thirds in the 1990s (NCOFF, 2002). Longitudinal studies in the United States, the Netherlands and Canada have found that men have been more involved in parenting in recent decades (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). In South Africa, a time-survey study found that on average women spent 3 hours 15 minutes on household maintenance activities, while their male counterparts only spent 1 hour 28 minutes (Statistics South Africa, 2013).

The essence of this study was to explore how men think of themselves as fathers and what role they believe a father should play. It would be erroneous to conclude this line of questioning of the concept of fatherhood without soliciting fathers' personal reflections on the role they

play. Therefore, I asked fathers whether they believed themselves to be responsible fathers or not. Equally, three types of categories surfaced, namely:

- I am not a responsible father
- I am a responsible father
- I try my best

There is a category of fathers who expressed outright that they do not regard themselves as responsible fathers. However, it is interesting to note that none of them attributed this to their inability to provide financially, but rather to the mistakes they made and the decisions they had taken that resulted in them being non-resident fathers today. Some men expressed that they had failed to be responsible fathers because today their children are being raised in households without biological parents but with grandparents. Therefore, some fathers are beginning to see their absence in the everyday lives of their children as a challenge. The second group of men regarded themselves as responsible fathers and expressed a number of activities that they continue to perform in raising their children. Financial contributions, emotional and educational involvement feature heavily in these fathers' reasoning. The final category of fathers simply expressed that they try their best to be involved. Many of the men expressed the challenges they experience in their attempt to be responsible fathers. These challenges include mothers and maternal grandparents acting as gatekeepers and the distance between where the father and the child reside.

CHAPTER SIX

In his own voice: Challenges experienced by non-resident fathers

> *It is humanly incomprehensible why one parent would refuse the other parent's rights of access to their own child. Courts will never allow children to use children as pawns where they notice such conduct* – Honourable Justice Mabuse, January 25, 2022 (Ulrich Roux Associates 2022).

6.1. Introduction

There are a number of identified routes that lead to non-resident fatherhood. According to Bradshaw (1999: 23), these routes include fathering a child out of wedlock, divorce and relationship dissolution of parents who were cohabiting. Consistent with other literature on the subject, this study will show that other routes include fathers leaving their provinces of birth and their children to work as migrant labourers mostly in metropolitans such as Tshwane, Johannesburg and Cape Town. I titled Chapter 6 "*In his own voice: Challenges experienced by non-resident fathers*" as this chapter aims to add to the growing literature on fatherhood through the lens of the fathers themselves. Most recently, the Commission for Gender Equality has focused on providing a narrative on what happens to children when their parents' romantic relationship ends (Commission for Gender Equality, 2021). This chapter follows the narratives of how the men in this study became non-resident fathers. Fathers also express their frustrations and obstacles in their attempt to fulfil the role of being involved fathers beyond residence.

This chapter responds to one of the three research questions of this study, that is: *Which and whose positive fathering roles do we exclude by assuming that father presence equals active involvement?* In this chapter, men's understanding of the term "non-resident fatherhood" is investigated and compared or contrasted to the term "absent father". In the comparison, a non-resident father was conceptualised by participants as a type of a father who is physically absent from the household in which his children reside, but is involved in the upbringing of the child either by paying maintenance and/or participating in the other areas of a child's life (extramural activities, school work, etc.). An absent father on the other hand refers to a father who is physically and emotionally unavailable to the child, because he does not know that he fathered a child, or though knowing, he deliberately chooses to neglect his fatherly role. All the fathers in this study perceived themselves as non-resident fathers and not as absent fathers.

6.2. Background of the themes

Fathers expressed the extreme difficulties they have experienced in their attempt to gain access to their children. Biological mothers, maternal grandparents and systemic challenges were identified as people or reasons blocking fathers' attempts to gain access to their children. The involvement of maternal grandparents resonates with research by Nduna (2014) and Padi et al. (2014) who found that maternal grandparents acted as gatekeepers. One theme that occurred prominently is the challenges non-resident fathers' experience. At the time of the interviews, four of the fathers were denied access to at least one of their children and in all these cases, the fathers had embarked on court processes to gain access to their children. This theme is grouped into three sub-themes, which are *relational challenges, systemic challenges* and *frequency of contact*.

6.3. Men's narratives on how they became non-resident fathers

The participants shared their narratives on how they became non-resident fathers; accordingly, three main routes were identified in this study. Firstly, men indicated that they became non-resident fathers because they had a child out of wedlock and subsequently broke up with the mothers of their children. Secondly, participants indicated that they became non-resident fathers following their divorce; in all cases, full custody of the children was granted to the mother with the father granted visitation rights. The third reason why fathers became non-residents was as a result of working in different cities from their children, commonly referred to as labour migration. It is worth noting that labour migration is mainly understood in light of the historically discriminatory policies of the South African government during apartheid. As outlined in the literature review, labour migration became entrenched among certain black families and hence the high absence of biological fathers in households. However, for the interest of this study, labour migration[20] refers to the relocation of people from one province (usually rural) to another province (mostly urban) in search of employment prospects.

6.3.1. How men became non-resident fathers

This section covers the pathways that lead fathers to be non-resident fathers.

[20] This type of movement of people is defined in some countries as "commuter couples" although there may be overlaps and the distinctions can become blurred (see Kumswa, 2018).

> **Benny:** *Firstly, when her mother fell pregnant we had a lot of differences, actually I was the root cause of everything because I was young and irresponsible. I didn't know what it means to be a father back then and the thing is dating random girlfriends and I guess at some point we happen to have unprotected sex and she got pregnant. We just didn't work out, we believed in different things, we came from different backgrounds, there were a whole lot of factors. We were different Bra*[21]*, so separating from one another at that particular time seemed like the best situation going forward.*

The portrayal of young fathers as irresponsible and absent has dominated the South African media in the past few years. While studies have been conducted in recent years with the aim of redefining young fatherhood in South Africa (see Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015; Swartz & Bhana, 2009), there are fathers like Benny who label themselves as irresponsible fathers because of mistakes they made when young. When asked how he became a non-resident father, Benny responded by indicating that at the time his daughter was born, he was still young and promiscuous, dating multiple girls at the same time, and this eventually resulted in one of them becoming pregnant. He further indicated that he and the mother of the child had a difference of opinion on a number of key issues, which led to the eventual separation. Key to the discussion is the fact that Benny acknowledges his irresponsible behaviour that led to the break-up.

> **France:** *Well it's been largely because of separation, although with my first born, I got him while I was in matric*[22]*, I was still young, I was in matric, I made it up when he came to live with me for tertiary [education] that is how I made it up. My daughter, I separated with her mother while she was still three, so she was still young and the last born, it is even worse, when she was one year old.*

Similar to Benny, France is the father of three children (a boy and two girls). France fathered three children, although he cohabitated sequentially with two of the mothers of his two daughters, France reports that he never married any of his three ex-lovers. He indicates that he became a non-resident father because his relationships with all three mothers of his children ended. France indicates here that the three relationships with the women ended within the first three years of his children's birth. France fathered his first child while still in secondary school; like Benny, he describes himself as young and immature when his son was born.

[21] Bra is slang for "brother" to indicate a relaxed or close relationship between men of equal status.
[22] Matric is a South African term used to refer to Grade 12.

France believes his age at the birth of his son is one of the reasons he was unable to fulfil the role of a responsible father. Nonetheless, he points out that when his son started his tertiary education he [the son] moved to Pretoria and this allowed France to develop a closer relationship with him. It appears two reasons prevented France from fulfilling his fatherly role, that is, his age at the birth of his son and the geographical location after he moved. France left Sharpeville where his son was living and found work in Tshwane and he reports that he seldom went home to Sharpeville (roughly 130 km from Pretoria). France also notes that he became a better father, as he grew older; this is evident in his attempt to compensate for the time he lost with his son, but also in the manner in which he responded to the hostility of the mother of his second child. He explains that regardless of the resentment displayed against him by the mother and the maternal grandparent, he focused on developing a relationship with his second daughter.

> **Cedric:** *First reason why my wife's job, in my marriage, I have realised that my wife's job offers more opportunities, therefore I have allowed her space to go and work anywhere. That on its own has an impact on the kids because if she gets a job in the North West, what happens to the kids? We realised that for now let's have them based in one place ko [at] Polokwane.*

Cedric is the father of three children, all based in Polokwane, while he and his wife currently live and work in Pretoria (roughly 260 km from Polokwane). He explained that he and his wife took a joint decision to leave their children in the care of their maternal grandparents so that his wife could pursue her career. For Cedric and his wife, career growth means having the ability to pursue opportunities across the country without disrupting the children's lives through frequent moving. As such, they chose to leave the children with the maternal grandparents because it allows them to relocate without changing the children's living environment. Therefore, leaving the children with the maternal grandparents is a measure to create a sense of consistency, stability and continuity. Bähre (2020: 269) indicates that this is common practice among the Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape where married couples often to take a decision to both relocate and leave children in the care of their grandparents. In addition, grandparents often assume the role of parenting grandchildren in the case of death of parents, parental neglect, teenage pregnancy or lack of financial resources, among other things (Birhanu, 2020; Saxena & Brotherson, 2021; Mtshali, 2015). Cedric is the only participant in this study who was still married to the mother of his children.

> **Itu:** *I am a non-resident father because of employment; I am still dating the mother of my child. We do spend a lot of time together when I go home during my vacation days and some weekends.*

During the interview, Itu was still in a relationship with the mother of his child. He indicated that he became a non-resident father owing to work commitments. At the time of this interview, Itu was an intern in a government department in Pretoria. One thing that became clear during the interview was the fact that he had greater access to his child than some other participants in the study, mainly because he is still romantically involved with the mother of his child. For Itu, spending time with the mother of his child often translates to spending time with the child, mainly because when visiting the mother, he interacts with the child in the process.

6.3.2. Discussion

Early fatherhood remains an important transitionary point in men's lives. In the section above participants indicated the challenges they experienced because of their early transition to fatherhood. France, for instance, suggests that having a child while still in secondary school made it difficult for him to be both a father and a student. As such, France chose to be a student and neglected his role as a father. The transition to fatherhood also requires a certain level of preparedness, mainly because such a transition is a diverse and complex task (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009: 5–7). Participants communicated the difficulty they experienced as young fathers, which stemmed from their irresponsibility, lack of comprehension of their expectations as fathers, and a shortage of men who modelled the role of father. However, studies have also shown that young fathers find it difficult to negotiate with the maternal family, mainly because negotiations often involve financial resources (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). As such, young fathers may find it easier to deny paternity or dispute paternity (Nduna, 2012). However, regardless of the route men become non-resident fathers, participants indicated that they had experienced a myriad of challenges because of being physically absent from their children. The next section will discuss some of the experiences and/or challenges of non-resident fathering from the father's vantage point.

6.4. The challenge of non-resident fathering

Participants experienced a number of challenges at some point in their attempt to fulfil their fatherly role. Most of these challenges resulted following relationship dissolution (i.e. divorce or break-up). In almost all the cases, the conflict spilled over to the child(ren), and fathers were denied access. In some cases, the conflict appeared to be resolved until one or both parents chose to enter into a new relationship and/or enter into marriage. The second prominent challenge men expressed was the perceived failure of the country's judiciary. This relates to

the belief that the country's laws and legislation neglect the rights of men as they pertains to the custody of children. Relating to this theme, fathers express their personal experiences of being non-resident fathers in South Africa and fighting for custody of their children. It should be noted that older[23] fathers in this study were reporting retrospectively. These participants still consider themselves as non-resident fathers although many of them have access to their children now because the children are old enough to make their own decisions. An interesting phenomenon observed during the interviews was the difference in approach between older and younger fathers. In all cases, older fathers chose not to pursue court proceedings in order to gain access to their children.

6.4.1. Parental relationships post union dissolution

The responses from the interviews indicate that the relational challenges that fathers referred to in this study are multifaceted. Some men expressed deep relational challenges with the ex-partners that resulted in conflict. For others, these relational challenges stemmed from their inability to bond with their children, and instil a certain level of moral principles and values. However, this research also indicates that there are ex-partners who maintain a healthy relationship after the union's dissolution.

a) Post-relationship conflict

Relationships do not always end amicably. When a romantic relationship ends in conflict, this has the potential to affect the father–child relationship, especially if the child is under the age of 18. As outlined in the study titled "So we are ATM fathers" by Mavungu et al. (2013), fathers argued that in conflicted relationships children are used by mothers as weapons against them. In this section, participants argued that conflict with the mother usually spilled over to the children.

> **Tumza:** *That's war, my guy, that's war. We were okay at first but now we are constantly fighting about small things. But the main source of the fight is the bond I have with my son that she doesn't have, like I said, I stayed with him from the time he was two years old until he was 14 years. Sometimes when he visits for the weekend, he doesn't want to go back and the mother thinks it's because of me. I had to bribe him by buying him a puppy that will stay with him at his mother's place in Mabopane.*

[23] Older fathers in this study refers to four fathers who participated in this study who were within the age cohort of 50 and 62.

Tumza is a 36-year-old father with two children (a 14-year-old boy and a 3-year-old girl) by two different mothers. Tumza does not live with either of the children since he broke up with their mothers. However, he indicated he lived with his son from the age of two to the age of 12, largely because the mother was unable to care for the child because she was still studying. He mentions that the conflict began when the child turned 12 years old; it was at this time that the mother demanded full custody of the child. This was the cause of a huge fight between Tumza and the mother, and the case was eventually resolved by the Children's Court which awarded primary custody to the mother, and Tumza was given access to the child on weekends. Tumza believes that the mother of his child is jealous of the relationship he shares with their son. This is perpetuated by the fact that being mostly absent for 12 years the mother does not have a close relationship with the son. Section 10 of the Children's Act indicates that a child who is considered to be of age and a certain level of maturity has the right to be heard by the court in a custody case (Republic of South Africa, 2005). However, it appears that in Tumza's case the voice of his son was not considered when the court took a decision.

> **Tumelo:** *I have had my fair share of baby mama drama [conflict with the mother of the child] in the past six years. I have had constant fighting with the mother of my child on issues such as how to raise our daughter. There were instances where she refused groceries that I bought for the child. I remember having to leave these groceries at her doorstep because she was refusing them. The greatest challenge I encountered was gaining access to my child. She firstly made it difficult for me to see my child, then later she tried to prevent me from seeing my child altogether. I can never do anything right in her book; I think she was bitter because of the break-up.*

Tumelo is a father of two children (a girl aged six and a son aged one). He is married to the mother of the second child and has joint custody of his first child. However, he indicates that he is in constant conflict with the mother of the first child on issues such as how to raise their daughter. Tumelo remembers instances where the mother of his child would refuse to accept any financial assistance from him towards the maintenance of the child. The challenge that Tumelo experienced was being denied access to his daughter. He claims that the mother began by making it difficult for him to see the child as a measure to deter him. When that failed, she began to deny him complete access to the child. In the subsequent extract, Tumelo detailed the processes he undertook in an attempt to resolve the matter civilly. He reports that he first requested his parents to intervene by approaching his ex-partner's parents, but they were met with hostility. He considered approaching the Children's Court as his last resort. He indicates that approaching the courts further strained the relations between him and the child's

maternal family. Tumelo believes that he tried everything in his power to please the mother of his child, but all efforts were unsuccessful. He uses a popular term used in South Africa for post-relationship conflict, namely "*baby mama drama.*[24]" Tumelo stresses that his ex-partner constantly found ways to prevent him from gaining access to his child; he believes that this push back was caused by her bitterness over the break-up.

Another participant, France, explains the conflict between him and the mother of his second child as follows:

> **France**: *The break-up with the mother of the second child affected the relationship with my child. I mean I would see the child's mother and her mother [the maternal grandmother] taking sides, so I would be waiting outside to see my child and there would [be] this hostile attitude towards me. I think about a year after the break-up I could not get inside the house to see my daughter. I would be waiting outside their house for hours and eventually, she [my daughter] would come see me at the car. She was about three at the time.*

Children are often the hardest hit during a parental separation or divorce. A number of studies in South Africa and other parts of the world have documented the lasting effects of divorce on children (Haaz et al., 2014; Mudau, Mulaudzi & Ncube, 2018). Furthermore, in conflict-ridden relationships and/or break-ups children are often used as cannons by the custodial parents[25] (Commission for Gender Equality, 2021). France indicates that a year after the relationship broke down, he was denied access to his child and the maternal grandmother did not help the situation, choosing her daughter's side in the matter. The role of grandparents in non-resident fathers being denied access seems to be prominent in South Africa, especially in situations where the mother lives with her parents. Various newspaper articles in South Africa have detailed the plight of fathers who indicate that maternal grandparents directly or indirectly deny fathers' access to their children (Johannes, 2020). France attests that the strained relationship between him and the mother of his child has affected his relationship with the child as well. At only three years old, France's daughter was torn between her desire to see her father and the opposition that she experienced from the mother.

This subsection shows that there is a close link between the quality of the relationship between the parents after the separation and the degree to which fathers are allowed access to their

[24] *Baby mama drama* is an informal expression used to refer to the conflict between the father and the mother of the child following the break-up. A baby mama is therefore the mother of the child, while the drama refers to the perceived conflict that mothers are believed to instigate with their ex-partners.
[25] A custodial parent refers to the parent who is entrusted with the care of a minor. This is commonly understood as a primary caregiver.

children. It has also been observed that mothers are more likely to play gatekeepers in conflict-ridden break-ups (Nielson, 2012).

b) Father–child relationships

The participants of this study indicate that the biggest challenge of being a non-resident father is the negative impact their prolonged absence has on the father–child relationship. Participants posit that they are unable to form bonds with their children because of their status as non-resident fathers. They contend with feelings of doubt, anger and apathy from their children.

> **Cedric:** *Like I said, my kids only see me as a guy who is able to afford because they do not think that my father can't afford. It's unfortunate that my kids love me because I give them money, I am afraid they have a narrow definition of me as their father. So, it denies me the opportunity to connect with them on another level, other than the affording part. This also denies me the opportunity to instil my own principles, like my father instilled his principles and laws onto me. So, it would be nice to be in a position to instil that.*

Cedric would like a better relationship with his children, especially his two older girls. He is worried that his children only have a one-dimensional view of him and his role as a father which is that of a provider. He expresses his interest in having a deeper relationship with his children, one that is not based only on the material things he is able to give them. Cedric believes his role as a father has to be diverse. As such, he would like to be able to show other sides of fathering to his children. Furthermore, Cedric wants to take an active role in the moral development of his children, passing on to them the same principles he learnt from his father. He acknowledges that his father-in-law is instilling good values in his children, but as a father he wants to be able to instil his own values. The ability and opportunity to transmit the learnt moral values from one generation to the next is hailed as one of the paramount functions of a father. In a study conducted by Mavungu et al. (2013: 29), fathers expressed that being absent from their children's lives for long periods prevented them from fulfilling their role as moral guides and this led their children to grow up devoid of proper manners, respect and values.

> **Pat:** *You constantly contend with feelings of doubt from your child. Your child always asks himself "does this person really love me?" because his head rings of all negative things and lies that have been fed to him over the years and you could not defend yourself… [Pause] it's complicated, just complicated …*

For Pat, the most complicated aspect of being a non-resident father is the fact that the people who spend the most time with your child may attempt to sow a seed of doubt in your child about your love for them. The challenge, he argues, is the fact that people continue to tell your children lies about you and you are not in a position to defend yourself. He continued that in the end, your child starts to believe their lies and they begin to doubt your love for them. This is a similar finding to that of Bosch-Brits, Wessels and Roux (2018), who argue that in cases of parental alienation, mothers tend to speak negatively about the father to their children in an attempt to strain the father–child relationship.

Pat continues:

> **Pat:** *… but then again, I think children will also take advantage of the fact that you are trying so hard to prove yourself and it will make outrageous demands. Things like this year, [he said] I want to buy shoes that cost R2000, and if you say, I can't afford it but we can use the R2000 to buy you books, clothes and [cheaper] shoes. The child will say "Ja*[26] *that's because you don't love me, they told me you don't love me", there is a lot of emotional blackmail from the child.*

Pat believes that his son makes unrealistic demands as a measure to test the validity of the claims made by his maternal family. Pat believes his child has started taking advantage of the situation and making what he believes to be unrealistic demands, such as asking for expensive clothing items. In Pat's view, these demands come as a test of a father's love; if he fails to provide these expensive items, the child views this as a confirmation of all the negative tales told about the father. Pat indicates that his son does not want to see reason, for instance, he [Pat] would indicate the importance of spending this large amount of money on something school related such as stationery and use the remainder of the money to purchase clothes that they can afford. As alluded to in Cedric's case as well, older children tend to make more financial demands on non-resident fathers.

c) Conflict resulting from re-partnering

Re-partnering presents a unique challenge to non-resident fathers; the participants of this study argued that conflict with their ex-partners ensued shortly after they entered into a new

[26] "Ja" is an Afrikaans word meaning yes. However, it is a commonly used as an informal exclamation in other South African languages.

relationship. Some participants pointed out that interaction with their ex-partners had gone through a number of trajectories.

> **Khumo:** *With the mother of my first child, the relations had improved after our break-up. This is how she found out that I was dating again; she came to my office requesting to use the internet to search for vacancies. I left her in my office with my tablet because I was going on lunch. Instead of searching for posts, she went through my phone and found texts between my new girlfriend and me. When I returned to the office, we had a fight about it because she began questioning me about my new girlfriend. As a result of what she read, our relationship became worse, worse, worse and that's when the alienation began.*

Khumo indicates that as the relationship improved, it allowed them to connect on matters beyond those which affected the child. He recalls multiple incidents where his ex-partner would visit his office to use the internet in search of employment, thus indicating the level of trust he had in his ex-partner. However, she used this opportunity to go through his phone for other things and discovered that Khumo had entered into a new relationship. This was followed by feelings of anger and disappointment which began spilling over to the child. It was at this point that Khumo's battles to gain access to his child began.

