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# THESIS SUBMISSION

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**Title:**

**Masculinity and Fatherhood: A Narrative Study of South African Black Men Living in Mangaung**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the doctoral degree (with specialization in Sociology) in the Department of Sociology in the faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State.

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*Inspiring  
excellence,  
transforming  
lives through  
quality,  
impact, and  
care.*

## Declaration Doctoral Student

I, Nontombi Lenah Velelo, declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree in Sociology at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.



27/11/2024

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Student's Signature

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Date

Sociology

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## *Dedication*

This thesis is dedicated to my forefathers, who guided and provided me with wisdom, understanding, and protection in this journey. I thank my ancestors, who have been wanderers, for allowing me to find their place of dwelling in the academy and for trusting me to fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

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## ***Abstract***

Rooted in a qualitative research paradigm, this study views Black masculinity and fatherhood through the theoretical lenses of Interpretive Sociology and Africentric ontology. By focusing on the perceptions, understandings and meanings that participants draw from their everyday lived experience, the study aims to open out new understandings of a field that remains under-researched: what it means to be a Black man and father. More specifically it explores the experience of Black men from Mangaung, a township located in Bloemfontein, in the Free State Province.

Various data collection methods were applied in this study, *i.e.* semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and community-level lekgotla gatherings of men. Participants were purposively sampled and included a few women. Key constructs from the two main theories, and a literature review grounded in Gender perspectives, were distilled into guidelines for data collection instruments and to generate a-priori codes for data analysis. Analytical insights were also generated in an inductive, ground-up manner. Rigorous ethical considerations and procedures were applied throughout the study, including having a male assistant for data collection. A reflection is offered on methodology in terms of the qualitative encounter itself, and the ways in which it (re)shaped my thinking on my/our nature, culture and circumstances.

Findings are discussed in three chapters; *'Being a person'*, *'Being a man'*, and *'Being a father'*. Insights are offered on how communitarian interactions shape participants' understandings of their lifeworlds, and their views on masculinity and fatherhood. Individuals are judged – as person, man and father – on how well or not they adapt, conform, and adhere to community-level expectations, norms and roles. 'Masculinity' and 'fatherhood' are conflated with 'fulfilling responsibilities' and this occurs at personal as well as at communitarian levels.

Findings highlight the complex nature of manhood and fatherhood in the context of several sets of relationships, circumstances, and cultural practices. A key contribution of this study is its integration of a Western and an Africentric gaze – theoretically speaking, as well as in terms of the more social, interactive aspects of research methods. It uncovers how African traditional norms, and the practice of Ubuntu have evolved due to social evolution and urbanization. The thesis adds meaningful knowledge to Sociology, and more specifically, to what we know of Black South African men and fathers. It does so by focusing on participants' *whole personhoods* – on private and on shared aspects of their spiritual, communitarian, and everyday lifeworlds.

## *Opsomming*

Gesetel in 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsparadigma, het hierdie studie swart manlikheid en vaderskap deur die teoretiese lense van Interpretatiewe Sosiologie en Afrisentreise ontologie beskou. Deur te fokus op die waarnemings, begrippe en betekenis wat deelnemers uit hul alledaagse geleefde ervaring put, het die studie ten doel gehad om nuwe begrippe oop te maak van 'n veld wat nog min nagevors word: wat dit beteken om 'n swart man en pa te wees. Meer spesifiek het dit die ervaring van swart mans van Mangaung, 'n plaaslike distrik van Bloemfontein, in die Vrystaat ondersoek.

Verskeie data-insamelingsmetodes is in hierdie studie toegepas deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, in-diepte onderhoude, fokusgroepbesprekings en *Lekgotla*-byeenkomste van mans op gemeenskapsvlak. Deelnemers is deur doelbewuste steekproefneming gekies en het 'n paar vroue ingesluit. Sleutelkonstrukte uit die twee hoofteorieë en 'n literatuuroorsig gegrond op geslagsperspektiewe is saamgevoeg in riglyne vir data-insamelingsinstrumente en om waarskynlikheidskodes (*a priori*-kodes) vir data-ontleding te genereer. Analitiese insigte is ook op 'n induktiewe, basiese wyse gegenerer. Streng etiese oorwegings en prosedures is regdeur die studie toegepas, insluitend 'n manlike assistent vir data-insameling. Die navorser het besin oor die kwalitatiewe ontmoeting en hoe dit haar denke oor haar/mense se aard, kultuur en omstandighede (her)vorm het.

Bevindings word in drie hoofstukke bespreek: '*Om 'n persoon te wees*', '*Om 'n man te wees*' en '*Om 'n pa te wees*'. Insigte word aangebied oor hoe kommuniteëre interaksies deelnemers se begrip van hul lewenswêreld en hul sienings oor manlikheid en vaderskap vorm. Individue word – as persoon, man en vader – beoordeel op hoe goed hulle aanpas, konformeer en voldoen aan verwagtinge, norme en rolle op gemeenskapsvlak. 'Manlikheid' en 'vaderskap' word saamgevoeg met 'die nakoming van verantwoordelikhede', wat op persoonlike en kommuniteëre vlak plaasvind.