> **Mike:** *I know of two guys who share a similar story as me; their relationships with the mothers of their children started to fall apart as soon as [their ex-partners] knew that they had a new girlfriends*.

Mike also records that the relationship with the mothers of his children began to fall apart when they realised that he had entered into a new relationship. Similarly, he narrates stories of two of his friends whose relationships began to crumble when they re-partnered. Conflicted relationships between couples makes relationships between fathers and their children difficult (Commission for Gender Equality, 2021). Nielson (2011) further argues that the quality of a father–child relationship depends on how well a mother can keep a child out of her marital issues post-divorce.

> **Tumelo:** *The immediate relationship I entered into did not affect the relationship I had with my daughter; she loved the woman I was involved with. However, the mother was still angry, so she tried to restrict me from seeing the child because of the woman I was dating.*

The mother's approval of the woman the non-resident father is dating seems to be another predictor of whether or not a father is granted access to the child. Tumelo indicates that he was denied access to his child solely because his ex-partner did not approve of the woman he was currently dating. Tumelo alludes to two important factors in his narrative; firstly, ex-partners often find it difficult to accept a new relationship that a non-resident father enters into, and secondly, the mother of the child's disapproval of the father's new partner often spills over into the father–child relationship.

When I asked Tumelo what he thought the reasons were for the mother denying him access after he re-partnered, his response was the following:

> **Tumelo:** *I do not know, perhaps she felt like it was too soon for me to be dating again, maybe she was still angry and bitter or maybe she thought the woman I was dating was the reason behind our break-up. Who knows?*

The timing of the relationship is portrayed as a key indicator for post-relationship conflict, i.e. too soon after the break-up or the belief that a non-resident father had an affair with the woman in question. The timing is important considering that Henslin (2008: 490) argues that following a union dissolution that involves children (either marriage, cohabitation, or a relationship) fathers tend to remarry or re-partner more quickly than mothers. The second factor that Tumelo alludes to relates to the difference in responses between his ex-partner and his daughter. He indicates that although the ex-partner did not approve of the woman he had chosen, his daughter showed affection for her (the new partner). This suggests that the father's re-partnering did not necessarily affect the father–daughter relationship. This finding is consistent with Frank (2007: 108) who argues that re-partnering mostly affects the relationship between the parents (mother–father) and not the parent–child relationship. However, it should be noted that custodial parents of younger children still have the power (if unchallenged) to restrict the father's access regardless of the child's feelings about the father and/or the new partner.

> **Tumza:** *I now have a new girlfriend, so the mother was saying you can't take my boy and go live with him and another woman, maybe she was afraid that my boy will have a bond with the other woman.*

There is also a belief that when a child spends too much time with the father's new girlfriend, the child might develop a deeper bond with this woman than the one she has with the mother. This, in Tumza's view, is the reason why the mother of his child began to deny him access

after he entered into a new relationship. Tumza indicates that when he entered into a new romantic relationship, the mother of his first child attempted to deny him access to the boy. Tumza believes that one of the reasons why the mother of his child was trying to deny him access was that she was afraid that their son would form a bond with another woman. As indicated above, Tumza had custody of their son for over a decade; this would possibly explain her uneasiness at having another woman form a bond with her son that she possibly could not form.

This study found that the re-partnering of one or both partners is in many ways one of the main factors that lead to fathers being denied access to their children. This may be driven by, among other things, the custodial parent's hope of reconnecting with the ex-lover, disapproval of the chosen partner, or simply the fear of having one's child develop an affection for another woman. Regardless of the reasons for the conflict between parents, children are often the most affected.

d) Mutual relationships post break-up

It is worth noting that not all relationships end in conflict, and not all relationships that ended in conflict remain in conflict following the break-up. Prince, Lynton and Benny share similar stories of cordial relationships following the break-up. These three narratives suggest that there is a link between cordial parental relationship post the break-up and fathers' access to their children. Linked to this is the correlation between maternal grandparents' relationship with the fathers and access to the child.

> **Prince:** *Well the relationship is not bad, I will give an example; I recently bought a phone for my son but he regularly forgets it at home or it is off most times. In such situations, I would call the mother to check on my son and she does not have a problem with it. The mother calls me whenever there is a problem with the child, so we have a kind of relationship where we can talk about the child. We make it a point to both bond with the child even if we are separated, but the relationship with the child is still there.*

According to Prince, their focus is on the best interests of the child. In explaining their courteous relationship, Prince indicates that he has an open communication channel with the mother, which allows them to discuss the child's successes and shortcomings. He further indicates that they both understand the importance of bonding with the child and as such find time to do so. Referring to his relationship with the maternal grandparents, Prince states:

> **Prince:** *Well it [the relationship with my child's grandparents] is very good because when we broke up with their daughter we were not fighting or something like that; it was a mutual agreement that this thing won't work. So it's a very good relationship, they are not angry about the break-up, but rather they are happy that I still support the child, I am there for the child; so the relationship is excellent.*

As indicated above, maternal grandparents play a big role in either the restriction or granting of access to the non-resident father, especially if the mother still lives at her parents' house. Therefore, in a follow-up question, I asked Prince about his relationship with his child's maternal grandparents. He used words such as "*very good*" and "***excellent"*** to describe the relationship, indicating that the main reason why the relationship is favourable is that the child's maternal grandparents understood that the break-up between him and their daughter was mutual. Furthermore, the maternal grandparents' satisfaction stems from the fact that he continues to provide financial support for the child. A number of studies in South Africa have been conducted to examine the link between a father's ability to pay maintenance and his access to the child (Mavungu et al., 2013; Commission for Gender Equality, 2021; Madhavan et al., 2014; Malinga, 2015). These studies have indicated that unemployed fathers tend to alienate themselves from their children because they are unable to pay maintenance; accordingly, many feel emasculated and this pushes them to relinquish their paternal rights (Commission for Gender Equality, 2021).

> **Lynton:** *I believe we have a better relationship than most ex-couples in my surroundings. I told myself that we are no longer in a relationship and I have my other partner and she has another partner, and then for me is easy if I do my part as a father and she does her part as a mother, in this way we have a comfortable way of raising a child.*

Lynton compares his relationship with the mother of his child to those of other men in similar situations and makes the assertion that they are doing better than most. According to him, their favourable post break-up relationship stems from the fact that they have developed a mutual agreement on what is best for their child. He also adds that he and the mother of the child have both re-partnered. Lynton logically brings to the fore a possible correlation between the re-partnering of both parents and access to the child. In Lynton's case, the fact that he and his ex-partner have entered into new relationships has allowed them time to focus on the child and on building their relationships instead of fighting each other. However, Lynton also adds that it is important for both parties to make their contribution towards the wellbeing of the child.

With regard to his relationship with the maternal grandparents, he stated:

> ***Lynton:*** *I can tell you they love me like [as] their own child, because of the respect I give them, and the respect they give me is something you cannot buy. When I started dating their child, I used to come by their house and we would sit in the car. One day they came to the car and told me that it is not good for me to stand outside when I am visiting, rather I should come inside the yard, use the place like a couple, and chill, they don't have a problem with it. They said it is much better rather than being a person who is not welcome in their home.*

Similar to Prince when questioned about the relationship with his child's maternal grandparents, Lynton used pleasant words to describe this relationship. He indicated the child's maternal grandparents "*love him*", citing a number of reasons why they love him. Chief among those is the fact he showed respect while he was still dating their daughter and continues to display the same respect. Secondly, like Prince, he indicates that they love him because he is able to provide for the financial and physical needs of his child.

> **Benny:** *Aaaaah! Because we broke up way back, communication has improved over the years. However, we communicate more where the child is concerned. I have also listed her on my medical aid scheme, so she is enjoying my medical benefits to such an extent that there is no need for her mother to be bothered with the child's health. So we communicate, it is most civil. She respects my life and I do the same, we understand that we were once together but not anymore, I guess that is why it is civil.*

For Benny, the relationship between him and the mother of the child seems to have improved over time. He claims that although he communicates with the mother of his child, they have decided to limit their interaction only to addressing the child's needs. He considers their relationship civil and there is a sense of mutual respect between them. Benny further indicates that although he broke up with the mother of the child he still has her (the mother) listed in his medical aid.

In this subsection, participants indicated elements of co-parenting; these elements were visible in the continued financial support by fathers and ongoing communication between ex-partners on the wellbeing of the child. It was also ascertained that when relationship dissolution is accompanied by little or no conflict, it provides a landscape for co-parenting. However, this finding needs further research.

6.4.2. Discussion

In this theme (*parental relationships post union dissolution*), a number of points were raised which are pertinent to our understanding of the experiences of non-resident fathers in South Africa. It has become clear that not all relationship break-ups are conflict-ridden and, perhaps of importance for this study, that fathers have a better chance of having access to their children when a relationship ends on mutually agreed terms. The findings of this study also show that conflict between ex-partners tends to spill over to the child, and non-resident fathers often believe that their ex-partners use children as weapons to punish them for leaving the relationship. This is a similar finding to that contained in the Commission for Gender Equality report published in 2021. In this study, participants provided three reasons for the continued conflict post-separation. Firstly, re-partnering is viewed as one factor that fuels conflict between ex-partners and some non-resident fathers were held to be at fault for entering into a new relationship too soon after the break-up with the mother of the child. While some fathers were denied access simply because they had entered into a new relationship, irrespective of the timing, others were denied access for re-partnering because it threatened the biological mother–child relationship. Whatever the case, re-partnering is a key reason for denied access. Nevertheless, the study shows that some children were perceived as being supportive of their father's new relationship.

Secondly, socioeconomic characteristics can be viewed as another factor that influences the level of non-resident fathers' contact with their children. These factors include the father's ability to provide financially for his children, the proximity between the father's and the child's geographic location, and the level of respect offered to the maternal kin. Various studies hail the father's inability to pay maintenance as one of the key factors for denying access to children (cf. Commission for Gender Equality, 2021; Heartlines, 2020). Fathers who are unable to pay maintenance are often denied access to their children with little or no consideration for their financial wellness (Malinga, 2015). The high unemployment rates in South Africa suggest that a considerable number of fathers may genuinely not be able to pay maintenance. To date, unemployment in South Africa has risen to 35.3 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2022: 6). The father's ability to pay maintenance feature features strongly as a part of this chapter as well. However, for some participants of this study maintenance alone was not enough to obtain access to their children.

Fathers who had greater access to their children indicated that beyond paying maintenance, they had a favourable relationship with their child's maternal family including, but not limited to, grandparents. The contrast can be seen in participants like France and Tumelo who report

that regardless of paying regular maintenance they were denied access to their children because either the mother of the child or the maternal family were still angry about the break-up. The role of the maternal grandparents remains key; the narratives above suggest that when grandparents approve of the father, they tend to facilitate fathers' involvement in children's lives. The converse is also true; France for instance indicated that his child's maternal grandmother was one of the reasons why he was denied access to his child. Distance was also cited as a challenge that has led to a disconnect between non-resident fathers and their children. This finding is in line with some of the narratives contained in Mavungu et al.'s (2013) study, where participants reported that leaving their children in rural provinces to take up work in a city like Johannesburg put a strain on their relationship with their children, mainly because of travel demands.

The current study also shows that there are parents who engage in what McGene and King (2012: 1620) describe as cooperative co-parenting. This is a process where parents who live separately take a decision to share parental responsibilities and support each other in their various roles. Despite their differences, these parents choose to embrace the best interests of the child. Cooperative co-parenting can be regarded as being in the best interests of the child based on findings that children whose parents share parental responsibilities with little conflict post-separation tend to adjust better than their counterparts whose parents do not (Adamsons & Pasley, 2006). Furthermore, in cooperative co-parenting, the involvement of the non-resident father and his family tends to increase. In South Africa, the Children's Act of 2005 makes provision for cooperative co-parenting through the development of a parental plan entered into by both parties. A parental plan is a legal document constituted in terms of the Children's Act. The plan is designed by a court-appointed mediator (usually a social worker or a family advocate) in consultation with both parents. The plan covers aspects that relate to the care of and contact with the minor children at the end of a marriage or the dissolution of a relationship.

6.5. Systematic challenges

Systemic challenges are another major reason for fathers being denied access to their children. This section covers the narratives of four men who believe the system has failed to protect their rights as fathers. Mike's challenge is against the injustices he has received during his various encounters with the magistrate's court where he was summoned for defaulting on his maintenance. The second case is that of Amazing Dad who has been at loggerheads with the family court, the DSD, and the magistrate's court in Pretoria for a number of years. The narrative below details his journey towards gaining custody of his children and the extreme

measures he has taken in that regard. Khumo, the third example, believes he has been failed by the magistrate's court through the family court. Khumo also details actions by a social worker handling his case that are tantamount to malpractice. Lastly, Zondo details his ex-wife's disregard for the court order set in place to ensure joint custody of their children.

6.5.1. *Mike's story*

Mike has four children from three different mothers. He has one child from a previous marriage, one child from a subsequent relationship, and two children from his current marriage. He has access to three of his children, but he has been denied access to his second child – a child he fathered following the divorce from his first wife. According to Mike, he has been in and out of the magistrate's court either because he missed a month's maintenance payment or the mother wanted more money. However, Mike argues that regardless of the demands by the mother, he is still denied access to his child. Mike narrates how he has approached the Children's Court countless times, to no avail. At the time of the interview, Mike had not seen his child for approximately two years.

When questioned about the role of the Children's Court in providing assistance, Mike claims that his ex-partner has found a way to cheat the system. He recounts that every time he approached the Children's Court, the mother of his child gave the magistrate the impression that she was ready to enter negotiations towards the formulation of a parental plan, but once a mediator is appointed, the mother makes outrageous demands and disrupts the proceedings. This behaviour places the mediator in a difficult situation because without agreement on the terms by both parents, the parental plan cannot be finalised. Failure to reach consensus requires the case to be referred back to the magistrate and the cycle begins again. Mike notes that he has been to the Children's Court four times already, and each time the case is referred for mediation with little or no consideration of the outcome of the previous mediation attempts. This is particularly frustrating for Mike, given that without tracing past incidents related to the matter at hand, it makes it difficult for the court to identify the core of the problem, which in this case are delaying tactics on the part of the mother. Perhaps what is more frustrating to Mike is the time it takes for the case to appear before the magistrate once it has been referred back. This could be attributed to the caseload of the magistrate's court.

Mike compares the effectiveness of the magistrate's court in dealing with maintenance cases to the perceived effectiveness or lack thereof of the Children's Court in custody cases. However, since every magistrate's court is a Children's Court (Republic of South Africa, 2005),

Mike's view is simply that cases of maintenance and denied access should be dealt with simultaneously. This view implies that while dealing with maintenance cases on the one side, the father can raise issues of denied access or alienation. Furthermore, the understanding is that the same speed that the magistrate court employs in resolving maintenance cases will also apply in child access cases.

> **Mike***: I feel like they should run together, maintenance court*[27] *and Children's court should be one thing. The maintenance court is harder on defaulters while the Children's court is lenient on mothers who deny fathers' access to their children.*

Mike also believes that the magistrate's court does not consider all sides. Studies in South Africa have also expressed the failure of the maintenance system to acknowledge the challenges (mostly financial) faced by fathers (Chauke & Khunou, 2014). Further to this, the maintenance system seems to only emphasise the role of fathers as providers while ignoring other contributions (Chauke & Khunou, 2014). Against this background, Mike believes the courts seem to be vilifying men without consideration of their circumstances. In the extract below, he recounts how a female judge blamed children's delinquency on fathers' inability to provide. This statement is not only biased but there is no empirical evidence to support it. While father absence has been found to be one of the contributing factors to children's negative behaviour (Lesch & Scheffler, 2016; Wessels & Lesch, 2014), scholars also acknowledge that there are many other factors at play such as the environment, the company a child keeps and poor parental monitoring (Van Staden, 2015).

> **Mike:** *I remember being there, I had not paid in one month I got called to court, there was a case before mine. A female magistrate asked the guy [maintenance defaulter], when are you paying for your child's maintenance and he replied, "I am unemployed and I cannot afford the amount being requested". The magistrate said, "Today we have criminals because of fathers like you who leave children to sleep hungry. These children go on and break into people's houses in order to survive." This really rattled me and I could not say anything and the poor guy could not respond and he was told on this day you will pay, that's it, case close. So, I felt like they don't look at the whole picture to say if the father can't pay, maybe let's make a different arrangement to say okay what can you afford?*

[27] Maintenance cases fall within the jurisdiction of the magistrate's court. However, since the magistrate's court deals with a range of criminal and civil cases, the section dealing with maintenance has become known to most people in South Africa as the maintenance court.

Generally, Mike believes that the court system in South Africa is failing men by refusing to acknowledge the circumstances many fathers face. A similar view is shared by Chauke and Khunou who argue that simply applying punitive measures against maintenance defaulters does not consider the conditions men are faced with such as the high unemployment rate among South African men (Chauke & Khunou, 2014: 21). They continue, stating that it is erroneous to assume that men who do not pay maintenance are simply refusing to do so. Mike adds that the system is biased against South African fathers, punishing them while letting mothers involved in parental alienation go free. Bias may also be seen in the fact that while maintenance defaulting is illegal, denying access to children is not.

6.5.2. *Amazing Dad's story*

Like Mike, Amazing Dad has been involved in a number of court cases over the past few years. His first encounter with the Children's Court came shortly after the death of his girlfriend of ten years. Amazing Dad explains that he cohabitated with his late girlfriend for the best part of those ten years, and two children were born out of that union. He attempted to pay *lobola,* but his girlfriend's family made negotiations impossible and in the process called him and his uncles *Makwerekwere,*[28] The reference to Amazing Dad as a *Kwerekwere* is derived from the fact that his father was a Mozambican man who married a South African woman. He told of how his father was a freedom fighter and, as such, they were exiled to Swaziland and only returned to South Africa in 1997, residing in Mpumalanga province. During the interview, he explained that this was his tenth year in Pretoria.

Amazing Dad stated that he is the father of seven children, five of whom are his biological children. He fathered two children with his first girlfriend in Swaziland, two with his deceased girlfriend, and one child with his current girlfriend. He also explained that he is the social father of the two children born to his current girlfriend. Amazing Dad stated that he has contact with five of his seven children, but has been struggling to gain access to his two children born to his deceased girlfriend. He explained that he lived with these children from the time they were born until a few days before his girlfriend passed away. However, after the funeral, the maternal grandparents removed the children from his care and he has been denied access ever since. During the interview, he mentioned that the last time he saw his children was on 30 April 2017.[29]

[28] This is a derogatory term used to refer to foreigners, especially Black foreigners from other African countries.

[29] During this interview, Amazing Dad kept referring to his phone showing pictures of his children, newspaper articles that have been written about him and television programmes where he was invited

Amazing Dad recalled that it was at this point that he began approaching various law firms,[30] the DSD[31] and the Children' Court. He maintains that he spent all his money paying lawyers and approaching courts in order to receive access to his children. Among other things, he explained that he had to take on extra work such as farming in order to raise enough money for court payments.

Amazing Dad had very strong views about the South African court system – calling it a "*multimillion-rand corrupt industry".* In his view, when a father challenges the Children's Court system, he puts himself in danger because he is "*touching people's livelihood".* He believes social workers, psychologists and lawyers manipulate the system in order to gain the most money out of it. In his view, the officials appointed by the courts as mediators are corrupt and have used the system to empower themselves financially. As alluded to above, Amazing Dad was very vocal about what he considers the injustices of the South African court system in dealing with child custody cases. In these discussions, he insinuated that his life could be in danger, because the issue he is addressing, particularly in the media, threatens the livelihoods of these corrupt officials within the system.

> ***Amazing dad:*** *We are dealing with a multimillion corrupt industry in South Africa. An industry of corrupt social workers, psychologists, and lawyers as I speak to you, I don't know whether tomorrow I will be alive because this is a multimillion-rand business. I am touching people's fortune, they are manipulating the system. When I was living in the street as part of my hunger strike, I knew something may happen to me at any time, because I am challenging the existing system. Children's Courts are being used to manipulate fathers to spend millions to have access to their children and that is a stumbling block.*

He has taken extreme measures to gain the attention of the policymakers in the country. One of these extremes was staging a sit-in in one of the government departments and refusing to leave until his matter was resolved. He was also featured as a guest on a television show, *Abobaba,*[32] which aims to find solutions for fathers who are alienated from their children. This

to speak about the feud between him and his children's grandparents. He even offered to show me some of the pictures and video clips of his children when they were born.

[30] Amazing Dad mentioned all these law firms by name and the government officials he had been in contact with. To protect his identity, some of the details had to be omitted.

[31] Amazing Dad also shared a letter that he had written to the Minister of Social Development.