Die bevindinge het die komplekse aard van manlikheid en vaderskap in die konteks van verskeie stalle verhoudings, omstandighede en kulturele praktyke aan die lig gebring. 'n Sleutelbydrae van hierdie studie is die integrasie van 'n Westerse en 'n Afrisentriese blik, teoretiesgesproke, sowel as in terme van die meer sosiale, interaktiewe aspekte van navorsingsmetodes. Dit het aan die lig gebring hoe tradisionele Afrika-norme en die praktyk van *Ubuntu* ontwikkel het as gevolg van sosiale evolusie en verstedeliking. Die tesis voeg betekenisvolle kennis by tot Sosiologie, spesifiek tot wat bekend is oor swart Suid-Afrikaanse mans en vaders, deur te fokus op deelnemers se *volle persoonlikhede* – op private en gedeelde aspekte van hul geestelike, gemeenskaplike en alledaagse lewenswêreld.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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### *1.1 Background*

Rooted in the early struggles of suffragettes in 1848, the ideas and ideals of equal rights for women gave rise to the women's liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The early field of 'Womens' Studies' at the time focused primarily on feminism and politics; it played a critical role in investigating patriarchy and unpacking the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system towards women. As 'Womens' Studies' evolved into the more contemporary field of 'Gender Studies', more feminist scholars began to acknowledge the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system towards *men*. Third wave feminism rose out of this standpoint, promoting the idea that men and women should work *together* as equals to overcome oppressive gender beliefs, norms and roles for all. In this "positive" process feminist theories contributed to the development of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (Mangezvo, 2015: p33-36, Anderson & McCormack, 2018) and the emergence of the phenomenon of 'inclusive masculinities'.

Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities regard masculinities and fatherhood as a set of evolving historical and traditional practices (Ratele, 2016: p169) that take place within ever evolving contexts. Sociological, socio-economic, and socio-political positionings of men influence how they view and practice masculinities and fatherhood (Ratele, 2016: p16; Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell, and Dunkle. 2011; Hobson, 2004: p245). This insight led Hobson & Morell (2006: p. 13) to argue that masculinity and fatherhood are not biologically determined but rather socially constructed. Richter, Chikovore & Makusha (2013) add to this by observing that conceiving a child does not make a man a father. Nonetheless, in everyday life, the understandings and expectations of '*man*' and '*father*' often overlap. Irrespective of strident critiques of men's practices by radical feminists, and calls for a more inclusive approach to

gender inequities by third-wave feminists such as <sup>1</sup> bell hooks (hooks, 2000: p.117), perceptions and interpretations of masculinity and fatherhood remain slow to break free from hegemonic norms. The concept of traditional masculinity – of masculinity embedded in traditional ideologies, norms, and rules (Morrell, 2006) – is frequently used when investigating the construction and practices of manhood. More recently, studies on masculinities and fatherhood highlight the struggle between upholding traditional practices of manhood and the desire for modern as well as liberal – yet still respectable – practices of manhood.

In an African context fatherhood has more to do with kinship than with biological status, however, the phenomenon of the biological father becomes very relevant in the context of ‘absent biological African fathers’, which is a reality for most of Black South African children (Clowes, Ratele & Shefer (2013). It is the biological fathers’ responsibility to ensure that children are fully integrated into the family and gain knowledge and understanding of their identities and of traditional rituals and customs (Sonke Gender Justice & Human Science Research Council, 2018). The absence of biological fathers can be recognized as one of the factors that threaten the family’s ability to effectively fulfil their roles of socialization, nurturing, and protection. Even though studies highlight the role played by social fathers, the absence of a biological father can have a lifelong emotional and psychological impact on the life of a child.

### ***1.2 Research focus***

Black South African masculinities and fatherhood are often associated with the absence of biological fathers, gender-based violence and all manner of social ills. But how often are the voices of men consulted on these issues, and more generally, on their lifeworld as men and as

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis, bell hooks’s name and surname are in lower case letters, in keeping with her personal and professional wishes.

fathers? My research aims to fill this gap and hear men's stories and experiences as narrated by themselves. In doing so I aim to uncover some of the challenges, joys and aspirations of being a Black South African man and father in an ever-evolving world.

Fatherhood and masculinities in South Africa are often understood to involve the man providing material resources to the household and/or children. But many South African Black men of working age are unemployed – as many 35.6% of men in the second quarter of 2024 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Therefore men from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are unable to fulfil the expectations of financial provision.

Another growing concern in South African Black communities is the absence of biological fathers in the lives of their offspring (Sonke Gender Justice, Human Science Research Council & Stellenbosch University, 2021: p. 53). In many cases biological fathers are physically *as well as* emotionally and psychologically absent, and so they do not, or cannot, provide for their children's needs in the more wholistic sense. According to Manyatshe (2016, p. 228), it is important to note that there are children who do not know who their biological fathers are, due to various reasons such as the primary caregivers not disclosing the identity of the biological father, mothers not knowing who the real biological father is, and cases of informal adoption. Manyatshe (2016, p228) highlights the pain endured by mothers when the biological fathers deny paternity. In South Africa a man is not recognized as a father if he impregnated a woman outside of marriage and fails to pay *inhlawulo* (damages) to the woman's family; not paying is often interpreted as denying paternity. So factors of African tradition also shape the everyday lives of men, women and children. To contextualise this, I pay close attention to Africentric views and traditions that influence the lifeworlds of participants.

All these factors influence the day-to-day lives of men, women and children. Featuring the narratives of the lived experiences of South African Black men regarding masculinities and fatherhood enables me to gain in-depth understanding on how men negotiate communitarian

expectations and their understanding and practice of masculinities and fatherhood. I do include a few women's voices, but in essence my thesis is firmly focused on the narratives of men.

### *1.3 Clarifying key concepts*

Feminist scholars and scholars working in 'Critical Studies of Men and Masculinity' describe gender as relationally constructed. Also, gender is interconnected between a person, family and community. It is worth mentioning that masculinity is not synonymous with manhood, and vice versa. The concepts masculinities and manhood are employed in the study to draw a clear distinction between these two concepts since they are constructed in different social and traditional contexts.