[32] *Abobaba* is a Zulu word meaning "fathers".

interview took place, a week after the end of Amazing Dad's sit-in and he explained to me that the Department had appointed a social worker to deal with his case.[33]

> **Amazing Dad:** *I have been a victim of the systems, I was told to pay an amount of R600 to be psychologically evaluated. Imagine having to pay R600 just so that I can visit my child. How many R600 am I going to pay in a year for three-hour sessions with my child? We are fighting against a multimillion-rand industry here my brother, an industry of social workers and psychologists hoping to cash in on our misfortunes.*

In the case of his two children who are currently living with their maternal grandparents, Amazing Dad indicates that as a measure to deny him access, his mental state was called into question and this necessitated a psychological evaluation at the cost of R 600. He indicates that it did not make sense to him to pay an amount of R 600 to be evaluated only to be given a three-hour visitation session with his children. He argues that this psychological evaluation was supposed to be done each time he is to see children. According to Thompson (2012), psychological testing in child custody cases is conducted to make sure that the father is not potentially harmful to the child. However, Amazing Dad is of the view that this strategy was used as a measure to deter him from having custody of his children.

> **Amazing Dad:** *I feel like sometimes "best interest of a child" is a phrase used to block fathers while allowing social workers to push their agendas. I feel like the system is against fathers, regardless of how we try to step up.*

Amazing Dad has a very negative view of South Africa's court system as it relates to custody battles. This was inspired by the number of challenges he has had to contend with in his attempt to gain access to his children. During the interview, Amazing Dad highlighted that despite him being unemployed, the court recommended a private social work company/organisation to handle the processes. In addition to the mediation fee, the company charged him R 600 per hour for a supervised visit and R 900 for a psychiatric evaluation. It is against this backdrop that Amazing Dad believes private lawyers and social workers uses the plight of men for their financial gain. In his narrative, he believes the entire custody system to be a multimillion-rand business, which only benefits the affluent in society. To an extent, he believes the phrase "*best interests of the child*" which is meant to protect the rights of the child, is a measure to deny fathers access to their children. He notes in upholding the principles of

[33] After our interview, Amazing Dad sent me a WhatsApp message informing me that the social worker appointed to address the case arranged a mediation between himself and the maternal grandparents, but even that process failed to resolve the situation amicably. Based on the message, he was preparing to take to the street again.

the interests of the child, the system seems to ignore men's genuine attempts to become involved fathers.

6.5.3. *Khumo's story*

Khumo, a 28-year-old father of two children, believes that the system has failed to uphold his parental right to have access to his children. The interview with Khumo lasted for roughly two hours; most of the time was spent in conversation about the challenges that he experienced in custody battles. Khumo's first-born child is in KwaZulu-Natal and his second-born is in Pretoria. At the time of the interview, Khumo had no access to his first child and limited access to his second. He articulated that the last he was in contact with his first child was in December 2019. He explained that he bumped into the child on the street while they were visiting family close to where he lived. Although the mother knew that Khumo lived close to where she was visiting, she did not inform him that she was in Gauteng, nor did she allow the child to visit the paternal side of his family. In relation to the second child, Khumo mentioned that he has some access, but this is dependent on his ability to meet the unreasonable financial demands made by the mother and sometimes her family.

Khumo recounted that he had been through the court system with both of his ex-lovers. In his view, the system failed to protect his rights on both occasions. He narrated his experiences in dealing with the Children's Court and the maintenance system. Khumo mentioned that following their break-up, he and the mother of his first child had a cordial relationship in the interests of their child. He explained that the relationship was cordial to the point that one could view it as a friendship. However, things began to change when she [Khumo's ex-lover] discovered that Khumo had entered into a new relationship. It was at this point that the conflict between the two began to escalate and it invariably spilled over to the child. Khumo speculates that their friendship and the assistance he offered to his ex-lover post-separation may have been construed as an attempt to rekindle their love. This is based on the notion that he believes his ex-lover felt betrayed when he re-partnered.

When the mother began to deny Khumo access to his child, he approached the Pretoria magistrate's court in an attempt to be granted access to the child. Through the court, a family advocate was appointed as a mediator. The role of the mediator, as in all custody cases, is to consider both parties' views and support the drawing up of a parental plan. However, he records that the advocate made decisions without consideration of all the circumstances. He

states that the mediator failed to consider all sides when drawing up the parental plan[34]. The terms of the parental plan stipulated that Khumo was entitled to custody of the child for two weekends in a row. During these weekends, Khumo was to fetch and return his child on Saturday and repeat the procedure on Sunday. Khumo deemed this unreasonable because of the distance between where he resided at the time and his child's primary home. Khumo lived in Tsakane, which is located east of Johannesburg, while his son lived in Atteridgeville west of Pretoria. The distance between the two areas is approximately 100 kilometres and Khumo asserts that it would take him four hours using public transport commuting between the two areas. This would effectively mean that he would have less than three hours to spend with his child. Khumo maintains that he kept stating his case to the mediator, but his pleas were ignored.

> **Khumo:** *I approached the Children's Court in Pretoria to request access to my first-born child; I was living in Tsakane at the time. My ex-girlfriend and I both stated our cases to the presiding officer. The officer took the decision that I should collect the child at her mother's residence Saturday morning, return him in the evening, collect him again Sunday morning, and return him in the evening. This is after I stated that I live in Tsakane which is 108 kilometres away; I explained that it would take me at least four hours on public transport to and from Pretoria, when do I get a chance to spend time with my son? And all the presiding officer said was the child is too young and cannot sleepover at my residence.*
>
> **Interviewer:** How did you resolve the case?
>
> **Khumo:** *She referred our cases to the family advocate, who was not much help either. I remember trying to plead my case to her and she stopped halfway through and asked my ex-girlfriend "what are you offering?" She then concluded that there is no access problem because I do not have difficulty seeing the child. I explained to her as well that the current arrangement is difficult for me because of the distance between Tsakane where I stay and Atteridgeville where my child stays. She also dismissed the case stating that the child is too young for sleepovers.*

[34] It should be stated that the parenting plan considers the best interests of the child as paramount. However, the mediator's role is not to impose terms on the parties in mediation but to find common ground. In a situation where both parties fail to reach a consensus, the matter needs to be referred back to the magistrate with recommendations.

The age of the child is one of the factors considered when drawing up the terms of the parental plan. While each case is considered based on its merits, the Office of the Family Advocate has designed a set of guidelines to be considered by mediators when drawing up parental plans. These guidelines do not recommend overnight visitation for children younger than three years old (Preller, 2013: 44). Van Jaarsveld (2018: 78) states that apart from age, the child's maturity, personality, attachment and developmental phase should be considered. She believes this to be in the best interests of the child.

> **Khumo:** *With my second child things were pretty much different with him[35] because it was complicated, I came to know of his existence at birth you know, and under those clouds [of doubt] I asked for DNA [test] and they gave me a DNA [test]; but I was already involved from the first time.[36] I wanted a DNA [test] for my peace sake so I know that the kid is mine. I told her parents I am not going to deny anything, I was sexually involved with your daughter and wanted to take full responsibility, but I want to do that with a free spirit of knowing that this is my child and they agreed.*

Approximately two years after the birth of his first son, Khumo discovered that he had fathered a child with another woman. However, he was sceptical of the paternity of the child mainly because at the time the child was born he was no longer in a relationship with the mother and he learnt about the child during his birth. Being uncertain of the child's paternity, Khumo requested and paid for a paternity test.

> **Khumo**: … *after that they requested R15 000 that is inhlawulo. That was the beginning of quarrels between our family, and I told them I can't pay R15 000. I can't, it is not going directly go to my child and I am not a wealthy person to just give R15 000 for something that is not related to that child's development. I am giving you my word that I will love that child, I will come as much as possible with the distance, is not a problem, I will be there every week if not every two or three times, I will be there to take care of my child financially too, and they declined.*

He states that once the paternity test confirmed him as the father of the child, the maternal side of the family began making unreasonable demands and threatening to deny him access if their demands were not met. The first request from the family was for a R15 000 payment of *inhlawulo.* The second demand was made in the maintenance court, requesting large sums of

[35] Captured verbatim.
[36] From the start.

money from Khumo, including lying about the child's medical needs. When Khumo failed to give in to these demands, the family began to limit his access to the child. In the beginning, he was allowed to visit the child three days per week and given enough time to spend with the child. However, when he failed to live up to the expectations and requests, the family began to limit the time he spent with the child, from three days to one and ultimately a few supervised visits.

> **Khumo:** *She threatened that if I keep pushing her for shared custody, she will go back to KZN, and unfortunately, while we were waiting for the court date, she relocated and only told me when she got to KZN that they had moved. She was so casual on the phone she said: "Hi know that we moved, we are now in KZN." I went back to the social worker and told her my situation, she promised she would call her to find out, but my ex-girlfriend still missed the court date.*
>
> **Interviewer:** What did the magistrate say when she did not pitch?
>
> **Khumo:** *The case was deferred for two occasions and eventually the administration approved that my son was in a different jurisdiction.*[37] *This meant I would have to approach the court where my son is currently located. The question I kept asking the social worker and the magistrate is "what evidence do I have that when I go to KZN, she will not move to another jurisdiction with my son?"*

Khumo explains that he was again subjected to the court system with his second son. This time they were assigned a social worker who was a mediator. He outlines that following the drawing up of the parental plan, both the mother and the child's maternal grandmother threatened to take the child to another province in order to prevent him from ever seeing the child. Sure enough, while they were waiting for a date to sign off the parental plan in the Children's Court, his ex-girlfriend called him to inform him that they had moved to KwaZulu-Natal with the child. Khumo approached the social worker to mediate, however the mother failed to make the court appearance and, the magistrate was informed that the mother had moved to KwaZulu-Natal.

[37] Section 29(1) of the Children's Act states: "An application in terms of section 22(4)(b), 23, 24, 26(l)(b) or 28 may be brought before the High Court, a divorce court in a divorce matter or a children's court, as the case may be, within whose area of jurisdiction the child concerned is ordinarily resident" (Republic of South Africa, 2005: 47). Section 22(4)b relates to an order that is made to the High Court, divorce court or Children Court on application for a parental agreement between both parties, while sections 23 and 24 relate to an application made by an individual to the High Court to request an assignment contact/care of the child and assignment of guardianship respectively (Republic of South Africa, 2005: 44). Finally section 26(I)(b) refers to a court order by a person claiming paternity and section 28 to a court order for either a termination, extension, suspension or restriction of parental responsibilities and rights.

Khumo's case exposes a possible gap that can be exploited by mothers who are determined to deny fathers' access to their children. During the interview, his frustration with the system was visible, mainly because he believed the court failed in the execution of its duties. Among other things, he believed the mother of the child was supposed to be subpoenaed. He believes the system failed both him and his son.

6.5.4. *Zondo's story*

Zondo is a 62-year-old father of five children, three from his previous marriage (25, 21 and 15 years old) and two from the current marriage (20 and 11 years old). The 20-year-old has a different father[38] and therefore Zondo is her stepfather. Zondo records that he was married to his previous wife for seven years, after having cohabitated for over 20 years. Following the divorce, the mother consistently tried to deny him access to his three children (19, 15 and 9 years old at the time). Zondo relates the difficulty of the divorce and how it affected him. Zondo uses the words "*killed me*" to express the range of emotions he went through as a result of being denied access to his children. During a divorce, men tend to suffer a double blow; on the one hand dealing with the challenge, heartache and at times lack of financial resources that result from divorce, while on the other hand having to contend with losing partial and at times full access to their children. Mnyango and Alpaslan (2018: 70) substantiate that fathers tend to lament the loss of their children, family life, and routine far more than they mourn the loss of their ex-lovers.

> **Zondo:** *My divorce was in fact… very… I don't know what the word is. It was not good. So hence it really affected me to be away from them [my children]. The mother was also fighting that I shouldn't have access. So hey… that killed me inside. But at least I have a son with me, my son that I live with, besides the daughter from my wife's side and I try to make time to also see them whenever I can. That helps me now because they are grown up. When they were young… hey I struggled because I didn't have access.*

When Zondo was denied contact with his children, he went through a lot of emotional turmoil. Fathers in a similar situation in the study conducted by the Commission for Gender Equality

[38] This implies that Zondo is a social father to one child.

(2021: 29) report having lost weight, being unable to eat or sleep, and being admitted for psychiatric treatment. Zondo brings to light another important factor in the discussions, that is, the age of the child. He expresses that he began to have better contact with his children when they grew older. When I asked him about the measures he went to, to gain access to his children, this was his response:

> **Zondo:** *I tried to get a court order, but then because she didn't care about it. The violation of the court order would mean she could have ended up getting arrested, something I did not want to see happen. So, I ended up just living with the situation for the sake of the children.*

I probed the phrase used by Zondo in his response, namely "*for the sake of the children*". He outlined that regardless of seeking a court order to gain access to his children, his ex-wife chose to ignore the terms of the order. He further mentioned that he would have approached the court to report his ex-lover's non-compliance with the regulations of the court order. However, he decided against it because he did not want a situation where the mother of his children would be arrested for being in contempt of court. This phrase almost certainly implies that Zondo was directly or indirectly trying to enforce the principle of "*best interest of the child*" while he was fighting with his ex-wife, as he did not want the conflict to spill over to the children; as such he sacrificed himself for the benefit of his children. However, considering the negative effects of a father's absence on children, it can be asked if Zondo's absence really was beneficial to his children.

> **Zondo:** *For the sake of the children and for her not be in trouble with the law. Because she broke the court order knowing what the consequences would be. So, if I was cruel, I could have reported it, but she was going to be arrested and I did not want that. That's why I lived with the situation, but now they are grown-up like I said, at least they are able to make up their minds and decisions. It is no longer a problem.*

Zondo's extract points to the assertion that when children grow older, fathers have more opportunities to be involved. According to Zondo, this is based on the premise that older children have increased autonomy. In Zondo's case, as his children grew older they chose to develop a closer relationship with him, an opportunity he was denied by their mother when they were younger.

6.5.5. Discussion

The failure of the South African court system, the influence of the media, and the disregard of the role fathers play in the well-being of children have been heralded by the participants of this study as some of the biggest challenges facing fathers today. Chauke and Khunou (2014) concur that the media tends to portray negative images of fathers without taking into consideration the structural challenges men face. As alluded to above, some of the participants believed that the South African legislative system favours women over men in custody cases. Some participants maintained that the South African court system appears to endorse parental alienation. This subject has also acquired prominence in the media in recent years. The same notions are also prominent in other countries around the world. A cross-national study conducted in Argentina, Brazil and the United States found that women are generally allocated custody of the child over men (Esteves et al., 2018). Similarly, in South Africa, Poppy Louw (2013) argues that the courts continue to favour women when it comes to awarding custody of children, since in 90 percent of cases women are still being awarded custody (Louw, 2013). Fathers like Mike, Amazing Dad, Khumo and Zondo have engaged in ongoing court battles to gain access to their children and expressed their frustrations with the system. During the interviews, three (Mike, Amazing Dad and Khumo) of the four fathers were still separated from their children, despite having approached the Pretoria magistrate's court, the Children's Court and the DSD. I observed the pain in these men's eyes as they spoke about their experiences as non-resident fathers alienated from their children.

Moreover, while rarely discussed, fathers' mental health suffers when they are denied access to their children. The stress associated with unending court cases, demands for higher maintenance and restricted access to their children tend to contribute to fathers' deteriorating mental well-being. In all cases, fathers expressed the negative effects that being denied access to their children had. For example, the interview with Khumo lasted two hours and 21 minutes, largely because he kept crying during the interview as he shared some of his experiences. This finding corresponds with those of the Commission for Gender Equality (2021: 28) which narrates the deep emotional wounds that being denied access to their children caused. Therefore, denied paternity has the potential to have cumulative negative effects on fathers over the life course.

In 2019, a South African film titled *Losing Lerato* shed some light on the emotional turmoil fathers undergo as a result of being denied access to their children (Zulu, 2019). This film follows a man who after exhausting all recourse, decides to take matters into his own hands by kidnapping his daughter from his estranged wife. This ends up in a hostage situation

(*Losing Lerato*, 2019). This film is based on true events and also indicates the extremes that fathers could possibly go to in order to gain access to their children. Some participants in this study have gone to certain extreme levels to gain access to their children and to foster public support and sympathy.[39]

Mike, Amazing Dad and Khumo each experienced what they perceive to be the failure of the South African court system, in particular the Children's Court. Although each of their cases is unique, some similarities can be identified. One of the key frustrations is the fact that the maintenance division of the magistrate's court seems to respond speedily to cases referred to it while the Children's Court is slower in addressing cases of parental alienation and denied access. It appears maintenance cases are resolved promptly while requests for access cases are sometimes left without a mutual agreement between the parties, like in the case of Khumo. The case of Zondo has shown that at times mothers blatantly ignore the court orders, leaving fathers in the difficult situation having to choose between reporting the non-compliance, which could lead to possible arrest, and simply leaving the mother in the hope that she will agree to a more amicable arrangement. Failure to attend the set date for mediation and subsequently moving the child to another jurisdiction by the mother of Khumo's second child further shows the disregard by some women for the Children's Court and exposes the gaps that exist within the system.

The life course approach emphasises the interconnectedness of people's lives, particularly in families. Children tend to be disproportionately affected by custody battles. In all four cases stated above, the conflict is between the mother and the father, with little or no consideration for the child's rights, feelings, interests or viewpoints. In a study conducted by Lobaka (2017), young adult women voiced their frustration at being caught in the middle of custody battles that were often driven by spite. These young women also indicated how these ongoing parental fights have affected their lives over the life course.

6.6. Frequency of contact

The last theme covers fathers' struggles with maintaining consistent and frequent physical contact with their children.

[39] Unfortunately, I cannot elucidate on the various activities that some fathers have undertaken without indirectly revealing their identity. As such, in protection of the of these fathers' anonymity, this information has been omitted

6.6.1. *I live too far*

The first group of fathers indicated that the frequency with which they physically interact with their children is impeded by the geographic location of their residence.

> **Prince:** *The biggest challenge is living far away from my child; I mean living in a different house and province from my child. An even bigger challenge is that if you miss your child, you don't get to see them like if you were living in the same province 10 or 20 kilometres away.*

The proximity of the father to his children tends to affect the existence of a consistent father–child relationship. Therefore, Prince submits that being a non-resident father is difficult. This is exacerbated by living too far from your children, i.e. in a different province.

> ***Vincent:*** *Limpopo is far,[40] you are unable to go home every weekend to see your child. So seeing your child becomes a planned trip. I think that is the biggest challenge of being a non-resident father.*

Vincent shared similar views to Prince; he is the father of one child. He left his home province of Limpopo and came to Pretoria to take up a position in one of the government departments. Vincent accentuates that the distance between his house in Pretoria and his child's primary home in Limpopo makes it difficult for him to see the child when he wants to. He calls seeing his child a "*planned trip*"; this implies he has to prepare weeks in advance before going home and probably has to set aside money for transport and other necessities on the road.

6.6.2. *I am missing out*

In the sub-theme, "*I am missing out*", participants argued that they tend to miss out on their children's key developmental milestones.

> **Cedric:** *There are some firsts that you are not part of, like [such as] I won't be there to see my son when he starts walking or to experience it when he speaks his first words (saying mommy, daddy or uttering other words). Every time I see him, I think to myself; "wow this person has grown so much and I was not there to see it". Again, it is all about connection, the manner in which you connect with your kid is limited.*

[40] Limpopo is the most northerly province of South Africa. Vhembe district in Limpopo is approximately 420 kilometres from Pretoria, a trip which takes roughly four hours.

One of the most difficult aspects of being a non-resident father, according to Cedric, is missing important milestones in your child's growth and development. He goes on to mention that he is frequently astounded by his children's developmental progress achieved in his absence. Furthermore, his relationship with his children is negatively impacted as a result of this distance.

> **Benny:** *Each and every parent wishes to raise their kid their own way. As a non-resident father, you miss out on the opportunity to influence your child's future in many different ways.*

Benny indicates his need to raise his children a certain way, but is unable to because the child spends the majority of their time with his mother and maternal grandparents. He further notes that as a non-resident father he has limited influence over his child's life and/or his future. This is a view shared by a number of the participants who feel that the limited contact they have with their children ultimately leads to limited or no influence in charting the child's plans, such as their career path and the type of a person they will become. In the narrative shared above by Mike (see section 5.5.1*)*, it is clear that to some extent society (through for example statements made by magistrates) continues to attribute a child's deviant behaviour to father absence.

> **Pat:** *Well you don't have the legitimacy to be exact, you are there but you are also not there. Actually, the boyfriend to the mother or the husband to the mother would be more of a father than you are, because he is able to be there physically and he can afford to be there at Christmas, he is able to be more responsive to what the child wants. The child ends up spending more time with another man than he does with you as the father.*

According to Pat, a non-resident father does not have legitimacy. He defines legitimacy based on his inability to be physically and actively present in the day-to-day raising of his child. Against the backdrop of this definition, he believes his ex-lover's current partner is a more legitimate father than he is. Among other things, he indicates that while he is absent for key events, vacations and milestones, the mother's new lover is always present. Additionally, he adds that his ex-lover's new partner has the advantage of being present for his child's immediate needs.

> **France:** *Not being there for them obviously and seeing them growing, witnessing what they go through on a daily basis, the ups and downs of a child in the presence of their parents, it's a very missing link for me. I mean even though I try to do it on weekends, it does not compensate for five days, it will not be every weekend of every week, it will be as I could, sometimes, twice a month, sometime thrice or once a month, but it, not the same as being a resident father where you see your child grow daily*

France states that one of the challenges he experiences as a non-resident father is the inability to be present and involved in the child's day-to-day activities. He regards himself as a *missing link* in the child's life. Furthermore, France admits that although he has access to his children during weekends, this time is usually too short and does not allow him to make up for the time lost being a non-resident father.