- **South African Black Race:** The South African population is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Unlike the previous political apartheid system, the democratic government uses the term 'South African Black' as an umbrella term that refers to South African non-white population. So the term 'African people' in South Africa refers to Black, Coloured and Indian people who are either born in South Africa or are citizens of South Africa by descent or naturalization (The Broad-Based Economic Empowerment Act (53), 2003). The focus of this study is on South African Black men and women living in Mangaung, a suburb in a Bloemfontein township.
- **Manhood:** According to Griffith & Cornish (2016), Black African men affirm their manhood status through family, community and spirituality. Mfecane (2018) states that being a Black African man requires an individual man to undergo set of traditional practices that are prescribed by his social environment. Completing these rites of passage positions a person as a man. To a large extent, manhood is rooted in the custom of traditional circumcision, commonly known as 'initiation school' among South African Black communities such as the one in which data for this research are collected. According to Mfecane (2016), transitioning from boyhood to manhood starts with

implanting a traditional mark on a young man's body. Upon completing initiation school, an individual man gains his status of manhood. Like Gyekye (1992), Mfecane (2016) argues that a man does not lose his status of *bonna/indoda* – manhood – once he has undergone and completed the practice of *lebollo* (in Sesotho)/*ulwaluko* (in isiXhosa) - initiation school - even if his social conduct is in contradiction with social norms and values. Furthermore, initiates are taught a special language understood only by men who have completed the custom. This special language is used to exclude those who have undergone western health care circumcision (voluntary medical male circumcision) and those who are yet to go through the traditional circumcision process. In this study, the concept of '*manhood*' refers to this traditional context whereby manhood notions are formed and practiced. I also pay attention to the custom of *lebollo/ulwakulo* – initiation school – as a rite of passage and transitioning phase from boyhood to manhood.

- **Masculinity:** Masculinity is socially constructed. It entails the performance of social roles, and the fulfilment of gendered expectations associated with being a matured man. Griffith & Cornish (2016) describe masculinity as a set of interpersonal characteristics that are often expected and accepted as indicating the essence of 'Man'. Also, the concept masculinity is linked to how men negotiate power dynamics, to gendered order and societal norms and expectations (ibid). This study focuses on how men construct, negotiate and practice their masculinities, and the influence of social expectations on their understanding of masculinities.
- **Fatherhood:** The concepts man, fatherhood and masculinities are interconnected. According to Sikweyiya, Shai, Gibbs, Mahlangu and Jewkes (2017), most Black African communities view parenting as a predominantly feminine role and restrict fatherhood to financial provision rather than with the act of establishing an emotional connection with children. The concept of Black African fatherhood is complex and multilayered. Circumstances such socio-economic background, being residential or non-residential

fathers, marriage and intimate relations, and age-related circumstances such as teenage fatherhood, all play significant roles in determining the quality of a father's involvement and relationship with his children. Fatherhood in Black African communities is not only a biological phenomenon, but also a communitarian responsibility. Most of Black African children grow up in extended family structures and are raised by their families and communities. Accordingly, the study pays attention to different classifications of fatherhood, i.e. biological fathers, absent biological fathers, uninvolved fathers and social fathers.

#### ***1.4 Research Aims, Objectives and Questions***

The research, firstly, aims to narrate and describe Black African men's experience and interpretation of masculinity and fatherhood, with reference to the social construction of reality. Secondly, the study aims to explore and critically engage with the 'Lekgotla' as an indigenous method of data collection.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

- To show, via their narratives, how Black South African men experience, express, practice, and negotiate masculinity and fatherhood.
- To investigate how Black South African men's daily lived experiences shape their construction and interpretation of manhood and fatherhood.
- To interpret how societal norms and normative expectations (co)construct and influence Black African men's experiences and perceptions of masculinities and fatherhood.
- To explore how Black African men's gender roles overlap with fatherhood roles.
- To critically explore Lekgotla as an indigenous data collection context and method.

#### **Questions posed by the study:**

- How do participants perceive, experience, and practice masculinity and fatherhood?
- How do social expectations influence participants' perceptions of masculinity and fatherhood?
- How do 'traditional' ideas of manhood and fatherhood influence participants' lifeworlds?
- How do participants (re)negotiate intersubjectively constituted notions of manhood and fatherhood?
- How do participants use language to co-construct manhood and fatherhood?

### *1.5 Structure of the thesis*

- **Introduction:**

**Chapter 1**, which you are now reading, briefly introduces the research.

- **Theoretical lenses** of the study are presented in two chapters:

**Chapter 2:** Interpretive Sociology: This chapter presents one of the key theoretical lenses used to envisage the phenomena of masculinity and fatherhood. The main assumptions and arguments of interpretive sociology are outlined here. I pay attention to the work of Alfred Schütz on understanding the lifeworld, and the (co)construction of meaning in an evolving social world. I also reflect on the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann on understanding multiple realities of the social world.

**Chapter 3:** The Africentric Theory: Attention goes to the African ontology –to the philosophy of Personhood, and Ubuntu. The chapter presents the main, and sometimes conflicting, ideas of classic Africentric scholars, i.e. Molefi Asante, Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye and Bernard Matolino. Key to the chapter is an exploration of African human personhood and the precedence it takes in shaping modern social norms and expectations. Additionally, I pay attention to traditional notions of kinship and traditional customs relating to Black masculinities and fatherhood. Irrespective of strident critiques of men's practices by radical feminists, and calls for a more inclusive

approach to gender inequities by third-wave feminists such as bell hooks<sup>2</sup>, definitions and interpretations of masculinity and fatherhood remain slow to break free from hegemonic norms.

- **Gender perspectives**

**Chapter 4:** presents a **critical review of literature** relevant to key ideas in Gender Studies as these relate to masculinity and fatherhood. This chapter examines the body of literature around masculinity and fatherhood. It pays attention to the feminist scholars who initiated intense debates around gender, gender roles, sexism and sexist patterns. I unpack the contribution of the African American scholar, bell hooks, and her views on the feminist movement, Black masculinities and fatherhood. This chapter also reflects on the theory of Inclusive Masculinity, developed by Eric Anderson.

- **The research methodology**

**Chapter 5:** Key epistemological aspects of the study are discussed first. Following that, the practical methods are comprehensively described. This chapter gives account of the epistemological approach to the study. This chapter describes sampling, the location of the study, the data collection approaches and methods, and the processes followed to analyze data. Attention is paid to enhance the quality of the findings, and to ethical considerations and conduct.

- **The Findings of the research** are presented in Three Chapters.

These chapters integrate data with their interpretation, which does away with the need for a separate chapter on data presentation.

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<sup>2</sup> The use of low case letters for her name are used throughout the thesis, in line with the author's personal and professional wishes.

**Chapter 6:** Being a Person is mainly informed by an Africentric view of reality. It focuses on the *communitarian* lived experiences of participants against the backdrop of expectations regarding masculinities, manhood and fatherhood. I engage with the content and meaning of what participants say about the acts of Ubuntu – including communitarian support – that they experienced in their initiate cycle, and of how the essence of Ubuntu is changing in a modern context. Participants share their views on the expectations of masculinity and fatherhood that members of their respective communities hold, and the behavior and attitudes of community members when those expectations are not met.

**Chapter 7:** Being a Man: In this chapter, participants talk about men who shaped their views of what is to be a man. They reflect on how the lessons they learned from these men have shaped their lives. The term manhood refers to a traditional context, where notions of manhood are constructed and fostered – such as traditional rites of passage and expectations, and community involvement in the transition from being boys to becoming men. Participants also share their views on changes in this traditional rite of passage in the context of modern society. This chapter unpacks the connection between the living and non-living in the process of socialization, including the interconnection between the soul, spirit and body that exist in the custom of initiation school. The chapter features participants’ experiences and understandings of their relationship with other men and with women and how these relationships influence how they understand what it is to be a man.

**Chapter 8:** Being a Father, explores this phenomenon through the lens of participants’ early experiences of fatherhood and how this influenced their journeys to becoming fathers themselves. Participants share memories of relating to their biological fathers and the lessons on fatherhood they learned from their fathers. I also pay attention to the phenomenon of absent biological, and uninvolved fathers. Understanding that fatherhood is a communitarian responsibility, participants talk about their relationships

with men who – as social fathers – fulfilled the fatherhood role. Moving on to their own practice and experience of fatherhood, participants tell of their relationships with and expectations of their children, and of the other parent (with whom they share the children).

- **Chapter 9: The Qualitative research encounter** emerged as an important aspect of the research. It speaks to the roles and personal experience of the qualitative researcher, a theme gaining momentum in the literature. I thus dedicate a separate chapter to it.
- **Chapter 10: Drawing together the Threads** presents the conclusions of the research. Conclusions are organized in themes. Critical engagement with findings yields insights on theory; gender; the strengths and limitations of the research; ideas on future research; and contributions of the research to the discipline of Sociology and the field of Masculinities.
- **The List of References and Appendices** follow these main chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO: INTERPRETIVE SOCIOLOGY

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### *2.1. Introduction*

Natural scientists have often challenged the possibility of using common sense to understand social reality. Natural scientists usually create concrete models of reality that they argue assist them in the quest to predict, know and understand the natural world. However, this does not work for understanding the structure or functioning of the social world. In addition to the structured world, a sociologist must focus on the people who live in it and how they have created and shared meaningful structures and processes that make social interaction possible (Heiskala, 2011). Social analysts are interested in knowing how individuals perceive and make sense of their lifeworld. Their mandate is to describe and report on how individuals perceive and make sense of their everyday world, a world collectively shared with others.

David (2010) highlights many discussions and disputes over how social scientists perform their tasks. At the root of their activity is the concept of understanding. The term understanding is the most common translation of the German word *Verstehen*. This concept of *Verstehen* is critical to the sociological practice of Max Weber, the founding father of interpretive sociology, and the entire interpretive tradition in sociology. *Verstehen* concerns itself with the concepts people use to organise and make sense of their social experiences of the world. It often requires the sociologist or researcher to place themselves in the position of others to gain insight into how they view the world. It also focuses on how people's actions and interactions inform their understanding of the world. All these concepts (understanding and making sense of experiences) allude to language. Sociologists can access a component of people's understanding, meaning making, and experiences through language. Language enables one to enter into a dialogue with people. By utilising language, sociologists become intersubjectively involved in understanding, making sense of, and to some extent experiencing, aspects of the research subjects' understandings and experiences.

As mentioned, the term Verstehen is often associated with the work of Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of sociology. For Weber, sociology is concerned with the interpretive understanding of social action (Weber, 1981). The interpretive understanding of the social world accounts for understanding the behaviour and perceptions of others. In his writing, *'Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology'*, Weber highlighted the importance of culture and meaningful action in historical change (David, 2010). He focuses on how shared meaning creates cultural forms and how individuals make sense of these cultural forms. Understanding the act of social action includes considering the self-understanding of social actors. Weber's idea of Verstehen enables sociologists to investigate people's experiences and gain insight into how people perceive and experience their social world (Bonner, 2001).