> **Peter:** *When you want to see your child is not like [as if] you just gonna see your child, a matter of now needing to make appointments, you need to call people; you need to bother people at some point. As the father of the child, I feel I should not be required to justify why I need to have access to the child or give reasons why I should be taking the child this week and not the other week. It is so extreme that if I want to see my child, I need to pay someone transport to bring him and pay again to return him. If I pay him to visit me for a holiday, nabo [they] should also pay his transport to return home.*

Peter states that one of the advantages of being a resident father is that you have complete access to your children without having to make appointments or continually call people because you want to speak to your child. He asserts that a father should never have to justify why he needs to see his child. Peter also laments the adjustments that a father must go through following union dissolution, citing among other things that a man would be required to make an appointment in order to have contact with his child. Additionally, he states that on various occasions he was expected to justify his reasons for requesting access to his children.

6.6.3. Discussion

The sub-theme on the limited physical contact highlighted the subjective feelings of non-resident fathers in relation to their contact with children or lack thereof. As expressed above, non-resident fathers are of the view that they are missing pivotal points and moments of their children's growth. Some believe that their absence has made them miss treasured moments like the child's first words or first steps, while others feel like missing out on creating memories

with their children, mainly because even during certain holidays, such as Christmas, access to the child remains with the mother and/or her new partner. Finally, others felt as if they were missing out on the opportunity to influence their children's future. The findings also show that some fathers are of the view that their fathering roles are inferior to those of their children's social fathers. One participant indicated that he felt he did not have the same rights to his child as the child's stepfather.

6.7. Conclusion

There is a widely known Sepedi[41] saying, "*Monna ke nku o llela teng*", which loosely translated means "a man is a sheep, he cries on the inside". This saying is used to suggest that men do not share their feelings. I titled this chapter "In his own voice" because as outlined from the outset, the narratives of men's roles as fathers have usually been studied from the perspective of others such as women and children. This chapter responded to the research question *which and whose positive fathering roles do we exclude by assuming that father presence equals active involvement?* The first theme clearly outlined some of the key challenges that South African men face as non-resident fathers. This was divided into three sub-themes, namely:

- *Parental relationship post union dissolution*
- *Systemic challenges*
- *Frequency of contact*

This chapter covered the challenges men have experienced by virtue of being non-resident fathers and the role played by other extended kin (uncles, aunts, grandparents, older and younger siblings) in aiding or exacerbating these challenges. The responses in most of the interviews show that fathers have experienced some backlash at some point in the life course from the mothers of their children, especially as it pertains to issues of access to the child and maintenance. There is a correlation between a father's ability to pay maintenance and access to his children. This implies that fathers are more likely to be granted access to their children if they are able to pay maintenance regularly (Madhavan et al., 2014: 445; Human, 2018: 36). However, responses in this chapter show that the correlation between maintenance and father access is more complex than this. There is also a belief among the participants of this study that the South African maintenance system tends to favour women while vilifying men. The Children's Court is seen to be deaf to the plight of fathers by, among other things, appointing

[41] Sepedi is one of South Africa's eleven official languages, mostly spoken in Polokwane in the Limpopo province.

mediators who are either incompetent or who are biased against fathers. In most of the responses, fathers believed the law is quick to act in maintenance cases but slow to address parental alienation.

The role of the extended kin in the upbringing of children featured strongly in this research. Seven of the participants reported that their children are living with their grandparents without both biological parents. Twelve participants indicated that the mother is the primary caregiver but she lives with her parents. In the remaining four cases, the mothers are remarried or re-partnered. The role of the extended kin was explored as part of this theme; it became clear that the extended kin plays a pivotal role in either aiding or hindering the father–child relationship. It was found that in those cases where a biological father had a favourable relationship with his child's maternal grandparents, he was more likely to have access to his child. Conversely, if the relationship was unfavourable, the maternal family could play a key role in denying the father access to the child, especially if the mother still lived with her parents. Maternal grandparents' disapproval of the father is often linked to his actions pre or post the breakup and/or his inability to pay *inhlawulo* and in some cases the father's inability to pay maintenance. The responses also indicate that a positive relationship between the father and the grandparents after the dissolution of the relationship tended to promote a father's access to his children. In all instances in this study where the maternal grandparents were fond of the father, he was allowed full access to the child. A mother's ability to go against her parents' decisions to deny the father access was also outlined. There were cases where fathers believe their ex-partners denied them access because they wanted to honour and/or respect their parents' words. Conversely, other participants recorded that although the maternal grandparents tried to deny them access, the mothers could resist this pressure that allowed them to have continued access to their children. In other cases, aunts, older sisters and cousins were involved as mediators to ensure that fathers were granted access to their children.

Fathering children out of wedlock has caused a cumulative disadvantage for some of the participants in this study. The life course perspective defines cumulative disadvantage as being when one disadvantage leads to another in an individual's life course. This chapter indicates that life events that occurred at one point in the participants' life course had ripple effects in subsequent trajectories. Trajectories, which include unplanned pregnancies, divorce, relationship dissolutions, and relocations, have affected participants' abilities to sufficiently execute their role as physically and/or emotionally present fathers. The principles of linked lives are also apparent in this chapter because while participants faced systemic, relational, or societal challenges, their inability to be present has affected others such as their residential and non-residential children. Furthermore, this study found a firm link between

fathers and their children; as such, fathers tend to suffer from mental health disorders as a result of having restricted access to their children. This finding corroborates the life course perspective principle of linked lives which states that a change in an individual's life within the family affects other members of the family. However, fewer studies have focused on the negative psychological trauma men experience as a result of being denied access to their children.

It should from the outset be clear that the fathers are not merely passive receivers of life events but had made significant decisions that formed their lives. Therefore, the decision to be a non-resident fathers was not merely handed over to these men but they took such decisions themselves. These decisions included ending marriages, dissolving relationships and relocating to other provinces. Some of the decisions made by the participants may be regarded as transitions in the individual trajectories of the participants' lives, but owing to the interconnectedness of lives, such decisions are also turning points for their children whose lives are intensely altered because of these decisions Despite the fact that these life events were important to men, in the context of human agency it should be noted that the participants took the decision. Some took these decisions in the full awareness of the possible consequences that might follow, for example when Khumo asked for a paternity test he was aware of the subsequent push back he would receive from his ex-partner and her family.

The information shows that the presence of material resources enhances the fathers' opportunities to be present in their children's lives. This is expressed by among others some fathers' ability to take time off work to spend time with their children. In the same light, fathers who were unemployed indicated that their employment status had been used as a barrier to deny them access to their children. Therefore, when lives are linked the parental income tends to affect the children. Therefore, a father's presence or absence in the lives of his children can have a cumulative advantage or disadvantage for his children.

The next chapter will cover men's conceptualisation of the term "responsible fathering", with a particular focus on the caregiving role that men continue to play in the upbringing of their children. The chapter will also trace participants' experiences of being fathered.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fathers' experiences of being fathered and the role of the extended family

7.1. Introduction

Chapter 7 deals with fathers' experiences of being fathered as well as the lessons they may have learnt from their own fathers that they are currently applying with their children. The study began with the premise that a father's experience of being fathered plays a major role in how he executes his role as a father. This premise is based on the research conducted by among others Ratele, Shefer and Clowes (2012), Makhanya and Matthias (2017) and Madiba and Nsiki (2017). Participants fell within one of the four categories; firstly, those who had no relationship with their father because their parents were divorced, or the father lived in another town and seldom came home. Part of this category was fathers who were classified by the participants as physically present but emotionally unavailable; these fathers hardly ever spent time in conversation with their children. There were also a few fathers who reported having no relationship with their biological fathers because they had passed away while they were still young. The second group of fathers reported that they did not have a good relationship with their fathers when they were young, but this relationship improved as they grew older, particularly when they achieved a certain level of independence. The third group of fathers was raised by their stepfathers. It is important to distinguish between the biological and the social father in this context because as the data below will show, most of the participants did not consider social fathers as fitting replacements for the void left by their biological fathers. The final group reported that they had a good relationship with their fathers. Nevertheless, whether present or not, some participants reported having learnt something from their biological fathers, while some men reported that their biological fathers' absence taught them the value of being physically and emotionally available to their children.

Fatherhood remains largely socially constructed and to an extent practised through years of social observation of one's own and other fathers. Therefore, fathers' experience of being fathered is one of the important influencing factors for how men become fathers themselves. The type of father that raised him often shapes a father's view of fathering and fatherhood; it is mainly because of their fathers that men tend to learn what to do and what not to do when they become fathers. From a life-course perspective, this phenomenon is known as linked lives. As mentioned in the theory chapter, a linked life simply refers to the interdependence of individual lives. Of interest to this study is the concept of intergenerational links between parents and their children. There are two main approaches theorised in this regard, the first

being the modelling approach, which suggests that men tend to approach fathering and fatherhood in the same way as the men who raised them (Bar-On & Scharf, 2014). This implies that men learn to be fathers by observation, thus creating a challenge for the men who were raised in single-mother households. Therefore, the role played by social fathers and extended kin becomes important. The modelling approach argues that fathers are merely imitating the fathers (both biological and social) that raised them. In the narratives below words such as "*he had no choice that's how he was raised*" will feature. This denotes that participants believed that their fathers fathered a certain way because that is how they were socialised. For example, men become violent because a violent father raised them. The second approach is the compensatory approach, which implies that when men become fathers they make sustained and deliberate efforts to avoid repeating the mistakes of their fathers. These men believe that their fathers could have fathered them better and they in turn do their best to give to their children all that they did not receive from their fathers; this ranges from financial support to emotional availability and involvement in activities that were originally reserved for mothers. Some men in this study used their fathers' perceived mistakes as a template for what not to do with their own children.

All the men in this study are non-resident fathers, many of them are physically absent for more than a week at a time. Therefore, the role of the extended kin cannot be taken lightly; it is plausible that the extended kin interacts more frequently with children than the fathers in this study. It is thus important to explore the role played by the extended kin in the socialisation and upbringing of children regardless of whether or not the father is present. It should be noted that extended kin, in this case, relates to both the maternal and paternal sides of the children fathered by the men who participated in this study.

7.2. Father's relationship with own father

The first section of this chapter reports on the questions posed to participants on their relationship with their biological fathers. In the absence of a biological father, a follow-up question was posed to explore whether participants had other father figures, such as their mother's lovers, uncles, grandfathers or other males in the community. As alluded to above, there are four categories of fathers identified under this theme: those who had no relationship with their biological fathers; those who only developed a relationship with their fathers when they were young adults; those who were raised by stepfathers either because the father was absent or had passed away; and those who had a good relationship with their fathers.

7.2.1. We have no relationship

The majority of participants in this study posited that they did not have a relationship with their biological fathers. This theme looks at some of the reasons why fathers did not have a relationship with their own fathers.

> **Nkosi:** *No, it was not that good, not that good at all.*
>
> **Interviewer:** *Please elaborate.*
>
> **Nkosi:** *No, he was a father because of giving birth to me, supporting me, the support was not there, and financially it was there, but emotionally he was not there.*

Nkosi co-resided with his father from the time he was born until his father passed away in 2008. When questioned about their relationship, he asserted that he did not have a good relationship with his father. Nkosi describes his father as merely a man who gave birth; he maintains that his father was emotionally absent. Nkosi's narrative strengthens the argument by researchers who maintain that a father's physical presence does not automatically translate to involvement (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b). The fathers matter research conducted by Heartlines describes these types of men as present–absent fathers (Heartlines, 2020: 15). Furthermore, in his research on daughters raised without their biological fathers, Lobaka (2017) also found that fathers might be physically in the household, but fail to contribute to the financial and emotional well-being of the child. However, it should again be noted that with high unemployment rates in the country, it is not always possible for men to provide financially for their children.

> **Lynton:** *The relationship with my father, the biggest problem with it was he was a very silent man, he was not the kind of person you would ask anything. There are things that I had to go and find out from other people who were grown up, because my father wasn't the kind of person who talked to his children. You know sometimes when you have a lot of brothers and they are around the yards you tend to compete for your father's time. Sometimes he can't even talk to any of you because he is busy. But like I said, my father was a difficult man and sometimes you would think that he intentionally keeps information from you.*

Children raised in a household where the father is absent (emotionally or otherwise) are often left with the decision to learn on their own. Lynton explains that his father's general silence in the household led him to search for information elsewhere. According to Amos (2013: 67), this type of parenting where a father makes few demands and has few conversations with the child

can be classified as an uninvolved type of parent. Unfortunately, research shows information sought by children without parental supervision and influence is not always accurate. However, it is worth noting that in an African context paternal involvement usually takes place within an extended family kinship system (Rabe, 2018: 17: Mwoma, 2015: 420). Therefore, the "*other people who are grown-up"* that Lynton refers to in the extract could be other members of the family such as uncles, grandfathers and/or older brothers. However, it can also refer to peers and other members of the community who did not always have his best interests at heart. In research conducted among African American boys, Ellis (2009) argued that when a father is physically or emotionally absent, children tend to seek solace and guidance in older deviant role models. Furthermore, Lynton notes that a rivalry developed among his siblings owing to the limited time each had with the father.

> **France**: *Yhoo! That old school. My father was an old school type, there was a presence but there was no support. But you won't blame him because the context of how they grew up is something else that plays a role, because are they are fathers that's it. They are tigers or lions in the house, no close relationship, no affinity; nothing! He was present, but presence does not necessarily mean catering for all the needs; physical, emotional, psychological. Our fathers were not brought up in the manner. And once we turned 18, our fathers regarded us as men and basically… actually, I started fending for myself when I was about 13–14 years old, despite the fact that I had the presence of my father in the house, so I was literally selling and doing whatever I could do, working part-time jobs ko di shopong [at certain shops] just to fend for myself*.

France describes his father as an old-school type of father, who was merely physically present but provided no emotional, financial or psychological support. He uses the depiction of a lion and a tiger to describe his father. This depiction implies that his father was strict and possibly feared by everyone in the house. Like a lion, this father had no empathy or sympathy for his children and hence France struggled to establish a relationship with him. France's narrative is similar to that of the mineworkers' interviews in Rabe (2006) who also described their fathers as *lions.* France continues that he was forced to provide for himself without the help of his father at an early age, implying that although he lived with a physically present father, he had to find ways to purchase things that he wanted that the father could not provide. Interestingly, France does not blame his father for how he was raised, rather he believes his father was also replicating what he had learnt from his own father. The life course perspective terms this intergenerational links, which suggests that fathers tend to replicate their own experiences of

being fathered with their own children. As such, because France was raised by a lion of a father, he replicates this with his own children. However, we established in the last chapter that France intends to be a different kind of father to his children than his father. As a result, while intergenerational links exist, fathers still have life course agency over their own lives.

> **Tumza:** *We have no relationship. I know my father, but I think at the age of three maybe four, he divorced my mother, he was like coming once in a while dropping in, and we didn't have this father–son relationship till now. It would have been helpful to have a relationship with him because now I am going through the same situation of being he passed through [being a non-resident father]. It sounds funny but it happens. Anyways, no, I have no relationship with him.*

Tumza's parents divorced when he was young, and he states his father was physically absent for long periods of time following the divorce. As a result, establishing a good father–son relationship with his biological father proved tough. Tumza mentions that he is now a non-resident father of two children, and that he believes that having a relationship with his father would have been good for him because he has already travelled the path. He believes that if he had had a relationship with his non-resident biological father, he would have been better equipped to deal with the challenges of becoming a non-resident father himself. Tumza alludes to the principle of linked lives that states that a father's role transition through work and family domains shapes their children's role transition through the same domains (Bengtson & Allen, 1993).

> **Solomon:** *Growing up I had no relationship with my father, it was difficult to have a relationship with someone who was never home. See my father lived and worked in Gauteng for most of my childhood life. We saw him once or twice a year. Le moo [even there] he never took time to spend with his children. Plus my mother will always threaten me about him, gore [saying that] when your father gets here, I will tell him of all your naughtiness. So ke gotse kemo tshaba [I grew up being afraid of him], I saw him as something scary. This man used to slap every chance he got, so nna I thought he hated me. So no, we did not have a good relationship.*

Solomon recalls having a strained relationship with his father, owing to the fact that he worked as a migrant worker in Gauteng whilst his family lived in Gauteng and was only allowed to visit once or twice a year. He says the distance made it impossible to form a bond with his father, which was exacerbated by the fact that his father was also portrayed by others such as his

mother as somebody to be feared. Solomon's father was a distant disciplinarian, and despite the fact that he only visited home once a year, he was still used as an object of punishment. Solomon perceived his father's primary function in the family as that of a "punisher" or law-enforcer, which further alienated him. He adds that this led him to feel that his father disliked him, since the majority of their interactions involved physical punishment.

In the preceding section, three representations of fathers are visible: a) fathers as lions or tigers, b) fathers as silent figures, and c) fathers as distant disciplinarians. These types of personality were cited by study participants as the primary reason they were unable to have a relationship with their biological fathers. The fathers who fathered the study's participants were often emotionally and/or physically absent. Some participants believed that if their fathers were present they would have prepared them for life as non-resident fathers.

7.2.2. Our relationship improved

Some participants reported that they did not have a good relationship with their fathers while growing up. The reasons for this include the fact that fathers were generally quiet in the household, or fathers were abusive, and/or fathers spent a majority of their time in the company of others, such as friends. However, these participants noted that relationships with their fathers improved as they became older.

> **Johnny:** *Ke godile ko diplasing tsa Mamosa ko Schwaza, koo Ntate o utlwa fela ga o dirile phoso. So relationship yaka le timer was not good growing up. E improvile fela ha ke gola ke simolla go bereke (I grew up in the rural areas in Mamosa in Schweizer-Reneke,[42] there you only get to hear your father's voice when you have made a mistake. So a relationship with my father was not good growing up. Our relationship only improved when I started working.)*

Johnny was also raised by a resident father but he remembers him as not emotionally present and generally silent. Johnny declares that while growing up the only time his father spoke to him was when he was guilty of something. Rush and Seward (2015) maintain that in certain non-western countries like Vietnam, fathers are viewed as symbols of authority and as disciplinarians. This is still a reality in certain communities in South Africa as well. However, like France, Johnny believes that his father fathered in this fashion because he did not know otherwise. Johnny maintains that the relationship began to improve as he grew older. Such change in a father–son relationship may be attributed to the fact that as sons grow older, fathers begin to perceive them as men in their own right. Once the status of "a man" is granted

[42] Schweizer-Reneke is a farming community located in the North West province.

to a boy, he commands a certain level of respect and this gains him acceptance into manhood. As outlined in the literature review chapter, this rite of passage can be linked to a boy's accumulation of wealth, independence, fathering a child, or entering into marriage (Becker & Ricardo, 2015: 2). For Johnny, the rite of passage was granted when he started working.

> **Cedric:** *I think my relationship with my father developed more when I got married, because I am able to tell my father about my marriage dynamics to the point where I even get to know the other side of his own marriage to my mom. Those things were not exposed to me or I never got to know before I got married. My father on a social level neh*[43] *is one guy that does not mind sitting here with you drinking beer together alright I joke with my father and my mother. Naturally, I talk right and I realise one thing the more I talk jokes and talk too much neh, I get to see the other side of him that I don't know because he is quiet, so in terms of relationship-wise if I can extend it neh, my father is a responsible guy, my father loves his kids because he is quiet. My father is there for his sisters and brothers like any other man he drinks, right [meaning "sure"], but my father is always there, he is not those guys who will sleep out. So, in a nutshell, the relationship with my father for me, we have a good relationship.*

Cedric also confirms Becker and Ricardo's (2015: 2) assertion that marriage is an important phase in the passage from childhood to manhood. He narrates that when he was growing up his father was always quiet and never engaged in conversation with him as a son. However, Cedric began to see his relationship with his father improve after he got married. He refers to his father as someone he can go to when he needs to discuss the dynamics in his marriage. As such, the search for marital advice and lessons has enhanced the relationship between Cedric and his father. Cedric describes his father as a man who takes care of his responsibilities, which are his children and his extended family. However, beyond provision, he describes his father as a loving man who takes care of his children and his siblings. In this description, he emphasises that although his father occasionally drinks alcohol, he makes it a point to always go back home at the end of his drinking festivities. Cedric also notes that sharing a glass of beer is one way that he bonds with his father.

> **Zamile:** *like I said ke tswa ko vredefort, now batsadi baka had to leave us re le ba nyane ka 1990, ka re setse re le 4 le bo abuti baka batsadi ba rona ba sebetsa potch now ntate*

[43] Neh is a verbal cue used by the speaker to seek confirmation from the listener; it is mostly used to maintain the flow of the conversation. However, neh is also used as slang language to mean "no."

waka ke one of those he a typical Xhosa, when he come home ntho ya pele le bolela dibe a discipline ntate waka o nne a sa shape o nne a moera[44] *[both laughing] askies ka language.O nne a o ruba, and we always knew that ntate waka and nne re hore re kgalemelwa ka ene a le seko. Ha ke tla ke tlalefa ke bona ntho tse dinwe ke hotse ke ba bang wisher hokare ke ngwana wako next door, because ntate mo le o nne a dlala bolo le bana ba hae or a tsamaya le bona streteng, i never walk tropong nge le ha re saye o tse nex re walk nge hara tropong ele ntho e thata until ke moholo ke le secondary. (Like I said, I am from Vredefort*[45]*, we were still young when my parents left me and my three brothers around 1990 to work in Potchefstroom. Now my father is a typical Xhosa man, when he came home, the first thing he was told of were all the misdemeanours committed in his absence. Now my father did not just spank us he beat us up. Every time we did something, we were warned that our father will be told when he arrives. I grew up wishing I could be the child next door because I always saw him play with his father, they would walk in the street together; I had never walked in town with my father, this never happened until I was in secondary school.)*

Like Johnny, Zamile grew up in a rural community in the Free State. He narrates that he did not have a good relationship with his father while growing up. He attributes this to the fact that both his parents left him and his brother with relatives in Vredefort and took up work in Potchefstroom. Although Potchefstroom is only 60 km away, Zamile's parents only came home on weekends. Zamile describes his father as a *typical Xhosa man*, who is strict and metes out occasional punishment to his children. According to Zamile, the relatives they lived with kept a mental logbook of all the wrongdoings he and his brothers committed during the week and these would be told to his father at the weekend, as he would then punish them. Zamile continues that the punishment was so severe that it did not qualify as a spanking but rather a beating; he used the Afrikaans slang word "*moer*" which means a violent beating. The role of a father as a distant disciplinarian features heavily in Zamile's narrative. Mahati, Moore and Seekings (2016: 16) assert that fathers in West African and southern African countries are still viewed as sources of moral authority and discipline. I asked Zamile about the current state of his relationship with his father. This is how he responded:

Zamile: *It improved and le nne ha a re bontsa mabaka a hae why a nne a re treater jwalo. Although we understand there were other ways around. Vredefort mo South Africa I believe emo top 10, [or] top five of the places tse di poor mo South Africa, now ntate waka*

[44] Slang word imported from Afrikaans to indicate a severe beating, often used as a swear word and hence he apologises for his language after using this word.
[45] Vredefort is a farming town in the Free State Province.

did want he did o nne a batla hore beya tseleng, he wanted something for rona, in a way o nne a leka gore controller, according to him hore re be mo releng today now. I remember ha ntate waka a ho starter chencha ke after bo abuti waka Xolile[46] yes, base bale ko varsity the ke ha a starter a ba soft. (It improved, he gave us reasons why he treated us in that way. Although we understand but there were other ways around it. Vredefort is among the top ten maybe even five poorest towns in South Africa so my father wanted to discipline us because he wanted us to make something of ourselves. According to him, we are where we are today because he was strict. My father started to change when my brother went to university; he started to become soft.)

Zamile posits that as he and his brother grew older, their relationship with their father improved. Furthermore, he expresses that through a discussion their father was able to offer reasons why he was hard on them growing up. The main reason is that they were raised in one of the poorest towns in the country and their father was hard as a way of protecting them from falling prey to the poverty of the area. Their father used his violence as a way to keep them in line and, in his view, this is why they all ended up going to university and making something of their lives. Zamile introduces another rite of passage, which is the child's completion of secondary education and/or being admitted at an institution of higher learning. Zamile and his brother seem to have earned their father's respect when they complete secondary school. He also seems to suggest that the reason why his brother and he were the first ones to finish matric among their kin is that they were punished regularly while his cousins were not. Zamile and his brothers were beaten into obedience. This is consistent with a study conducted by Clowes, Lazarus and Ratele, (2010) which found that men tend to use violence as a way of instilling fear to get respect from others. However, Zamile reports that his relationship with his father began to improve as they grew older; in his view, his father became soft. However, as Ratele (2013: 9) correctly notes, "soft" can potentially have negative connotations which may call a father's manhood and masculinity into question.

Mike: *Basically like have a conversation, we have never had a conversation about anything, the only time we ever spoke with him was when my mother said he did one, two, three, he was the enforcer basically.*

Interviewer: So he played the role of the disciplinarian?

[46] Pseudonym

Mike: *Yes, but in terms of school activities, what's happening in our lives he was never there.*

Mike was also raised by a father who was mostly a disciplinarian but never spent quality time with his children or in the activities of interest to them such as school and extramural activities. He outlines that the few times his father spoke to him were to reprimand him or when he was enforcing punishment for some kind of transgression that Mike had committed. Mike's account corroborates Zamile's and Johnny's, indicating that the physically present fathers of some of the participants in this study were mostly silent in the homes and were only called into action to inflict punishment and reinforce discipline.

Tumelo: *Where to begin? (Pause!) My relationship with my father was not the best for a number of years when I was growing up, he was never home. I hardly ever saw the man growing up. I remember there were nights when I would stay up all night just so that I can see him. He came home very late and went to work very early. It was only when I turned 18 that I found out the real reason for his absence in the house. Our relationship improved after I went off to university, I saw more of him in his old age and in my young adult years. Speaking of it now, we have a good relationship now, we talk as often as possible even though most times we talk through my mother.*

Tumelo indicates that growing up he did not have a good relationship with his father. Tumelo's father was a present–absent type of father. The Heartlines (2020: 15) describe this type of a father as a biological father who is physically present but emotionally and/or financially absent in the child's life. In Tumelo's case, while his father provided some financial assistance to the family, his physical presence in the raising of his four sons was virtually absent. He continued that as he grew older the reasons for his father's physical absence because apparent. I asked Tumelo to elaborate on these reasons – he paused for a while and then said that he was not comfortable talking about this subject. However, he responded as follows:

Tumelo: *I do not feel comfortable talking about it, but at the age of 18 I found out that my father had a whole other life. He had another family, a girlfriend, and three children. I think I will leave it there*.

Tumelo discovered that one of the reasons why his father spent time away from his marital home was because he was spending time with his other family. Although Tumelo did not feel

comfortable divulging all the information, it is clear that Tumelo's father was having an affair. Tumelo's father's extramarital affair became an important turning point in the lives of his children. The time Tumelo's father spent in the company of his new family took away his family time with his wife and children. This is why Thorson (2013) argues that infidelity affects the relationship of all linked individuals. Tumelo only found out about his father's affair when he was in his late teens, but it is apparent that it had a profound impact on him, which may explain why he was hesitant to discuss it during the interview.

> **Etsile:** *No, no, no, growing up I had no relationship with my father, I have always been on my mother's side, my father and I did not have a good relationship. It is only now that I am older than we are getting to build a bond with my father. I figured it is best to leave the past in the past.*

Etsile, like the other participants, says he was raised by his maternal side of the family and had a strained relationship with his father. He does say, though, that when he became older, he opted to form a relationship with his biological father. Etsile believes it is important to concentrate on the future and forget about his father's faults in the past. He accordingly made a conscious decision to look past his father's flaws and focus on developing a relationship with his father. Etsile's decision may be beneficial not only to him but also to those whose lives are intertwined with his, such as his children.

This section confirms Mwoma's (2015: 420) research findings, which argue that Kenyan fathers do not play a direct role in the education and socialisation of children, especially girl-children. This function is left to the mother and the extended family. As such, fathers are viewed mainly as "emotionally distant disciplinarians" the family should obey and respect unconditionally (Siegel, 1996: 9). However, fathers played the role of preparing boys to be esteemed men in the community, and the passing on of skills such as herding, hunting, weeding, and building structures begins when a boy turns seven (Mwoma, 2015: 421). Of note to the life course perspective is the fact that the fathers of the participants merely replicated the behaviour learnt from their own fathers. However, the participants of this study communicated the choices they have made to chart a different course for the sake of their children.

7.2.3. I was raised by a stepfather

The reality of the South African fatherhood landscape is heavily affected by unemployment, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and other lifestyle diseases (Ratele et al., 2012). This has led to the death of many South African men, leaving many children fatherless. Divorce and relationship breakdown also affect the father–son relationship. This category of father reported having had little or no opportunity to develop a relationship with their biological fathers either because they had died while they were still young, or had remarried, or relocated.

> **Prince:** *I have never had a relationship with my father, I was raised by my stepfather, my father and I never had a relationship. We don't have that father–son relationship and I don't want that to happen between me and my son. It is a father's responsibility to keep in contact with his children even if he works in Gauteng and his children are left in the rural areas. My father worked in the mines and never bothered to come back to check up on me or even visit, so we never had a genuine relationship.*

Prince outlines that he has never had a positive relationship with his father mainly because he left them when they were still young. Prince's father left Limpopo in search of employment in the mines of Gauteng and Prince was left in the care of his mother. Prince's father never came back to Limpopo to visit the family and Prince's mother later married another man. Prince kept emphasising that the responsibility of a father is to develop a relationship with his children. When I questioned him about whether he is considered himself a responsible father, he clearly stated that he felt he is not responsible mainly because he seems to be repeating his father's mistakes by not developing a bond with his child. Prince wants to rectify his father's mistakes by developing a relationship with his child, but believes the fact that he is both a non-resident and a migrant father[47] restricts him in executing this task. When I questioned him about his relationship with his stepfather, this is how he responded:

[47] A migrant father in this context refers to a father who left their place of birth (mostly rural provinces) in search of work opportunities in another province. While many of these men spend the majority of their time in the city of residence, many still identify with the places of their birth. This may be attributed to the fact that their children, parents, siblings and sometimes their wives are still living in their birth provinces. This point is strengthened by the fact that the streets of Gauteng are usually empty over long weekends and during holidays such as Easter and Christmas because most people "go home". This term refers to visiting family in the provinces of their birth. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that although some people buy and build houses in Gauteng, they do not completely regard themselves as Gauteng residents. Furthermore, Gauteng remains the province with the highest percentage of domestic in-flow migrancy (Statistics South Africa 2018).

> **Prince:** *Well it was good because he will be able to put food on the table. He was able to guide us growing up and make sure we live by the laws and values of society, you have that respect, he guides you, and he has been supportive and so forth, so it was a very good one.*

Social fathers play a major role in children's upbringing especially in the absence of the biological father. As outlined in chapter 2, in the absence of a biological father, a social father can play a key part in modelling fathering skills for male children. Prince outlines that a social father, which he describes as a "stepfather", raised him. As part of the probe and with the full understanding that social fathers may at times fill the void left by the biological father, I asked Prince about his relationship with his stepfather and he classified the relationship as *good*. Prince notes that he had a good relationship with his stepfather because, unlike his father, he was able to provide for the family's financial and emotional needs as well as provide much-needed guidance to the children in the house. Prince adds that this social father was able to teach him about his own culture and how to put this culture into practice. Amos (2013) posits that the key to parenting in an African tradition is the father's ability to pass on his knowledge about culture and traditional folk tales to his children. This is done to preserve cultural knowledge and to ensure continuity.

> **Pat:** *Well monna (man) you know I feel a bit unlucky, so my real biological dad died when I was three, I never really got to know him. My mother married again. I was raised by my grandmother after my mother remarried. She [my grandmother] was for me everything, a mother figure, and a father figure. I only started to connect with my father, my second father of course at the age of fourteen. But then, he also migrated to Johannesburg, he only came home once or twice a year but we were fine and we were cool.*

When it comes to being fathered, Pat regards himself as unfortunate, mainly because his biological father passed away when he was three years old and his maternal grandmother raised him. The maternal grandmother fulfilled this parenting role not because Pat's mother was unable to, but rather because she remarried. Grandmothers continue to play an important role socialisation and the raising of grandchildren. In their study, Obioha and T'soeunyane (2012: 253) found that in Lesotho some of the participants' grandparents are often valued for their ability to educate children about sex, marriage and family issues. As such, these participants indicated having left their children in the care of the maternal grandparents after they entered into marriages. Makofane (2015) also found children raised by grandparents tended to advance better academically than their counterparts raised by single parents. Pat's mother married but Pat struggled to build a relationship with his stepfather because Pat lived

with his grandmother while his mother lived elsewhere with her husband. Furthermore, his second father (as he refers to him) migrated to Gauteng in search of work prospects. He explains that he began to develop a relationship with his stepfather at the age of fourteen. However, shortly after that his stepfather accepted work in Johannesburg, and this meant he could only come home once or twice annually.

> **Peter:** *I don't have a relationship with him [my father]. I know him, we have met once, but was just like meeting someone on the street, and it did not feel like I am meeting my father. So we did not even sit down to talk because there was generally nothing to talk about. My mother raised me as a single mother. She got married to someone else so that person became a father, but I still refuse to call him father.*

Peter expresses that he had no relationship with his father while he was growing up. He only met his estranged father once and during this meeting little information was exchanged between them. He likened their first and only interaction to that of *strangers meeting* on the street. He claims that they had nothing to share. Peter continues that his mother married another man who in his words became his father. However, he emphasised that he refused to refer to the man as a father. It is interesting to note that although Peter's mother remarried, Peter still thought of his mother as a single mother. This partly shows that in some instances, although present, a social father is often not referred to or regarded as a legitimate father by the children. Children's perceptions of social fathers, particularly mothers' new lovers and husbands, is a subject that needs to be studied in depth.

Research on absent fatherhood tends to take a narrow view of a father's absence without taking into account fathers who are deceased or in prison. Death and imprisonment are major turning points for the people left behind, especially children. For some men in this study, the death of a father affected the family's socioeconomic status. Participants in this study reported that their mothers re-partnered and/or remarried following the death of their husbands and lovers. Remarriage is also a major turning point in the life of a child, especially a boy child. The section above suggests that there may be conflict between boy-children and the mother's new lover. This is made apparent by some participants' blatant refusal to accept their stepfather as their fathers. This research has confirmed many studies that posit that stepfathers play a pivotal role in the raising of their stepchildren (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018a: 7). However, the stepchildren do not always recognise and/or acknowledge the role of a stepfather. Finally, this section also shows the importance of grandparents, particularly in

instances where the mother remarries, as certain participants referred to the role of the maternal grandparents in their upbringing.

7.2.4. We have a good relationship

The group of fathers discussed below recorded that they had a good relationship with both their biological and/or social fathers.

> **Itu:** *My relationship [with my father] is an open relationship, whereby if I have any type of challenge or problem I would be able to engage [him] on such matters. This makes all those types of matters that one [I] come across, such as challenges of life, to be easily resolved. He also guides me on some matters of life.*

Itu describes his relationship with his father as an open one; open in this context means that he is able to approach his father on every matter without fear of a negative reaction and/or judgement. Itu continues that he is able to approach his father whenever he experiences hardships in his life. Itu's father also plays an important role by being a moral guide for his son.

> **Khumo**: *My relationship with my father was quite good, my parents separated at a time that's unknown to me. So I stayed with my mother and her family, my mother was renting out and my father was just on the next street, so growing up I had access to both of them. I would walk to my father's house to chat with him, talk with him, and decide to sleep that side. If I want to eat breakfast that side I would eat breakfast that side, if I want to be that side I would be that side. Technically, even when I started school, I would walk out of the house in the morning go start [pass by] at my father's place to say "hi daddy I need money for school" and I would collect it and I enjoyed that. I remember when he wanted to make it a weekly thing, I was like no I will come and get it every day. When I was in high school he was like no seumdala [you are old now], you can have your budget thing, let me give all your money for the week, but I refused because I wanted to collect it so that we could have a father-son relationship. So in a nutshell I had full access to him and we love it too.*

Khumo represents children who enjoyed having a solid relationship with both his parents after their separation. What Khumo describes is commonly known as co-parenting. He expressed that although he lived with his mother, he never felt the absence of his father, mainly because his father lived a street away from Khumo's maternal grandparents' home where he lived with

his mother. Khumo describes how his mother allowed him to visit his father whenever he wanted to. Khumo's narrative brings to the fore the argument that close proximity between the child and the non-resident father may encourage father–child interactions. Furthermore, Khumo expresses that he made a deliberate effort to see his father every day; as such every morning before going to school he would pass by his father's house to collect his pocket money for the day and to greet his father. Khumo maintains that when he started secondary school he was given the option to collect his pocket money weekly, but he refused because for him collecting the money every morning allowed him the opportunity to spend time with his father.

> ***Amazing Dad:*** *My father died when I was 12 years, and also before that, I spend less time with my father because he was a freedom fighter, he was always called on duty in Mozambique to attend to the struggle. The three years towards his death our relationship was good, we were very close. I am the youngest at home, so he was already an old man when I was born. My father loved his children, but his work was very demanding.*

Amazing Dad's father was married to six different women and fathered a total of twelve children, of whom Amazing Dad was the youngest. He mentions that his father was very old when he was born and passed away before Amazing Dad turned twelve. However, he outlines that he had a good relationship with his father especially during the last three years before his death. Amazing Dad posits that his father was torn between his work and his love for his children, and in addition he spent most of his time in exile.

7.2.5. Discussion

The analysis of the responses in this study shows a variety of father–son relationships. Some of the study participants were raised by fathers who were generally physically present but emotionally absent. These fathers were generally silent, distant and lacked empathy. These fathers were viewed as distant disciplinarians and objects to be feared by children. Some participants expressed that physical punishment was relegated to their fathers. This meant that, whenever a child did something wrong, the matter would be referred to the father when he returned home; in some cases, these matters waited until the weekend. However, participants justified their fathers' abusive behaviour, anti-social personalities and lack of communication. The first reason given was that fathers are "old school"; this simply means that the fathers came from a different generation and were not prepared to be emotionally available to their children. It also means that this cohort of fathers was merely replicating what

they had learnt from their own fathers. Linked to this justification is the fact that most of the participants were raised in rural or farming communities in provinces like the North West, KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State. Participants believed their fathers were not trained on modern parenting approaches since they were exposed to rigid parenting styles as children. Additionally, in these areas emotionally involved fathers are often viewed as soft and thus this is a sign of weakness.

Some, like Prince, reported having had a father figure in the form of a stepfather who was able to form and maintain the father–son bond as well as fill the gap that was left by the biological father. These social fathers were able to meet the family's financial and emotional needs and guide the children, teaching them about their culture and instilling values onto them. However, these participants admitted that not having a biological father in their lives affected them growing up and, as a result, they want to prevent history from repeating itself with their own child.

The analysis also shows that father–son relationships tend to improve as men get older. Participants reported that their relationship with their fathers improved when they gained financial independence either by finding employment or moving out of the house to rent or buy property. Some reported that the relationship improved when they completed matric and entered tertiary institutions and others when they got married. This may be because fathers begin to see their children as adults. In almost all the cases, the improved relationship translated to spending more time in conversation with the father; asking and receiving life advice; receiving financial support, and assistance with children. The improvement in father–son relationships could be attributed to the fact that as sons get older, fathers feel the obligation to impart certain principles and values of fatherhood and manhood. Moreover, in circumstances like those of Zamile; when a child reaches certain milestones set by the father, it is no longer necessary to be strict as a father. Finally, it is easy to beat a child into obedience but it becomes difficult to beat an adult man, thus as men become older, fathers lose the control they had gained through physical punishment and, as such, begin to find new ways to instil discipline and guide their children. This in turn improves communication because it becomes the one way a father can continue to play a parenting role.

7.3. Intergenerational transmission

Fathers' behaviours, traits and parenting styles have a way of being transmitted to their children. As alluded to before, this is known in the life course perspective as linked lives. Studies have shown that fathering or lack thereof has the potential to affect a child's future life

trajectory. A myriad of research in the field of psychology, sociology, social work, anthropology and other fields has shown for instance that boys who are raised by violent fathers are prone to violence as they grow older and girls who are raised in absent-father households tend to seek unavailable partners (Peyper et al., 2015; Lobaka, 2017). In this section, I sought to explore how fathers' experiences of being fathered have affected their role as fathers. The compensatory and the modelling approach will be explored in this section and the following research question will be addressed: *How has the relationship with your father affected your relationship with your children?*

7.3.1. Doing things differently

The discussion in this section is in line with Giele and Elder's (1998) and Marsiglio's (1995: 81) assertion that fathers are beginning to construct their own paternal role in a new way. This is confirmed by studies that trace fathers' agency through the constant construction of paternal identities (Roy, 2006: 33). In this theme, fathers outline the decisions they made to achieve the goal of being involved fathers.

> **Mike**: *I wanted to be different than he, meaning that I want to be involved in my children's lives***,** *yes he was there, yes he provided financially but otherwise he was just not there, he did not know what was going on in our lives, practically he was absent.*
>
> **Interviewer:** What does being different mean for you?
>
> **Mike:** *Yes, be there, school activity be there, pick up your children from school, take them to school, find out what's happening in their life, get to meet their friends, get to know what's going on [with] their school work, you know to get involved, do something, sports activities be there, that's what I try to do.*

Mike was raised by what he calls a present–absent father. He noted that he only communicated with his father when something was wrong in his life. For Mike, financial provision alone was not enough, he needed his father to be actively involved in other areas of his life. His father's perceived non-involvement is what fuelled Mike's decision to do things differently with his own children – to compensate for his father's absence by being involved with his own children.

In compensating for his father's lack of emotional involvement, Mike takes time to spend with his children; he takes the time to question his children about the dynamics in their lives, including getting to know the company they keep at school. Mike adds that he invests time in helping his children with their schoolwork and being an active participant in their extramural activities. These are all the areas that Mike believes his father should have been concerned about beyond financial provision.

> **Etsile:** *I think for me the fact that I had no relationship with my father did not have any negative impact on me, but it did bring about a sense of responsibility. You don't want your child to go through the stages and processes that you went through growing up without a father. Your child must not feel your absence while you are still alive. Due to his absence, I took a decision to be present in my child's life physically and financially.*

Etsile notes that his father neglected to take care of his children's financial, emotional and physical needs and this encouraged him to become a responsible father for his children. Additionally, he notes his father's absence inspired him to be present in his children's lives. Etsile uses the word "*decision*" which implies that regardless of whether or not a father is present in the child's life, as an adult men raised by non-resident fathers have the power to change their trajectories. This is where the life course perspective differs sharply from life cycle theory. According to a life course perspective, regardless of how they were raised, people still have an opportunity to change their future trajectories. This is commonly known as human agency, in this particular case, existential agency.[48]

> **Prince:** *I learnt from my father's absence for one that it is important to maintain a relationship with your child regardless of what happens between you and the mother. Breaking up with the mother of the child does not mean you should neglect the child, you must continue with your relationship with the child; that is what I am doing with my son.*

Prince believes the most important lessons were the ones he learnt from the negative experiences of growing up without his biological father. The negative impact of his biological father's absence taught him not to repeat the same mistakes with his own children. In all his responses, Prince compared himself to his father, constantly mentioning his father's faults and relating them to himself, outlining how he is fixing them with his own child.