This chapter outlines one of the key theoretical groundings of this study, namely Interpretive Sociology, with specific reference to the contributions of Alfred Schütz, Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann.

## ***2.2 The primary theoretical lenses***

The primary theoretical lens used in this study was Interpretivist Sociology, based on the work of Alfred Schütz, the present-day father of phenomenology, who expanded on the work of Edmund Husserl and Max Weber and applied his phenomenological thoughts and methods to sociology. According to Heiskala (2011), interpretive sociology focuses on individuals' actions, social location, knowledge, understanding, and experience. It acknowledges context and, thus, the diverse lenses different actors use based on their social locations. Schütz incorporated Max Weber's work into his sociological perspectives, particularly his ideas on Verstehen, experience, and power. In his writing, Alfred Schütz focused on and emphasised concepts such as everyday

lifeworld, the meaning of the everyday lifeworld, stock of knowledge, and consciousness, as well as the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of knowledge construction (Fargains, 1996: p. 318). These concepts of Schütz provide a basis for understanding how individuals construct knowledge and how perceptions and experiences of one's everyday lifeworld are formed. This study used these concepts to unpack participants' views and understanding of manhood and fatherhood, as well as to examine how participants make sense of their everyday lives and experiences as men and fathers.

In addition to Schütz, this study focuses on the contribution of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, mainly to guide my reflections on the critical role played by language in the social construction of reality. Language generates and explains multiple factors in how language functions to shape realities. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann linked their thinking to the work of Alfred Schütz, and their particular ideas provide an additional framework for interpretive studies, in this case, for exploring how people construct and interpret masculinity and fatherhood. Interpretive sociology helps one to describe how people see the world, interpret what they see, and internalise what they understand to be socially acceptable. It scrutinises how human beings develop similar perceptions and how these perceptions construct similar or shared everyday worlds (Wallace & Wolf, 1986: 234). Interpretivist sociological thinking provides a useful investigative approach for an interpretive study such as the (co)construction of masculinity and fatherhood.

The following section provides more details on the theoretical framework of Alfred Schütz, including the theoretical contributions of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.

### **2.2.1 Alfred Schütz's theoretical framework**

Alfred Schütz focused on the conception of social reality in a way that incorporated Edmund Husserl's view of 'seeing beyond the particulars of every day' and Weber's concepts of 'Verstehen' and subjective meaning (Inglis & Thorpe, 2016: p. 86). Schütz addressed the primary structures of phenomenological sociology, thus the title of his book, 'The Structure of the Life World.' He deemed Weber's main ideas as a starting point for understanding and analysing social reality, disregarding Weber's idea of reality as it did not sufficiently reach its logical conclusion (Cuff, Payne, Francis, Hustler & Sharrock, 1984: p. 152). Weber's emphasis on subjective meaning can create an impression that individual action has a single meaning stemming from the actor. This assumption suggests that individual actors understand their social world. Schütz elaborated on this and focused on the *intersubjective* nature of the social world.

Schütz focused on producing various accounts to describe the primary pillars of the lifeworld of individuals. His primary aim was to investigate the processes people follow to make sense of general societal issues. According to Inglis and Thorpe (2016: p. 86), an individual often has contact with people who have a different outlook on life in a general sense. Therefore, it is important to note how individuals and a group of people from similar or different backgrounds formulate a shared understanding of their world; for instance, interactions between intimately connected individuals lead to them sharing a similar, or even the same, lifeworld. Schütz also focused on how individuals construct and understand social reality, the impact of macro-social structures in the lifeworld, and individuals' role as social actors (Inglis & Thorpe, 2016: p. 86).

The meaning people give to social interactions and everyday life circumstances is paramount (Inglis & Thorpe, 2016: p. 86; Farganis, 1996: p. 318). Schütz, therefore, focused on the larger contexts of concrete interactional encounters. For sociologists to interpret and explain human

action and thought, it is crucial to describe the foundational structures of the reality that often seem self-evident to people within that reality (Schütz, 1974: p. 3). Reality is, therefore, found and must be understood in the context of the everyday lifeworld.

Schütz called this everyday world the lifeworld (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 86). The everyday lifeworld creates a space for people to understand and be understood by others. The common, communicative, and surrounding world is constituted in the everyday lifeworld. The lifeworld contains an individual's view of social settings, life in general, and actions. Human beings are born into a world that is not only physical but also socio-cultural, shaped by social norms and morals. The lifeworld is influenced by the 'traditional' context of a particular group of people. It creates a shared sense of reality – the primary way people experience their world. The traditional context, therefore, influences how people make sense of and experience the world around them. It allows people to develop shared meanings of how they view the world. The lifeworld is, therefore, the everyday world and is an interpretative reality. People often accept common-sense reality without subjecting common-sense worldviews to rational and critical reflection. As a result, people often accept this common-sense reality without thinking about it consciously. Schütz referred to this habitual sense of the world, namely the sense of accepting social reality without consistently questioning it, as a natural attitude (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 90). When people have a habitual understanding of what the world entails, then several characteristics of the social world are common to them because they are rooted in a shared human condition. However, they are also individuals, so the lifeworld produces common yet varying experiences.