[48] See the Theoretical Framework chapter for further information on human agency

France: *Well, the lesson I learnt from my father that I must not be* ***missing a link*** *with my children. There isn't really much I mean my father was presence [present?] but did not really do much in terms of the support that one needed.*

France also learnt lessons from his father's absence that taught him never to be emotionally and physically absent in his children's lives. Like Prince and Etsile, France decided to rectify his mistakes by being a better father to his three children. These three men recognised the enormity of their father's absence and made a conscious commitment to be there in their children's lives. These men's actions are part of the human agency component of the life course perspective, which asserts that people are not passive recipients of life's events.

7.3.2. Replicating the father's behaviour

Fathers tend to model the behaviours they have learnt from their fathers. Participants in this study outlined that they used their experiences of being fathered as a precedent for fatherhood. When asked about the role the participants play in the lives of their children, they first related their stories about growing up and linked them to their role as fathers.

Cedric: *This comes from seeing my father when I say to my father I don't have 123,*[49] *my father does not question, like I give an example about the one thing ya [of] petrol. If I say I don't have money for petrol he does ask me gore [to say] last week you were here but you bought six Budweiser*[50] *you were drinking, but now and you don't have money. So, he just believes [me]. But because of his personality people tend to take advantage of him but the relationship I have with my father makes me reactive when my kids have a problem.*

Cedric posits that even though he is employed in a middle management position, he is still able to call his father when he needs financial assistance. He notes that his father never judges him or questions how he spends his money; whenever he calls his father, he is assured that his father will find a way to assist him. Cedric continues that this is the same behaviour and attitude he has towards his own children. He argues that when his children report a hardship in their lives, he does not argue with them but rather strives to offer them immediate

[49] 123 in this context simply means "this or that".
[50] Budweiser is a type of beer produced in the USA.

assistance. In this context, Cedric seems to be modelling the values and lessons that he has learnt from his father.

> **Itu:** *Mainly because for my side he was present during school days and during my childhood, up until the person I am today, so I can say even myself I can say have a view that I want my kid to be next to me and also make sure that he grows next to me.*

Itu has a present father who has taken part in some of his key developmental stages. In view of this father–son relationship, he longs to be present in his own son's life in the same way. He claims that he would like to be involved in all his child's key developments, as well as be able to play the role of a moral guide for his child. Itu has an advantage in that at the time of the interview he was still romantically involved with the mother of the child; this allowed him longer period of contact with the child both telephonically and physically. However, Itu's train of thought seems to suggest that he is not completely satisfied with the time spent with the child, as he uses the words "*I want my kid next to me*".

> **Tumelo:** *My relationship with my father has affected my relationship with my children a great deal. I used my father's mistakes to inform me of things to avoid. However, the caring and loving man he was translates into the relationships I build with my children and with my wife. Like I said earlier, our relationship improved when I went to university, the type of father he was from thereon, is the type of father I try to be for my children.*

Tumelo indicates that he used the mistakes that his father made as a caution for what to avoid with his own children. As outlined above, Tumelo indicates that his father was never home, they later found that he had an extramarital affair and fathered three other children from that relationship. Tumelo succinctly states that it was on the basis on these mistakes that he framed his role as a father. However, Tumelo also states that he chooses to become the type of father to his children that his father was to him when they started to build a relationship. He indicated that his father was an affectionate man, and these are the positive traits he adopted from his father. Tumelo is both compensating for his father's mistakes with his own children and he is replicating those positive fathering roles he learnt from his father.

> **Benny:** *Yes in a good way, because where I am now I could say is what he wanted was the best for me as a child. However, when he punished me as a child I thought he was mistreating and all that. Now I know he was right all along.*

Benny foregoes all the feelings of anger and disappointment he expressed about the state of his relationship with his father. When asked about how his relationship with his father has affected his relationship with his own children, he stated that he had a positive relationship with his father, because though generally silent, his father was able to provide financially for his children. He also attributed his academic and career success to the punishment meted out to him by his father, although as a child he never saw the value of this mistreatment. Benny's narrative proves just how complex human relations and in this case fathering is.

I was curious and asked Benny if he meted out similar treatment to his own children in the hopes of them succeeding psychologically, socially and intellectually. He reacted as follows:

> **Benny:** *I also come with family values and all, you know we are Africans, and in an African family we have ways of doing things and all that.*

Benny skilfully avoided the question by making a general statement on the family values of African families. In this view, he posits that the role of an African father in a family is to instil values. However, he chose not to elaborate on the methodology used.

> **Amazing Dad:** *That you don't have to question, that if someone says this is your child you don't have to question the DNA, you see the child had nothing to do with that, given the love the child need at the end of the day you are losing anything, you lose nothing, whether the woman cheated, you lose nothing by raising the child that was brought to you, I have learned that I don't question if you say that's my child I don't question, even the neighbour child is my child (is an African way) Yah.*

Amazing Dad proposed that the greatest lesson he learnt from his father, and that he is also planning on teaching his children, is never to question the paternity of the children said to belong to them. He calls this an African way of raising a child in your yard as your own regardless of the infidelity of your spouse. Furthermore, although Amazing Dad does not mention it, this also alludes to the fact that all adults are involved in raising children in their community, for example in line with the African proverb, *it takes a village to raise a child*. However, this argument is problematic for a number of reasons; firstly, not all fathers would be comfortable with raising another man's child as their own, especially if the mother blatantly lied about the child's paternity. Secondly, in African tradition, there is a belief that a child needs to be recognised by his biological father's kin in order to obtain ancestral protection (Nduna,

2014: 218). Furthermore, one of the participants in Lobaka's (2017) study blamed her unexplained illness on the fact that her mother lied to her about the true paternity of her father and that she needed to be introduced to her paternal ancestors in order to cure the illness. Thirdly, paternity fraud continues to be a challenge in South African courts. Although no official statistics on paternity fraud exist in South Africa, various qualitative studies and court rulings have shown that mothers have the potential to lie about the paternity of the child (see Nduna, 2014; Lobaka, 2017; Manyatshe, 2016; Nduna & Jewkes, 2011; Padi et al., 2014).

7.3.3. Discussion

Interestingly, most of the participants in this study make a deliberate effort to be present in all the areas where they believed their fathers failed. Thus, they are intentional in their involvement and they use the pain they experienced as children to fuel their need to be available, present, supportive, involved and compassionate. The participants' area of focus is mainly where they were failed as children. The first group of fathers strived to be better fathers than their biological fathers; many noted that they took a conscious decision to transform the negative elements of their relationship with their fathers and turn them into positive relationships with their own children. The ability to make a decision about one's life course is a key predictor of human agency. It suggests that no matter how adverse one's situation is, one can still make decisions on how one charts the course of one's life.

Regardless of the nature of the father–son relationship, most participants in this study chose to intentionally look past their father's misdemeanours and adopt some of the positive traits displayed by their fathers (biological or social). For example, Tumelo noted that his father made a number of mistakes while Tumelo was growing up but emphasised that he chose to focus on the relationship that he developed with his father as he grew older. He maintains his relationship with his children is shaped by the loving and caring version of his father that he experienced when he grew older. For this group of men being different and doing things differently was their main motivator. However, it was interesting to observe how some participants who earlier in the interview expressed feelings of pain and hurt at the mistakes made and/or faults displayed by their fathers still described them as good men and fathers. A father's ability to provide financially for his children continues to be a recurring theme in the participants' narratives. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the participants' involvement extends to the child's emotional well-being. The discussion with this first group of fathers revealed that in their absence, fathers still teach valuable lessons to their sons about parenting

and fatherhood. Accordingly, children learn how not to be a father from their fathers' faults and mistakes.

The second group of fathers reported having been raised by involved fathers. This group of fathers believes themselves to be replicating their father's positive parenting with their own children. They have described their fathers among others as involved, loving, and compassionate. These participants' main goal is to be the same type of fathers that their fathers were to them. In the instance of Cedric, he notes that the current version of his father has inspired him to be a better father to his children, but Cedric notes that his father was not as involved in his children's lives. These participants equally seem to replicate the positive elements of fathering displayed by their fathers.

7.4. Conclusion

Fathers' experiences of fathering usually stem from their observing their own fathers; in instances where a biological father was not physically present, a social father would normally fill in the role of a father. A man's ability to execute his fathering role is usually linked to his experience of being fathered. Fathers can either model the fathering role performed by their own fathers or attempt to fix the mistakes made by their fathers with their own children, as outlined above, these are known as the modelling and compensatory approaches respectively (Bar-On & Scharf, 2014).

In the first section of this chapter, I explored participants' relationships with their own fathers and four themes emerged. The first was participants who had no relationship with their biological fathers either because the father was physically absent from home owing to other commitments or, despite the father being home, he was generally silent and never took time to engage with the family. The participants related to this theme, describing their fathers as distant disciplinarians, mainly because the role of instilling discipline was relegated to them and they would sometimes use force. The second theme relates to the fact that participants' relationships with their biological fathers, though strained when they were children, improved as they grew older, finished school, went to university, and/or got married. These were outlined as some of the reasons that led to the improvement of father–son relationships. The third theme refers to participants who noted they did not have a relationship with their biological father because social fathers (in all cases these related to the mother's new lover/husband) raised them. Although these men played a key role in raising the participants of this study,

their role remained undervalued. Some participants indicated that they refused to refer to these men as their fathers. The final theme involves participants who reported having had a good relationship with their biological fathers. In this instance, the father's ability to provide financially for the family and to provide moral guidance was hailed as the key reasons why men regarded them as good fathers.

One of the greatest gifts of fatherhood is the ability to transmit one's life lessons, knowledge and wisdom to one's children. Tracing the history of fathering in Kenya, Mwoma (2015) argues that one of the main roles fathers play is that of preparing boys to be respected members of society. Their role has expanded to include advising on certain matters, role modelling, disciplining and teaching on culture. This chapter also covered some of the lessons that participants learnt from their biological and/or social fathers with the emphasis on how they are implementing the same lessons in the raising of their own children. These lessons include, among others, providing care for one's family and extended family, being affectionate to one's children, taking in children without questioning their paternity, and being a breadwinner for your family. Participants expressed that they try their best to live up to certain standards that were set by their fathers.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Introduction

This research contributes to the fatherhood literature by not only confirming the findings of other researchers, but also adding new elements to the existing literature. To that end this chapter summarises the findings of this research by focusing on the conclusions reached in terms of the research questions that were specified at the start of the project. The life course perspective was chosen as the theory to examine the contribution fathers make to their children's upbringing over their lifespan. This was developed with the intention of tracing the role of fathers in their children's growth at each stage and exploring the problems they may have faced along the way. Furthermore, the various factors that influence men's transition to fatherhood was another reason for choosing the life course perspective. Since the transition to fatherhood can be a significant turning point in fathers' lives, this study looked at the way participants experienced and/or identified with their new roles. As a result, this chapter will make and discuss a number of inferences from the life course perspective.

Every study has limitations, which will be examined in depth in this chapter. I conclude this chapter by making a set of legislative and policy recommendations based on the interviews with participants of the study and my own assessment and analysis of the core data. As part of the recommendation, I will discuss the inadequacies that were observed within two government departments that are at the forefront of ensuring unbiased parental rights and responsibility sharing. As part of this chapter, recommendations for further research will be made based on the findings of this study. These recommendations will include a number of questions that are pertinent but fall outside the scope of this study. These questions will be shared in the hope that they will form part of future studies on fatherhood.

8.2. Summary of findings

The key research question of the study was: *What caregiving roles do non-resident biological fathers play in raising their children over a life course*? To effectively answer the main research question, three subsidiary questions were formulated:

- What are the indicators of responsible fathering in a South African context?
- Which and whose positive fathering roles do we exclude by assuming that father presence equals active involvement?

- How do non-resident fathers care for their children?

8.2.1. Theoretical implications

The life course approach was an effective tool for examining the role fathers play in the upbringing of their children as it captures the complexities of lives, explores interrelationships across social institutions, and elucidates the impact of time, place and history. This theoretical framework contributed to the study in important ways as shown next.

Timing of events and the turning point

The life course perspective was chosen for this study because it is based on the idea that the role fathers play in raising their children changes over time and is influenced by a variety of factors. The age at which men become fathers has been found to be one of the most important factors in determining their participation as involved non-resident fathers. The participants who fathered children within marriages had a better chance of being involved fathers. In almost every case, however, a turning point in the relationship had an impact on the father–child relationship. A key turning point for the men in this study was union dissolution, i.e. divorce or relationship breakdown. Following the collapse of their union, participants stated that the quality and quantity of time they spent with their biological children substantially decreased. In large part, this was due to mothers' attempts to limit or even prohibit father–child relationships. Aside from residence, the relationship status of the child's father and mother was another factor influencing paternal involvement. For example, unmarried fathers who are still romantically involved with the mother of the child, tend to consciously or unconsciously share their time visiting the mother with the child.

Another element that determined the frequency of contact was the age of the child at the time of union dissolution. According to the participants in this study, the younger the child, the more difficult it was to keep constant contact with them. Some participants believed that when the child is still a minor, the mother and maternal family control the frequency of contact. Also, when the courts are involved, mothers are given preference for the physical care of young children, for example young children are not allowed to sleep at their fathers’ residences.

The father's age at the time of the child's birth also had an impact on the frequency of contact. In this study, the participants' replies were split into two extremes that can only be explained by looking back in time. In cases of an early transition to fatherhood, participants in the 40 to 50 year age range reported abandoning their paternal responsibilities owing to emotional immaturity, financial difficulties and/or a reluctance to use the legal system to fight for access

to their children. This contribution corroborates Clark et al.'s (2015) assertion that a young father's emotional maturity makes it more difficult for him to fully comprehend and carry out his fatherly responsibilities. The younger participants in this study, aged 25 to 39, had a different attitude to fatherhood from those in the study mentioned above. These fathers have made a concerted effort to maintain regular contact with their children. This difference in approach and resolution can partly be explained by the rising interest in fatherhood in general.

The length of time it takes for a father to re-partner was another significant turning point in the father–child engagement. When a mother believes a father rushed into a new relationship and/or marriage, it can be used to justify limiting father–child interaction. Mothers are also hesitant to allow their children to spend time with their ex-partners' new partners, as evidenced by a few cases in this study. This is especially common when the mother blames the father's new partner for the breakup of the relationship. Participants in this study cited three reasons for mothers denying fathers access to re-partnering: jealousy of the father's new partner, loss of hope by the mothers for a reunion with the father, and fear of a child bonding with a stranger (father's new spouse).

Historical landscape

According to this study, while the timing of the father's transition to fatherhood is vital, the historical landscape also has a significant influence. The current social climate encourages fathers to participate fully in their children's upbringing. This is bolstered by a growing interest in fatherhood by researchers, legislators, the media, and advocacy organisations. The study participants were found to be actively participating in activities that were historically attributed to women. To begin with, participants reported spending more time performing household chores like cleaning, washing and assisting children with homework. However, while fathers spend time doing these home duties, time surveys in South Africa demonstrate that women still spend a significant amount of time doing care-work that men do not (Statistics South Africa, 2013). This is consistent with global trends that show that women still spend three times more on caregiving work than men (Heilman et al., 2017: 18).

One of the questions asked in the interviews was in relation to the activities fathers did with their children during the periods of lone caregiving. Lone caregiving refers to situations in which a father cares for his children alone (without the help of his parents, child's mother, his new partner or other relatives). Based on the facts elaborated in this study, it would appear that most participants did not have enough time to spend with their children. Nevertheless, the time some fathers had with children was spent in the company and assistance of others. This

effectively meant that care-work is most often relegated to others, especially paternal grandparents, while the fathers themselves spend much of their time entertaining their children rather than caring for them during the period of lone caregiving. There was a small group of fathers who reported being actively involved in caregiving activities during periods of lone caregiving; these included bathing children, choosing clothes, cooking dinner, and changing diapers.

The study found that fathers become actively involved in their children's academic and extracurricular activities, such as attending teacher–learner sessions, sporting activities and so on. Since the majority of these activities take place during the week, this meant that the father would have to live in close proximity to the child and take time off work in order to attend these events. Admittedly, some of these fathers are describing typical “middle class” fathering activities that may not be possible for many men, including their own fathers who may have been mineworkers or other types of migrant labourers.

The findings of this study are comparable to those of other studies that have found that fathers who are involved in childcare have more gender equal attitudes, and that males are more inclined to help with childcare duties such as washing clothes and helping with schoolwork (Richter & Smith, 2006; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018a). In South Africa, the second edition of the State of South African Fathers also shows that father involvement often extends beyond financial assistance to include nurturing and caring (Lesch et al., 2021: 26).

Linked lives

Fathers have a significant impact on their children's healthy development as they transition to maturity. When considering the concept of linked lives, individuals within a family are interdependent. As a result, a change in one person's life might have a negative or positive impact on the entire family. Using this aspect of the life course perspective, I examined the participants' experiences of being fathered and how they had shaped their own position as fathers. It was evident from the start that fathers' experiences of being fathered had a significant impact on the type of fathers they became. The emotional unavailability of a father is frequently transmitted to the child. According to the findings, some fathers are emotionally unavailable to their children, owing to their upbringing by fathers who never exhibited feelings. In general, these fathers found it easier either to abandon or to be physically present but emotionally detached from their children. Furthermore, while fathers never admitted to physically abusing their own children, many rationalised the physical abuse they had received from their own fathers. A discussion of physical punishment would necessitate the inclusion of children, thus future studies could broaden the narrative by including children in the sample.

Participants who were raised by emotionally and physically present fathers described their attempts to emulate their own fathers' positive attributes. Finally, when compared to their own fathers, participants reported being more emotionally available to their children.

It is reasonable to assume that when a child is born, the lives of the parents are inextricably linked, especially if both parties have a vested interest in the child's well-being. According to Roy (2006: 33), in terms of the concept of linked lives, one family member's transition has an impact on other family members. Similarly, even if a child's parents are no longer romantically involved, their transitions are still linked. A father's promotion or loss of employment, for example, invariably affects the mother. It was shown here in one case how a mother wanted more maintenance from the father when he was promoted to a higher position.

When fathers are denied access to their children, it was reported that they feel a deep sense of loss and go through emotional turmoil. Some fathers conveyed their feelings by saying things like "it killed me inside [to be apart from my children]". Some fathers fought for access to their children for so long that the courts ordered psychological evaluations to determine their mental health. While this study cannot provide conclusive evidence, there appears to be a link between denied paternity and a father's mental health. In this field, more research is required. Additionally, while not directly studied in this research, mothers also seem to experience emotional distress when relationships end. In a number of cases, participants described their ex-partners as spiteful, bitter and/or angry, some even expressed that these women became heavy drinkers after the break-up. These emotional responses confirm how parents' lives are ultimately linked even after the relationship dissolves.

The conflict after a relationship ended and the accompanying emotional distress also tend to affect others who are linked to ex-partners, such as children and new partners. The study found that when fathers enter into new relationships, the conflict tends to spill over into the relationship. Some participants of this study reported an increase in hostility from their ex-partners as a result of re-partnering. This is especially true when the mother believes the new spouse is to blame for the break-up, as is the case with one of the participants (Tumelo). Although not explicitly expressed in this research, other studies in the field have reported the difficulty that stepmothers often experience when navigating the desire to be actively involved in the lives of their stepchildren and the reality that sometimes others linked to her husband or partner (children and/or ex-partners) may be hostile to them (Hutton, 2014).

8.2.2. Responsible fathering and the caregiving role

According to the findings, non-resident fathers frequently struggle to strike a balance between their many responsibilities and societal expectations of their role as fathers. In this study, non-resident fathers found it difficult to simultaneously adapt to their manifold roles of provider, nurturer and moral guide. Some participants continue to bemoan the structural factors that directly or indirectly force them to choose between these roles. During the conversation on responsible fatherhood and the role of men in caring for their children, three types of fathers emerged among the participants. These types were created completely based on participants' perceptions of their role as fathers and how they feel others (their children, wives and/or ex-partners, and society as a whole) see their role as fathers: *financial providers, Santa Claus,* and *involved fathers*.

The concept of fathers as *financial providers* originates from the fact that participants in this study regard a man's ability to provide for his family as the primary function of fatherhood and thus a crucial indicator of responsible fathering. This is in line with findings from different fatherhood studies undertaken in South Africa and around the world. The literature review chapter defined the notion of fathers as financial providers, while the theoretical framework chapter examined the emergence and rise to prominence of the concept of fathers as breadwinners, as well as the obstacles that men face in trying to live up to it (Mavungu, 2013; Commission for Gender Equality, 2021; Heartlines, 2020). These studies also show that when fathers are unable to provide material resources for their children, they tend to withdraw from them.

It is necessary to dispel the public perception that all black fathers are irresponsible (as seen on the Facebook page *izinja ezingondliyo* mentioned). However, the findings of this study suggest that for a variety of reasons some men find it extremely difficult to be active fathers. Unemployed and poor men, for example, cannot provide financially for their children. While some participants felt that nurturing and caring for one's children is crucial, the study found that providing for one's family remains a man's primary responsibility in the eyes of many role players. Surprisingly, it was found that none of the fathers who prioritised quality and quantity time with their children jeopardised their financial responsibilities; instead they took time off work to spend with their children. In her study, Malinga (2021) also found that even when fathers are unemployed, they spend the majority of their time looking for work. As more women enter the workforce, the concept of a stay-at-home father where the mother is the sole earner is becoming more popular in western households (Rushing & Powell, 2015). Women in South Africa, on the other hand, are sometimes discriminated against by their partners and/or

communities in which they reside if they are the primary breadwinners. This is in line with Parry and Puleng's (2017) exploratory research, which shows how female breadwinners fear they are endangering men's traditional role as providers. To this end, Parry and Puleng (2017) concluded that male identity is in transition, and many men are currently unable to navigate this.

On the other hand, the *Santa Claus* type of father emerged from participants who felt compelled to compensate for their absence by giving gifts and purchasing expensive material items for their children. Some participants stated that their children only communicate with them when they want something material. These fathers are only recognised when they have gifts or are appreciated for what they can supply, just like the mythical character (Santa Claus). Similarly, fathers in Mavungu et al.'s (2013: 28) study also believed that children typically disapproved of a father who did not supply items.

The involved father relates to individuals who believe that the role of the father is significantly more important than their monetary contribution. These fathers become involved in all parts of their children's development, from socio-emotional to academic to undertaking daily domestic chores that are traditionally considered a "women's role". Some activities that these fathers provide are in line with Hofferth's (2003) model of paternal involvement. This model indicates that there are three measures of paternal involvement: the amount of time a father spends with the child; the level of warmth a father displays to the child through hugs and expressing affection; the level of monitoring and control exercised by laying and discussing rules with the child, such as assisting with homework. Additionally, fathers exercise their responsibility by performing some of the eight essential tasks outlined by Marsiglio et al. (2008) including bathing children, changing nappies, disciplining the child, choosing activities for the child, buying clothes, driving the child to activities, selecting an appropriate paediatrician, selecting childcare programmes or a school, and playing with a child. It should be highlighted, however, that some of these are middle-class activities and should not be used as criteria for all fathers, particularly in non-western countries.

Finally, in this study I explored the way in which fathers provide financial support for their children throughout the child's life course. Despite widespread unemployment, which makes it difficult for fathers to assume the role of provider for their children, a large percentage of children received continuous or intermittent support from their non-resident fathers from birth until age 18. According to the findings, these participants felt confident in their abilities to provide monetary resources for their children, but often felt like they were missing out on other areas of their children's lives. The nuclear family paradigm, which assumes that father

engagement requires co-residence, contributes to this. Van den Berg and Ratele (2021) dispute this viewpoint, emphasising that the focus should be on the caregiving and psychological support that fathers provide regardless of living arrangements. In light of the above, fathers are often faced with the daunting task of balancing their role as financial providers with their involvement in their children's lives.

8.2.3. In his own voice

The outcomes of this study are in contrast to the popular belief that fathers are generally silent regarding their experiences and/or difficulties. This belief is summed up by sayings such as "big boys don't cry" or *Monna ke Nku ollela ka teng* (a man is a sheep, he does not or is not allowed to show his pain) (Luthada, 2016). According to the findings of this study, the discourse on non-resident fathers' experiences is continuing in informal contexts. In almost every case, fathers stated that they knew someone in a comparable or more unfavourable scenario than their own when it came to fathering experiences. In addition, participants stated that they have had a conversation, debate or disagreement with other males about fathering and the role expectations associated with fatherhood. This assertion is supported by the ongoing conversation on a platform known as Men's Parliament which was launched by the DSD in 2021. This parliament focuses on a number of areas such as toxic masculinity, gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), and fatherhood. Men have used this platform as a means to express their concerns, experiences and frustration.

Based on this narrative it becomes prudent to look at fatherhood through the eyes of the fathers. Fathers were given the chance to present a picture of themselves and the part they play in their children's upbringing in this study. The conversation started by exploring the routes that led to the participants of this study becoming non-resident fathers. According to this study, there are four ways to become a non-resident father, three of which are similar to Bradshaw's findings (1999: 23); these are fathering a child out of wedlock, divorce, or relationship dissolution. Rural–urban (sometimes circular) migration is another identified route to non-resident fatherhood in South Africa. To improve their work prospects, many of the participants had relocated from their rural provinces to major cities. For the participants in this study, employment in Gauteng gave a consistent income and the ability to pay for their child's financial necessities. It did, however, physically remove them from their children's company for prolonged periods of time.

Regardless of the path that led men to become non-resident fathers, the study found that these fathers face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to be active participants in their

children's lives. These are the challenges that fathers face when their union dissolves and they are refused access to their children. This is frequently aggravated by continued disagreement between parents (ex-partners) following the breakup. However, the study uncovered how disagreement is sometimes not restricted to the child's parents, but also extends to other family members. Participants have been denied access to their children as a result of poor relationships with maternal grandparents, which is especially true when the child's mother still lives with her parents. The father's failure to pay *inhlawulo*, his unwillingness to pay child support and the perceived lack of respect undermine these relationships. Furthermore, because grandparents are typically involved in primary care, men often have two layers to pass through: the mother and then the maternal grandparents. Often each layer has its own set of expectations ranging from paying child support to paying lobola. The study found that fathers may be successful in negotiating their involvement in one layer, but fail to penetrate the other layer. For example, some participants indicated that their ex-partners permitted them to see their children, but that the maternal grandparents restricted them, especially if the mother still lived with her parents.

When it comes to child custody, it appears that the mothers of the children hold all the cards, and as a result, they have the right to block the father–child relationship by limiting access. The term "maternal gatekeeper" is commonly used to refer to a mother's ability to control the father–child relationship. Participants' access to the child was exclusively based on the mother's feelings at a specific point in the life course, which was studied here. Some participants, for example, stated that the mother strictly defined the conditions of access, with little or no agreement from the father. Consequently, as a form of punishment, fathers in post-relationship conflict are denied access to their children. To punish the fathers, children are used as weapons. This study is comparable to that of Mavungu et al. (2013), who also reported that children are frequently used as weapons in ex-lovers' disputes.

The study found that in conflict situations, participants exhausted all other avenues before approaching the judiciary. The avenues indicated by the participants of the study included reasoning with the mother of the child, approaching other family members to seek mediation (aunts, parents and cousins), and paying *inhawulo*. Where relationships cease to be civil and intervention fails to yield favourable results, approaching the judiciary becomes the next logical step. However, participants said that approaching the judiciary put even more strain on their already tense relationships with their ex-partners. Approaching the courts appeared to be a declaration of war for some women, and children are frequently used as a negotiating chip. From the time the mother is served with a summons to the final decision of the courts, the majority of the participants reported being refused all access to their children. When the legal

route fails, fathers are left with fewer options. Participants in this study addressed the judiciary to express their dissatisfaction with the system's failure to listen to and address their concerns. These fathers were left despondent, dejected and feeling unfairly treated by a system that was meant to protect their parental rights. Some fathers had formed or joined advocacy groups in response to this perceived hostile milieu. These groups provided an opportunity for participants to share their grievances and experiences with other men in comparable positions, as well as discover common solutions. Parents Advocating Children Equality (PACE) 50/50, Dad's in the Picture, and the DSD men's forum were among the activist groups represented in this study. In extreme cases, the fathers in this study resorted to measures such as hunger strikes initiated outside the National Department of Social Development, as well as publicly naming perceived corrupt social workers and organisations dealing with child custody cases. Research conducted by the Commission for Gender Equality (2021: 54) similarly found that its participants were of the view that mothers use the judiciary as a weapon against them.

Participants identified a number of flaws in the system, which mothers seem to exploit either deliberately or unknowingly. Chapter 3 of the Children’s Act has a provision stating that child custody actions should be filed in the judicial jurisdiction where the child resides. This has been identified by participants as a provision that women tend to exploit. In one case, the child’s mother removed the child from the area just days before the custody case was to be heard by the court. In that case, the court made a recommendation that the matter should be transferred to the area where the child was relocated. Even though this provision was enacted in the best interests of the child, participants claim that some mothers remove their children from the jurisdiction in order to avoid appearing in front of the Children's Court.

The weak link between the court and the mediation process has been highlighted as the second gap. The mediator cannot impose terms on the parents when establishing the parental plan, therefore cases are sent back to the court if a stalemate is reached. In this way, some participants have been through the process more than once with the same child and still do not have access because the mediation failed. These participants indicated that instead of enforcing custody, the magistrate refers cases back to mediation.

The study also reported how fathers are dissatisfied with the frequency with which they communicate with their children. Proximity is recognised as one of the causes of fathers' rare interaction with their children. As indicated in section 8.2.3, the necessity to migrate for better job opportunities sometimes drives fathers to live in provinces far from where their children are. According to the findings of the research, fathers of younger children struggle with other forms of interaction, such as telephone contact. This is especially true in the aftermath of a

breakup. On the one hand, fathers are unable to use their mothers' phones to communicate with their children, while on the other hand the children are too young to own a phone. As a result, physical contact is the most common type of contact. However, this means that a father can only interact with his child after a long period of time has elapsed. Some of the fathers reported feeling like outsiders in their own children's lives.

8.2.4. Experience of being fathered and the role of extended kin

Role identification, commitment and a set of skills are all important aspects of fathering. The study also found that a father's experience of being fathered, his employment level, and his commitment to fathering are three of the factors that determine father iinvolvement This is in line with studies such as that of Swartz and Bhana (2009), which found that a young father's experience of being fathered is a significant predictor of how he will turn out as a father. Swartz and Bhana (2009) also found that young fathers who grew up with non-resident fathers are more likely to utilise this as an incentive to be present in their children's lives. Bar-On and Scharf (2014: 650) term this the compensatory approach. However, the study discovered that, despite their best efforts, young fathers sometimes fail to secure their position as fathers. This failure is frequently exacerbated by fathers' inability to negotiate the complexities of kinship obligations.

An analysis of the participants' relationships with their fathers revealed the various stages that father–son relationships undergo. Participants indicated that the relationship with their fathers had transitioned from being largely repressive to being expressive. This transition occurred when participants achieved a certain level of independence, i.e. starting tertiary education, getting married and/or starting work. Participants in this study generally recognised the circumstances that may have driven their own father's physical absence and/or lack of involvement in repressive father–son relationships. Some participants justified their fathers' absence and/or physical violence to some extent by recognising that their fathers' parenting style was influenced by their own experiences of being fathered. However, participants used these experiences of being fathered to encourage themselves to play an active role in the raising of their children.

Nduna and Khunou (2018: 65) argue that the concept of fatherhood should be redefined to be contextually relevant to South Africa. The basis of this argument is that in South Africa, and indeed many parts of Africa, the fathering role is not limited to biological fathers, but shared by extended kin (Nathane, 2018: 19; Mkhize, 2006). The importance of extended kin in caring for and nurturing of children can also be realised from the Setswana adage: "*Ngwana sejo o*

a tlhakanelwa" which loosely translated means "a child belongs to all of us". Reynolds (2016: 257) continues this line of thinking by explaining that in isiZulu the use of the word "orphan" is applied with extreme caution because it does not necessarily relate to a child without biological parents, but rather a child who is neglected by his/her extended family as well. As such, in households where the biological father is absent, it may well be the case that other adult men are taking on the father role (Morrell et al., 2016: 82). Extended kin play an important role in raising children especially when a child is born with parents who do not co-reside. The findings show that non-resident fathers acknowledge the vacuum created by their physical absence in the child's daily lives. To this end, participants appreciate the role played by the extended kin in raising their children. In this study, extended kin included maternal and paternal grandparents, uncles and mothers' new lovers. However, while admitting to the importance of the extended kin, the study found that fathers were not completely satisfied with having their children raised by others. For most fathers being non-resident fathers has denied them the opportunity to pass on their own values, life experiences and lessons. Participants expressed a need and interest to be more involved in the little moments that make up their children's life course, such as first steps and first words, but also in big moments such as summer vacations. A sense of envy towards the extended kin resonated in some of the fathers.

The above findings are in line with Madhavan and Roy (2012) and Mkhize (2006), who also found that in low-income communities in South Africa, various family members assume parenting roles for children, ranging from providing assistance with formal and informal education, to moral guidance, and emotional and financial support. Similarly, Moore (2021: 63) found that social fathers tend to play a caregiving role to many children within the broader kin structure.

8.3. Recommendations

A number of observations and recommendations were made by the participants of this study on the possible measures that the state could implement to encourage father involvement and family preservation. This section is used to make recommendations to policymakers, government departments and non-resident fathers. The recommendation are also informed by programmes implemented by other countries to promote paternal involvement. The recommendations also take into consideration the historical time and place in which fathers find themselves. New legislation and advances in research on fatherhood necessitate organs of state to be more responsive to the plight of non-resident fathers. Based on this background

many non-resident fathers across the country are adamant that their situation needs to change.

8.3.1. Legislative reform

It is recommended that some sort of synergy should be created between the operation of the Children's Court and the Maintenance Court, as the two courts are currently operating in isolation from each other. This is made apparent by the fact that there are cases in the Children's Court that takes months or even years to resolve, whereas maintenance cases are usually handled speedily. In line with this, Khunou (2006) argues that issues of custody have no place in the maintenance courts. Historically, the approach of both courts is based on the notion that fathers are absent, deadbeat, uninvolved and uninterested in providing maintenance to their children (Khunou, 2018). However, as outlined by the fathers in this study, the historical landscape has shifted, and some fathers show greater interest in being present in the overall care and upbringing of their children. These fathers often cited parental alienation as the reason for their lack of involvement in the upbringing of their children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have also declared parental alienation as a form of psychological abuse (Phillips, 2019). To this effect, countries like Mexico and Brazil have declared parental alienation to be a crime, with countries such as Ireland calling for its criminalisation (Soma & Williams, 2016). However, it is acknowledged that the participants in this study are not representative of fathers, as some women also flee and are in hiding from abusive partners. Hence the experiences of these participants cannot be used to justify changing legislation. It is therefore recommended that a thorough investigation and/or study be conducted on the extent of parental alienation in South Africa and the mitigating circumstances thereof. This research should aim at understanding parental alienation in the South African context and strategies should be sought to remove the child from the manipulative parent and place the child with the target parents, and secondly, consider putting in place measures to criminalise parental alienation. The court ruling mentioned in the next paragraph is an important starting point in this endeavour.

The court's role in encouraging father involvement should be strengthened. According to some fathers in this study, their ex-partners are more likely to deny them access since they know the courts will not help them. The Pretoria High Court, however, issued a landmark judgment on 25 January 2022. By denying and frustrating a father's parental rights to see his child, the mother and maternal grandmother were declared to be in contempt of court. The two were given a 30-day jail sentence, which was suspended pending strict adherence to the court's ruling (Maromo, 2022). Judgments of this nature are important in redefining the historical

landscape of the country and also reaffirming the role that fathers play in the well-being of the child over the life course. Furthermore, the decision will assist in deterring women from acting as gatekeepers in the absence of parental engagement. This judgment represents a major breakthrough for the participants of this study who are in a similar situation. Judgments such as the above reassure non-resident fathers that the historical landscape has changed. It is recommended that the judiciary use this judgment in this case to guide future decisions.

8.3.2. Improve the implementation of the “best interests of the child” clause

When reading the Children's Act, one gets the idea that the drafter meant for the child's best interests to take precedence over the guardians' own interests. Participants in this study repeatedly asked: "How is it in the best interest of a child when a child is prohibited from building a bond with his or her own father?" There is a general feeling among the non-resident fathers who took part in this study that the best interests of the child need to be redefined in practice for the following reasons: the current view assumes that the presence of the mother is in the best interests of the child; it is only in extreme cases (such as maternal neglect) that the father is considered better than the mother. Secondly, even in instances where the father has better resources, is emotionally more mature than the mother and can provide the child with a safer home, preference is still given to the mother. The historical role of men in South Africa has undergone a number of transitions as outlined in section 3.7. The image of fathers has transitioned from being moral guides in families prior to colonisation to being breadwinners during and post-colonisation, and currently fathers are taking up the new fatherhood role. In this role fathers are becoming more involved in the well-being and care of their children (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018b; Van den Berg & Ratele, 2021). Therefore, some fathers in this study are of the view that the implementers of legislation such as the Children’s Act need to operate within this historical time and place. This would apply to giving both parents equal consideration in custody cases without automatically assuming one is better than the other based on gender. The recommendation, therefore, is that the best interests of the child should not be automatically assumed, as this undermines the clause on the equal right to a child as prescribed by the Children’s Act. Courts need to do thorough investigations on the best interests of the child without merely assuming that one party is better than the other.

8.3.3. Intensify training of social workers on the Children's Act

Some fathers cited social workers and mediators in child custody disputes as stumbling blocks to their involvement in their children's lives. They questioned these professionals' decisions and, as a result, their comprehension of the different sections of legislation that govern the profession. However, these remain views of a selected group of men who reported specific experiences with a range of people. Accordingly, this cannot be generalised to all social workers, since their input was not part of this study. It is therefore recommended that the views of social workers are also included in future studies.

The Children Act has undergone a number of amendments in recent years, i.e. Children's Amendment Act 2008, Children's Second Amendment Act 2016, and Children's Third Amendment Act 2018. It is against this backdrop that the capability of social workers to implement the new regulations is called into question. Therefore, extensive training is required for new and seasoned social workers in line with the new regulations. Part of the reason for poor mediation is the lack of information on the developments that have taken place in the social development policy space. The Departments of Social Development and Justice and Constitutional Development need to provide training for fathers and mothers on parental rights and responsibilities, especially in line with the new additions to the Children's Act. Similarly, a mass reskilling and training programme should be offered to social workers and mediators of child custody cases. This training should focus on fairness and equality when preparing parental plans.

8.3.4. Community dialogues

This research study revealed a possible gap in the understanding and interpretation of family law. It is necessary to find common ground between legislators, law enforcement and individuals who are affected by these laws. As a result, it is suggested that the DSD, in collaboration with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, conduct a nationwide community dialogue to discuss the challenges that fathers face in their efforts to be actively involved in their children's lives. Such discourse has already begun in television programmes such as Abobaba, no excuse pay papgeld, etc. According to the findings, fathers' frustration stems from their belief that laws such as the Children Act are not applied equitably in custody situations. These dialogues should also be used to explain to fathers the processes and measures considered when applying these pieces of legislation and to increase fathers' confidence in the departments' intention to promote father involvement. The White Paper on Families acknowledges the importance of family preservation programmes. These dialogues

will go a long way to explaining the departments' plans and progress in this regard. There are a number of key court rulings that have affected and possibly changed the landscape of fatherhood in South Africa, such as the Constitutional Court ruling that unmarried fathers may change the child's surname in instances where the mother is deceased, has absconded or is undocumented (see Venter, 2021). The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development could possibly use this platform to inform fathers of the practical implication of court rulings.

The findings of this study show that unmarried fathers may not be fully aware of their rights as outlined in the Children's Act. Therefore, as part of these dialogues it is recommended that government should conduct awareness or education campaigns on the importance of fatherhood in a child's cognitive, emotional and social development. These campaigns could be led by a number of non-profit organisations in the country whose interests lie in fatherhood and fatherhood involvement. However, the government would need to strengthen these organisations with all the necessary resources to effectively facilitate these dialogues. These campaigns should be aimed at reaching men in their locality and where they are most comfortable, such as taverns, churches, community halls and sports grounds. The aim should not merely be to hand out pamphlets but to engage men on their parental rights and responsibilities as well encourage father involvement. These initiatives are important as they will address the issues that fathers face whilst encouraging father involvement. The success of these initiatives will also depend partly on the partnerships the government will form. It is therefore recommended that in preparing for these dialogues, buy-in should be sought from traditional, community and spiritual leaders and advocacy groups.

8.3.5. Policy development

The narrative of and about fathers (particularly Black African fathers) in the literature is going through major transitions. This is partly attributed to studies like this one that continue to shed some light on the role that fathers play in the upbringing of their children. To this end, the country's policymakers and the judiciary are beginning to embrace and promote fathers' rights. Landmark legislation such as the amendment of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act to include 10 days' paternity leave are important in promoting equality. This study has shown that the child's best interests may include that non-resident fathers should have contact with the children, regardless of whether they are able to make financial contributions to the upbringing of the child. However, in line with this finding, it should also be remembered that it could also be in the child's best interests not to have contact with the father if there is concern over his conduct, for example he is abusive either to the mother or to the child. Such suspicion of

fathers should, however, be a proven fact and not an assumption by the courts and other role players. It is recommended that future research should focus on the different role players in custody cases such as mothers, investigators of the court, social workers and the like.