Natural attitudes are concerned with the mental disposition of human beings. Natural attitude concerns itself with the consciousness in which people view and accept the everyday reality: life-as-usual (Drehen, 2011). Natural attitude is also based on the assumption that the structure of individual perceptions and actions in the social world is given. In most instances, people in

society have a sense of what is normal and what is different. Natural attitudes are often called into question and specifically reconsidered when something perceived as unusual occurs. This disruption of what is perceived to be reality can cause a sense of confusion and uncertainty. However, in most instances, natural attitudes reinforce people's actions and thoughts, providing a framework against which to act. Schütz explained that everyday lifeworld is not a private world but is, to a large extent, intersubjective and, therefore, anchored *between* individual subjects (Schutz, 1974: p. 3 and Heiskala, 2011). The understanding and analysis of daily life involves individuals co-constructing and sharing the experience of natural attitude – they understand it as being their reality. This resonates well with the core principle of Ubuntu – *umtu ngu mtu nga bantu* (refer to Chapter Three, p. 41) – a sense of collectiveness and shared experiences. People living together with other people usually have a common knowledge and understanding of social norms and what is socially acceptable. The lifeworld is a fundamental structure of what Schütz called self-evident reality shared by people (Drehen, 2011). Individuals share and experience the social world as a collective.

Since the social world is not unique for each individual in society but is, to quite a significant degree, a shared social world, Schütz emphasised the importance of reciprocity of perspectives (Schütz, 1970: p. 71). By reciprocity of perspectives, he meant that individuals are more likely to partake in events and actions that are understandable to others in the same way they are understandable to themselves (Wallace & Wolf, 1986: p. 235). This reciprocity of perspectives assumes that people share experiences and would have similar experiences should they be in a similar situation as others (Wilson, 1983: 154). Therefore, the assumption is that people have similar behaviours and similar sets of common knowledge, making it possible for us to recognise and understand normal behaviour. The affective meaning an individual imparts on a situation, and the accompanying interaction is often shared by people with whom he or she engages and interacts (Wallace & Willows, 1986: p. 235). The shared meaning is experienced and assumed in interactional contexts. It, therefore, comes across and is experienced as typical or normal. Also, people continuously contribute to normality by redefining their experiences

and interactions regarding what they deem typical or routine. People can also recognise the unstated and intended meanings. Their interactions during an ordinary conversation entail the assumption that those with whom they interact have similar experiences and understandings. Schütz viewed the lifeworld as an arena that provides space for people's reciprocal actions. People commonly know the typical roles and responsibilities of men and fathers. This set of common knowledge also influences the lived experiences of men and fathers.

Heiskala (2011) highlighted the ability of individual actors to create the lifeworld according to their habits and preferences, echoing Schütz's work. In his writing 'World of Daily Life,' Schütz argues that as our predecessors experienced, interpreted and constructed their intersubjective world, it gradually shifted, becoming their objective world (Schütz, 1970: p. 72). Thus, what they thought, believed, and practised slowly became their reality, their 'truth'. Understanding and interpreting the lifeworld are grounded in previous experiences (stock of knowledge). Families, communities, and society pass down knowledge and understanding, which entails a basic understanding of social expectations, attitudes, behaviour, and scheme reference (*ibid*). The assumption is that an individual draws from a common stock of knowledge: A social conception of appropriate behaviour that enables the individual to negotiate everyday life. The stock of knowledge also consists of the individual's experience in various situations. Men internalise and learn about socially desirable and undesirable behaviour through socialisation and social interaction. The social environment often informs men of the attributes of manhood and fatherhood. The knowledge and understanding of manhood and fatherhood are often passed down by observing the interaction of men and women in their social settings. This influences how individual men understand their lifeworld and make sense of it. The everyday world is, therefore, a combination of people's actions and interactions.

These ideas and concepts influenced the researcher's research process in terms of designing lenses, such as research questions and foci, to explore an individual's stock of knowledge

rooted in that individual's interpretations and experiences, including how the stock of knowledge can be modified and generalised, becoming social typification. The researcher also attempted to unpack how an individual man's behaviour and actions are influenced by his interactions with others and the social environment where his understanding of masculinity and fatherhood is formed.

Individuals deal with specific situations within the context of their stock of knowledge. The stock of knowledge provides a framework for individuals to understand, explain and deal with the circumstances presented by life. Therefore, the stock of knowledge is bound to various contexts and situations. An individual is not an isolated actor in any social situation but rather part of an ongoing process of collective experiences. Furthermore, an individual matures and changes over time, as does a society. Thus, while an individual may encounter similar situations or experiences in a lifetime, he or she and the society in which she or she is embedded will also develop *different* outlooks and understandings of phenomena and situations.

Though the social world is commonly shared and experienced by people, the experiences are not the same for individuals. On the one hand, Schütz focused on the larger context of well-established (habitual) interactional engagements and sociological constructs in various contexts (Psathas, 1983: p. 64). On the other hand, Schütz interpreted these interactional engagements in terms of the individual actor's knowledge and understanding. He focused on interactional engagements by recognising the logic of the interrelations between people. It is mainly through the medium of language that it becomes possible to understand how individuals' understandings are learned and shared.

As mentioned, Schütz (1974, p99) regards an individual's stock of knowledge as being connected to that individual's experience of their lifeworld. The stock of knowledge is built up from real/actual former and current experiences. These real/actual former and current experiences are inserted in terms of their relevance to the individual's existing stock of knowledge into the flow of the person's lived experience in what is considered a biography (Schütz, 1974: p. 99). The stock of knowledge provides a basis for individuals to understand, describe, and master the circumstances presented by life. In this regard, an individual is not positioned in a series of consecutive, isolated situations but rather in an ongoing *process* of experiences. In this instance, ageing is not defined in relation to biological time and existence but rather by the level of maturity and ability to engage in ethical reasoning.