8.4. Limitations of the study

The findings of this study are significant to inspire further research on the subject of the role played by non-resident fathers and the activities they undertake in the raising of their children over the life course. However, the chosen sampling method deliberately omitted non-resident fathers from other population groups. The decision to focus on Black South African fathers was taken so as to examine a population group that is seen as deadbeats in certain circles. However, this decision also presented a limitation to the study; as such the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other population groups and speak only of the experiences of the 23 men who participated in this study. However, it is important to note that, the aim of this study was to provide a rich, contextualised understanding of the experiences of Black South African fathers through the detailed study of their specific cases rather than to generalise. Nevertheless, the study has raised important findings that future research should consider. Moreover, while this was not the author's intent, the study was biased towards fathers who wanted to be involved in their children's upbringing. According to research conducted in South Africa, some men have little or no desire to be involved fathers. As a result, this study does not assert that all fathers want to be actively involved in their children's upbringing. Similarly, this study posits that a group of fathers' unwillingness to participate should not be extrapolated to the full community of Black South African fathers. Furthermore, there is a potential for bias since the interview questions were developed by the researcher, who is himself a non-resident father. A thorough analysis of the role of the researcher has been outlined in the section dealing with reflexivity. It is recognised that participants may have inflated their positive traits and underreported their negative traits. This is partly because the research was conducted only with non-resident fathers; accordingly, the inclusion of residential mothers and other primary caregivers (grandparents, uncles, and brothers) would have increased the reliability.

The South African government instituted a nationwide lockdown during the data gathering phase of this study in an effort to stop the COVID-19 pandemic from spreading. This required a slight modification to the study's approach. As a result, several interviews were conducted over the phone as opposed to in person as was the initial plan.

8.5. Future research

Consistent with previous research as conducted by Mercer et al. (2018: 34) and De Wit et al. (2014: 117), this study recognises that fathers and mothers generally report different levels of involvement. Thus, a comparative study is necessary to determine the level of involvement from the mother's and the father's perspective. Future studies on father involvement should include the voice of the mothers. In order to obtain both sides of the story, it would be useful to interview ex-lovers either individually or where possible together. Furthermore, it became clear from listening to the narratives of the men in this study about their experiences of being fathered that the fathers who raised these men were missing from the discourse.

Considering that social workers are at the forefront of child access cases, it is worrying that participants believe social workers (especially females) are biased towards fathers. This is especially concerning given that section 4.3 of the first White Paper on Families in South Africa states unequivocally that the DSD must ensure that fathers are treated properly in child custody cases. Therefore, research into the views of social workers and the claimed prejudice against fathers is needed. This research would add the views, perceptions and challenges experienced by social workers when dealing with child custody cases to the literature. The research would also assist in understanding the methodology social workers employ when drawing up parental plans.

Questions left unanswered by this research study are the following:

- How does the father-child relationship change when a mother remarries or re-partners?
- How do non-resident fathers see themselves being formed and positioned in policy and social discourses, and how do they negotiate and engage with this?
- To what extent do non-resident fathers know of their parental rights as prescribed by law?
- Are social workers (particularly females) biased against men in child custody cases?
- Are agents of the judiciary (judges, lawyers, mediators) in child custody cases impartial in the application of the various children's legislation?
- To what extent have mediators in child custody cases internalised the Children's Act and the White Paper for Families?

8.6. Concluding remarks

Despite the lack of clear evidence, non-resident fatherhood has long been related to non-involvement in the media and literature. However, recent studies, such as the State of South Africa's Father 2018 and 2021 reports, have debunked this myth, suggesting that non-resident fathers are more likely to be involved in their children's upbringing in some form. This study was designed to add to the expanding body of knowledge by examining the role non-resident fathers play in their children's upbringing. The thesis also looked into the difficulties that the participants faced in their attempts to be responsible fathers. While the study was conducted on a small scale, it revealed that a father's physical presence does not always imply involvement and, conversely, that his lack of physical presence does not always imply lack of involvement. Although some participants were raised by fathers who were physically present, their presence was not always felt. Similarly, the absence of a father (non-resident fathers) does not always suggest that he is uninvolved. This study demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between non-resident and absent fathers. In this vein, I conclude this thesis with the following statement: "Paternal involvement is defined not by physical proximity between the father and the child, but by the level of commitment and time a father invests in his children's health and well-being." This study found that these fathers are sometimes parenting in the face of great adversity as a result of their circumstances and the numerous problems they confront.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: UNISA Clearance Certificate

UNISA university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

19 June 2019

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # : 2019-CHS-CREC-0270

Dear S.T Lobaka

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 19 June 2019 to 01 July 2023

Researcher(s): **S.T Lobaka**

Supervisor (s): **Prof Marlize Rabe**

Tel: **012 429 6698**

Email: **rabeme@unisa.ac.za**

Paternal involvement beyond residence: The role of non-resident fathers in raising their children in Tshwane Metro, Gauteng

Research: D.Phil in Sociology

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The ***High risk application was reviewed*** by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on the **(19 June 2019)** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Psychology Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(01 July 2023).** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2019-CHS-CREC- 0270** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature :
Dr Suryakanthie Chetty
Deputy Chair : CREC
E-mail: chetts@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-6267

Signature :
Professor A Phillips
Executive Dean : CHS
E-mail: Phillap@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-6825

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Appendix B: The Department of Social Development approval letter

social development

Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X901 Pretoria, 0001, 134 Pretorius Street, HSRC Building , Pretoria Tel: +27 12 312 7994, www.dsd.gov.za
Private Bag X9150, Cape Town, 8000 , Tel: +27 21 465 1257/1277, Fax: +27 21 465 6439, e-mail: directorgeneral@dsd.gov.za

Director General

Enquiries: Michael Machubeng
Tel: 012 312 7839
Email: michaelm@dsd.gov.za

Ref: 8/4/1/2

Mr ST Lobaka
Assistant Director: Outcome 13
Department of Social Development
Private Bag X901
Pretoria

Dear Mr ST Lobaka

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT DOCTORAL RESEARCH STUDY

The Department of Social Development wishes to inform you that your request for permission to administer a questionnaire to officials and research towards fulfilment of your research study has been granted.

We wish to inform you that the Department of Social Development will not bear any financial and legal liabilities that may arise from accessing information and administering questionnaires for your research study.

We further wish to bring to your attention that research ethics must be considered and adhered to in this regard.

You are kindly requested to advance us with the copy of the completed research study.

We wish you all the best in your research study.

Kind regards;

Mr M Toni
Acting Director-General
Date: 16/10/2019

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Interview schedule

1. Background:

Tell me a little about yourself.

- Probe the following: (name/pseudonym, age, marital status)
- Where do you live and with whom?
- What do you do for a living?
- Do you have children? How many?
- Probe participants' educational background. What is your highest qualification?
- Are you originally from Pretoria?
- If no, how long have you lived in Pretoria?

2. Have your children always stayed where they stay now and with whom do they stay now?

- Probe the movement of children within households.
- Probe the reasons for these movements.

3. Responsible fatherhood

3.1. What is your understanding of the term "responsible fathering"?

- Probe men's understanding of responsible fatherhood.

3.2. In your view what constitutes a responsible father?

- Probe indicators/predicators/actions of responsible fatherhood.

3.3. Do you consider yourself a responsible father?

3.4. If yes to previous questions: What about the way you relate to your children makes you believe that you are a responsible father? If no, why do you say that?

3.5. In your view what distinguishes a responsible father from an irresponsible father?

4. Men's experience of being fathered

4.1. Tell me about your relationship with your father.

4.2. How has your relationship with your father affected your relationship with your children?

4.3. Are there lessons you learnt from your relationship with your father that you are applying with your child(ren)?

4.4. What role did your extended family play in caring for and nurturing you as a child?

5. Non-residence and caregiving role

5.1. What is your understanding of the term "non-resident father"?

5.2. How did you become a non-resident father?

- Probe routes to non-resident fatherhood (i.e. divorce, child out of wedlock).

5.3. What challenges and opportunities do you encounter in your role as a non-resident father?

- Probe challenges non-resident men face as fathers.
- Probe the opportunities non-resident fathers experience in their role as fathers.

5.4. What caregiving roles do you play as a non-resident father in the raising of your child(ren)?

- Probe positive fathering role non-resident fathers play in raising their children.

5.5. What activities do you engage in with your child, especially during lone caregiving?

Lone caregiving in this instance refers to activities the father provides without the assistance of another caregiver.

- Probe fathering activities men undertake especially during lone caregiving.
- Probe activities performed from birth until the child's current age.
- Probe the frequency of these interactions.

5.6. Do you think being a non-resident father has an effect on your capability to execute your role as a father? If yes, how?

- Probe how non-resident fathers parent.
- Probe whether non-resident father consider "non-resident parent" as a challenge.

6. Relationships with children and mothers

6.1. Tell me about your children both resident and non-resident.

- Probe the age, sex, geographic location and caretakers.

6.2. How would you describe your relationship with your children?

- Probe non-resident father and child relationship.

6.3. What is your relationship with the mother of your child(ren)?

6.4. How would you describe your relationship with your child(ren)'s maternal parents?

6.5. How has this relationship with the mother and the maternal family aided or hindered your relationship with your child(ren)?

- Probe the mother's relationship and the maternal family's relationship separately.

6.6. Do you pay maintenance for your child(ren)? If yes?

- Probe payment of maintenance from birth and ask specifically about the last 12 months.

6.7. Is it through a court order or through an arrangement with the mother?

- Probe how the payment of maintenance by either method has aided or hindered the relationship with the child(ren).

7. Frequency of contact

7.1. Do you have contact with your child(ren)?

7.2. How often do you speak to or see your child(ren)?

- Probe various methods of contact (phone, physical visitation).
- Probe whether contact was obtained through a parenting plan or a mother's consent.

8. Re-partnering *(this question only applies to non-resident fathers as a result of union dissolution)*

8.1. Following your relationship breakdown, did you enter into another relationship?

8.2. Has finding a new partner affected your relationship with your child(ren)?

8.3. If yes, how?

8.4. Has your ex-partner's re-partnering affected your relationship with your child(ren)?

8.5. If yes, how?

9. Men's experience of fatherhood in relation to other men

10.1 Do you know other men in a similar situation?

10.2 Do men ever discuss experiences as non-resident fathers with each other?

10.3 What do men cite as the most challenging elements of being a non-resident father? If yes, what are those elements?

10.4 What do men cite as an opportunity or advantage of being a non-resident father?

10.5 In light of everything we have discussed, how different or similar is their situation to yours?

Any other comments?

1. Do you know any other men who are non-resident fathers that would be interested to be part of this study?
2. Is there any question that I did not ask that you think I should have asked? If so, why do you think that is an important question?
3. Do you have any advice for me as I continue with this research project?

Thank you *very much for all that you have shared with me**.** It was a pleasure speaking with you.*

Appendix D: Recruitment Letter

Department of Sociology

University of South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO RECRUIT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I am a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of South Africa, currently conducting a research project titled: "*Paternal involvement beyond residence: The role of non-resident fathers in raising their children"* under the supervision of Professor M.E. Rabe.

The research study has six key objectives:

- To investigate the degree to which non-resident biological fathers are able to sustain a consistent caregiving role for the child over a life course.
- To critically explore indicators/predictors of responsible fathering in a South African context.
- To investigate non-resident biological fathers' confidence in providing care for their children in the absence of the mothers.
- To investigate how non-resident biological fathers' caregiving competence (or lack thereof) affects their relationships with their children.
- To explore the types of activity non-resident biological fathers and children engage in during periods of sole caregiving.
- To investigate the role non-resident biological fathers play in the social, moral and academic development of their children.

Research on fatherhood and father involvement has slowly begun to find expression in Southern African literature, yet we still do not know enough about non-resident

fathers. Literature and some government policies are clouded with incorrect assumptions that non-resident fathers never support their children, even though a father's absence from the household does not always imply a break in the relationship.

The key target population of this study is Black non-resident biological fathers between the ages 18 and 35 years residing in Tshwane metro. Data will be collected by means of audio-taped in-depth face-to-face interviews. I undertake to safeguard participants' anonymity by replacing real names with pseudonyms. Participants will be informed of the research and given an informed consent form fo sign on the commencement of the interviews, and the participants reserve the right to withdraw at any stage of the interviews without any negative consequences.

I wish to apply for permission to draw a sample of non-resident fathers from your organisation who fall within the targeted populations.

Thanking you in anticipation. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours truly

Tebogo Lobaka
Email: tslobaka@yahoo.com
0740272015

Appendix E: Informed consent form

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- Thank you very much for agreeing to meet and speak with me.
- My name is Tebogo Lobaka and I am a PhD student from the University of South Africa. I am conducting research on: **The role of non-resident fathers in the raising of their children.**
- The information that you share with me **will be used to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on fatherhood.**
- You **will not be paid any sum of money** for your participation in this study.
- Your participation in this study is **voluntary** and you **may withdraw from the study** at any point **without any negative consequences.**

Our discussion is scheduled to last approximately **45 to 60 minutes**. We can take a short break if you get tired during our discussion. Please remind me of the break if I forget if that is okay?

Before we can proceed, there is a consent form that should be signed. The reason for this is to confirm that you understand the information given above and that you agree to participate in this study.

Informed Consent Form

My name is Tebogo Lobaka and I am a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of South Africa. You are invited to participate in a research study titled**: Paternal involvement beyond residence: The role of non-resident biological fathers in raising their children.**

Remember that whatever we will discuss here will be **confidential**, and your **name** and details will not be made available to anyone else.

In order to capture our conversation accurately, it would be best to voice-record this conversation, **if you agree, using this voice recorder**.

ETHICS

- *Your participation is voluntary.*
- *You may choose to decline/terminate the interview at any time.*
- *There is low foreseeable risk or discomfort (emotional/psychological) for you.*
- *All interviews are recorded and transcribed.*
- *Data will be stored in a safe place for the duration of the study and beyond.*
- *Confidentiality of all identifying particulars are ensured throughout the research project and afterwards.*
- *You are agreeing to take part in the research by signing this informed consent form.*

Agreement to participate in the research study

I, **Tebogo Lobaka** will not implicate any individuals by discussing the details of the research participant's identity.

Signed:_____ Date: _____

The agreement to participate in the research

I, _____ agree to be part of this research

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Thank you.

Setswana translated informed consent form

Lemorago

- Ke leboga gagolo ka le dumela go kopana le go bua le nna
- Leina la me Tebogo Lobaka mme ke moithuti PhD go tswa Unibesiti ya Afrika Borwa mme ke dira dipatlisiso ka setlhogo se: Paternal involvement beyond residence: The role of non-resident father in the raising of their children.
- Dintlha tseo o di arolelanang le nna di tlile go diriswa go tsenya letsogo mokgatong o ntseng e godisa kitso ka boNtate.
- Ga gona mo golo wa madi ope ga o tsenya letsogo dipatlisisong tsena.
- Ho tsenya letsogo thutong ena ke ka thata ya gago, mme o ka tlogela thuto nako ngwe le ngwe. Mme ga go kitla gonna le ditlamorago dipe

Puisano ya rona e reretswe go tsaya metsotso e ka kana 45 goisa go 60. Re ka e khutsa go senene fa o kgathetse mo nakong ya puisano ya rona. Ke kopa o nkgopotse ka kgefu eo ga nka lebala. A go siame?

Pele re tswelela pele, go na le foromo ya tumelano eo tshwanetseng ke go e tlatsa. Lebaka la sena ke go netefatsa gore o utlwisisa boitshepiso jobo kwa godimo mme o dumelana go tsenya letsogo mo thutong ena.

Foromo ya tumelano

Leina la me ke Tebogo Lobaka mme ke moithuti wa bongaka go serutwa sa Sociology go tswa Unibesiting ya Afrika Borwa. Mme o lalediwa gore tsenye letsogo patlisisong ya setlogo se se reng: Kenyelletso ea bo-ntat'a bona ntle le bolulo: **Paternal involvement beyond residence: The role of non-resident biological fathers in raising their children.**

Gopola gore, eng kapa eng eo re tla bua ka yona mo e tla nna sephiri saka le wena; leina la gago ga le ditlha dingwe tsa gago ga di itsiwe ke motho mogwe ntle go nna.

Ka maikaelelo a go gatisa puisano ya rona ka nepagalo, go ka nna botlhofu ga nka gatisa puisano e ka tape-recorder, a wa ntumelela gore ke dirise tape-recoder?

Maitseo a mantle

- O tsenya letsogo ka boithaopi;
- O ka kgetha go gana kgotsa fedisa dipuisano ka nako engwe le ngwe;
- Ga go kotsi e nnye e ka tlhagang kgotsa e sa itumediseng (maikutlo / tlhaloganyong) mo go wena;
- Dipuisano tsotlhe di gatisitwe ebile di ngotswe;
- Boitshepiso bo tla bolokiwa mo tulo ee sireletsegileng ka nako ea thuto le go feta;
- Sephiri sa dintlha tsotlhe tse di kgethegileng di tla bewa tulong e e sireletsegileng go fitlha dipatlisiso di fela.
- O dumelana le go tsenya letsogo mo dipatlisisong ka go saena foromo ena ya tumelo.

Tumelano ya go tsenya letsogo mo dipatlisiso tse.

Nna, **Tebogo Lobaka** ga nkitla ka senola kgotsa go bua ka dintlha dife tsa boitshepo ba motho o ele karalo ya dipatlisiso tse.

E saenilwe:_____ Letlha:_____

Tumelano go nna karolo ya dipatlisiso tse:

Nna_____ ke dumela go nna karolo ya dipatlisiso tse.

Esaenilwe: _____: Letlha: _____

Ke a leboga

Appendix F: Historical developments in policy and the legislation affecting families

1994 First democratic election
1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
1996 National Programme of Action for Children: Framework
1996 Divorce Amendment Act 95 of 1996
1997 Basic Condition of Employment Act of 1997 (section 25 – Maternity Leave)
1997 Natural Fathers of Children Born out of Wedlock Act, 86 of 1997
1998 Maintenance Act of 1998
2001 Draft National Policy Framework for Families
2005 Children's Act, (Act No 38 of 2005)
2006 Children's Second Amendment Bill
2006 Civil Union Act, (Act No. 17 of 2006)
2013 White Paper on Families
2015 National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy
2018 Basic Condition of Employment Act (paternity leave)
2018 Social Assistance Amendment Bill
2019 Children Third Amendment Bill
2021 Draft Revised White Paper on Families (Gazette for public comments)
2021 Section 10 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992 declared unconstitutional (unmarried fathers and birth registration)

2022 Children's Admendment Act, (Act No. 17 of 2022)

Table 1: Fathers' marital status, highest qualification and current employment position

	Names	Marital Status	Highest Qualification	Current position
1	Amazing dad	Cohabiting	Diploma in Business Management	Managers of an NPO
2	Benny	Single	National Diploma in Public Management	Office Administrator
3	Cedric	Married	Masters in Economics	Specialist in Retirement Provisions
4	Chauke	Single	Security Management	Security officer
8.	Etsile	Single	Public Management and Development (Hons)	Company Secretary
6	France	Married	Master's in Business Leadership	Inter-sectorial Coordination
7	Itu	Single	Honours in public administration	Intern: Disability Advocacy
8	Jeremiah	Single	Matric	Unemployed
9	Johnny	Cohabitating	Matric	Unemployed
10	Khumo	Single	Matric	Self-employed
11	Lynton	Single	Matric	Driver
12	Mike	Remarried	Architect	Architect
13	Nkosi	Single	Diploma in Public Management	Administrative Assistant
14	Pat	Married	Master's in Development Management	Manager
15	Prince	Cohabitating	Honours in Project Management	Project Officer
16	Solomon	Cohabitating	Diploma	Unemployed
17	Sello	Married	PhD in Mathematical Science	Senior Mathematical Specialist
18	Tumelo	Married	Master's in Development studies	Population and Development

	Names	Marital Status	Highest Qualification	Current position
19	Tumza	Cohabitating	BCom in Business Management	Administrative Assistance
20	Vincent	Married	BTech Internal Audit	Internal Auditor
21	Zamile	Single	Electrical Engineering	Electrician
22	Molefe	Single	B.A Business Management	Administrator
23	Zondo	Re-married	Masters in Criminal Justice	Manager in Government

Table 2: Fathers' age, number of children from different mothers, current caregiver of the children and the relationship status with the mother of the child

	Names[51]	Ages	Number of Children	Number of mothers	Current Primary Caregiver[52]	Status of relationship with the child(ren)'s mother
1.	Amazing dad	40	5	3	Maternal grandparents and mother	Separated with the mothers
2.	Benny	34	1	1	Maternal grandparents	Separated
3.	Cedric	38	3	1	Maternal grandparents	Married
4.	Chauke	43	1	1	Mother	Separated
5.	Etsile	24	1	1	Paternal grandmother	Separated
6.	France	54	3	3	Mother	Separated
7.	Itu	26	1	1	Mother	Still dating
8.	Jeremiah	35	1	1	Mother	Separated
9.	Johnny	50	2	2	Mother	Separated
10.	Khumo	28	2	2	Mother	Separated
11.	Lynton	32	1	1	Matric	Separated
12.	Mike	40	4	4	Mother	Separated
13.	Nkosi	30	1	1	Mother	Still dating
14.	Pat	34	3	2	Paternal grandmother	Separated
15.	Prince	37	1	1	Mother	Separated
16.	Sello	53	2	2	Mother	Separated
17.	Solomon	42	3	3	Not indicated	Mother of 2 children is deceased and

[51] The names indicated in this column are the participants' chosen Pseudonyms

[52] This only refers to children who do not live in the same households with their fathers. The question was posed to find out with whom children live.

	Names[51]	Ages	Number of Children	Number of mothers	Current Primary Caregiver[52]	Status of relationship with the child(ren)'s mother
						of one child they separated
18.	Tumelo	30	2	2	Mother	Separated
19.	Tumza	36	2	2	Mother	Separated
20.	Vincent	37	1	1	Mother	Separated
21.	Zamile	31	1	1	Paternal grandparents	Separated
22.	Zondo	62	5	2	Mother	Divorced
23.	Molefe	39	4	4	Mothers	Never married