Schütz argues that individual members of society possess a large common stock of knowledge (Wallace & Wolf, 1986: p. 234). Common-sense knowledge enables social actors to categorise; in this way, they interpret the lifeworld in terms of their experiences. According to Wilson (1983: p. 154) and Heiskala (2011), Schütz viewed a common stock of knowledge as consisting of concepts containing common-sense knowledge, referring to these concepts as typification. He stated that the experience of the everyday lifeworld is a process of typification. Typification refers to what is perceived to be a typical or standard collection of events and actions (Cuff, Payne, Francis, Hustler, and Sharrock, 1984: p. 152 and Psathas, 1973: p. 64). This study focuses on unpacking the ideal typification of masculinity and fatherhood, perceptions, and perceptions of fatherhood and masculinity.

The process of typification enables individuals to see things in a collective form, as belonging to a similar collective. As members of society, individuals develop stocks of typification that allow them to deal with the everyday world as something relatively ordinary and familiar. Schütz argued that individuals construct their world using typifications primarily passed on to them by their social groups (Wallace & Wolf, 1986: p. 234). Individuals use typification in their

interactions with other people. Typology allows individuals to reflect, think about people in the past, and imagine what people will be like in the future. They also consist of stereotypical notions that an individual holds about other people. Stereotypes are essential for individuals to make sense of the world around them and influence their interactions with different people.

Furthermore, Schütz focuses on human consciousness (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 90). According to Schütz, individuals rely on typical ideas to grasp the various aspects of reality. People formulate these common-sense typifications based on their construction and understanding of everyday life.

Schütz distinguished meaning and motive (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 90):

- He referred to **meaning** as a means by which individuals decide on social aspects that are relevant to them. On the one hand, subjective meaning comprises what individuals view and define as a reality they have formulated in their independent mental construction and consciousness. On the other hand, a subjective sense is shared collectively by social actors in society, as noted earlier (see detailed discussion under paragraph 2.2.1. on p.29). Over years and years of intersubjective agreement, a shared subjective sense can take on the mantle of being 'objective' reality or the 'truth'.
- Individuals often have personal and collective reasons for their actions. Schütz referred to these as **motives**. Individuals engage in specific actions and often have subjective and intersubjective reasons for acting as they do.

In terms of the focus of this research, there are individual and collective understandings of what manhood and fatherhood entail. However, individual men have reasons why they conform or not to social notions and norms of manhood and fatherhood. A man may be

motivated by his independent mental constructs of what masculinity and fatherhood entail (his personal meaning) or by what others in his social world perceive as appropriate or inappropriate behaviour and actions (collective or social meaning).

People often take reality for granted. They, therefore, act with a significant element of common sense. People do not always question or critically analyse their experiences because they view their experiences as being part of a reality that existed long before they were born; therefore, they are born into reality (Schütz, 1970: p. 4). The natural world (social reality) has already been conceptualised, experienced, and mastered by our predecessors and, over time, has become a standard frame of interpretation. Schütz (1970: p. 210) states as follows:

'Meaning is not inherent in certain experiences emerging within our stream of consciousness, but the result of interpreting an experience looked at from the present. Now, with a reflective attitude. As long as I live in my acts directed toward the objects of these acts, the acts do not have any meaning. They become meaningful if I grasp them as well as circumscribed experiences of the past and, therefore, in retrospection. The only experiences that can be recollected beyond their actuality and questioned about their constitution are, therefore, subjectively meaningful.'

From the above quotation, it can be derived that the *meaning* of action and interaction is decided within the context in which it occurs and the individual's biography. Without context, an individual would not be able to explain or know the meaning behind the situation. It is also worth emphasising the significant role of actions. Once people understand the context, their interpretation of a situation may change. Therefore, the relationship between action and context is flexible and needs to be considered when analysing social action. This is essential when making sense of social reality and social interactions.

According to Schütz (1972: p. 6), people do not only act and operate within the lifeworld but also have a direct impact upon it. He viewed the lifeworld as a reality that people can influence through their acts and actions. Simultaneously, the reality already found within the everyday lifeworld may limit an individual's free possibilities of action. In other words, an individual lives within a lifeworld that directly impacts his/her experience of reality. However, the individual can also interact creatively with the social reality within which he/she finds him/herself.

Cuff et al. (1984: p. 154) defines social action as an action that considers the behaviour of others. Social action is, therefore, subjectively meaningful behaviour. It is influenced by or directed towards the behaviour of others. Although he strongly emphasised the individual's ability regarding agency, Schütz encouraged social scientists to consider the basis of social order. He argued that the social world is orderly and often organised and experienced as such by social actors (Cuff et al., 1984: p. 153). People's social world is arranged through common-sense knowledge possessed by social actors and is subjectively understood by individuals who operate within it. This world needs to be interpreted through the experiences of social actors. Therefore, social action should be analysed and understood as a meaningful experience (Wilson, 1983: p. 148). The lived experiences of individual men in society shaped their understanding of manhood and fatherhood. These lived experiences have also impacted their perceptions and understanding of their lifeworld. Their lived experiences as men and fathers often influence their subjective worldview.

Since the study focuses on the lived experiences of Black men and women relating to masculinity and fatherhood, paying attention to the social construction of reality is essential in understanding what participants view as real when describing their lived experiences.

### **2.2.2 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's contribution to ideas on the social construction of reality**

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, students of Alfred Schütz, extended Schütz's ideas and analysis of the social construction of reality (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 86). Berger and Luckmann argued that human consciousness is the ultimate root of all social phenomena. They viewed the social order as not biologically acquired, determined, or even derived or manifested from any biological empirical data. The patterns and regulations in human life are structured around human consciousness. They also viewed social order as an ongoing human production that makes possible action and interaction produced and reproduced over time. Human beings construct reality but are not always conscious of their role in creating and maintaining reality (Farganis, 1996: p. 318). Berger and Luckmann's belief that social order is produced mainly by human consciousness provides a sound basis for understanding and interactions. Through consciousness, human beings can (re)construct social institutions.

Berger and Luckmann added the idea of *alienation* to Schütz's basic concepts. The concept of alienation is derived from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and was developed mainly in Germany by prominent sociological thinkers such as Marx, Weber, and Simmel (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 86). These thinkers examined what they perceived as alienation, particularly in different aspects of modern society, and incorporated these ideas into their assessments of interactions and relationships of individuals in a society where living together was increasingly problematic. Berger and Luckmann's combination of the notion of alienation and Schütz's work on the lifeworld of common-sense knowledge, typification, and meaning bring a critical issue to the fore. People co-construct common sense knowledge, meaning and consciousness.

People form a collective understanding of social rules and values through social interaction. The interaction between people also creates social norms, which become institutionalised. Therefore, people perceive social rules and norms as natural (Farganis, 1996: p. 318). Berger

and Luckmann view society as man-made, comprising objective and intersubjective reality, created by people as social products of their world and interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: p. 33). In their writing, Berger and Luckmann highlighted the capitalisation process (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 86). Capitalisation refers to behaviour and actions frequently repeated to the extent that they become a habit. People create their realities through habitual interactions. Thus, the argument is that reality itself is habitual. This resonates with Schütz's idea of a common-sense view of the world. Also, people accept society and social rules and values as they are since they are born into a society where these rules and values were set by their predecessors who perceived their present-day social reality as a normal way of existence (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 86). Therefore, social norms, values, and interactions are habitual in the social world. Men's and fathers' behaviours, roles, and responsibilities are seen as normal and a habit, at least to some men, since they have been performed by men who came before them. They have been repeated frequently and become a pattern of actions.

Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann views language as one of the forms of objective and subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 49, Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: 95). From the early phase of a human's development, language starts as a set of sounds intended to communicate certain things. It becomes more elaborate as time passes and people begin to speak. People internalise and experience language as part of reality rather than as a human product. People perceive the words they use as directly referring to and describing their reality. However, language also represents the lifeworld of the people who produce and use it. As a result, different languages embedded in different lifeworlds generate distinctive and multiple realities (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: p. 95). The notion of multiple realities within the social world is central to interpretive sociology and the Africentric approach employed in this study (refer to Chapter Three, p. 41). Through human communication, typifications, like recipes, become habituated and experienced as typical ways of living.

Social institutions such as family relations, gender dynamics, relations of authority, and subordination are, therefore, objectified human products. As a result, people experience these relations as genuine, natural, normal, and unavoidable. They are convinced that this is the only way of doing things and the only way to perceive and act within the world. The lifeworld is perceived to attain firmness in consciousness and manifest as a reality that cannot be altered easily. Berger and Luckmann referred to this as a paramount reality; the lifeworld perceived to be completely unavoidable in which individuals live (Farganis, 1996: p. 319). The types of practical consciousness that people use are usually shaped by their lifeworld. As a result, the lifeworld is experienced as an ordinary and simple reality.

According to Berger and Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: p.13, Inglis & Thorpe, 2012: 97), society is a human product that manifests as objective reality. Society begins as a human product and evolves into internalisation, objectification, and institutionalisation. This becomes a continuous process that is natural and inescapable for people living in it. It also implies that social power and exclusion are not exercised *intentionally* by the privileged group since they perceive their social privilege as normal, natural, and inevitable (ibid). Therefore, power and domination are not consciously exercised since they are embedded in the practical consciousness and lifeworld shared by individuals who view social events as they are or ought to be. In this way, social situations are perceived as unchangeable. These views are also linked to the Marxist theory of alienation and the power struggle between the two socioeconomic classes in modern society.

### **2.3 Summary**

This chapter focused on the primary theoretical lens used in the study, namely interpretive sociology. Interpretive sociology reflects on individuals' actions, social location, knowledge, understanding, and experience while acknowledging diverse lenses used by different actors

based on their social environments. The chapter highlighted the contribution of Alfred Schütz to the discipline of Sociology. Alfred Schütz's expansion of Husserl and Weber's work offers new descriptions and understandings of what people perceive as social reality. Schütz focused on the intersubjectivity of the social world and the multiple realities that people form.

Human beings are exposed to traditional norms and customs from early life stages. People gain social position and gather information from early development stages by observing the interactions between other people, which influences their outlook on life. Subsequently, people formulate their perceptions and beliefs through social interactions and encounters. The social world comprises social actors with similar or contrasting views and experiences of their lifeworld: Various institutions and affective meanings factor into people's understandings of their life and world. Berger and Luckmann's proposition of multiple realities aids in acknowledging that people might have similar yet different experiences that impact their views and understanding.

## CHAPTER THREE: AFRICENTRIC THEORY

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*"A person is a person through other persons. None of us come into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, walk, speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human"* - Desmond Tutu (2004)

### **3.1 Background**

The term 'Afrocentric' is usually used to refer to Americans who identify as descendants of Africa (Nwoye, 2017), while the concept 'Africentric' (ibid) focuses on the distinctive role of African culture and tradition in creating human personhood. This study followed the latter. However, before elaborating on it, it is important to provide background about the thinking and history behind both these terms.

Afrocentric thinking is drawn from Egyptian philosophers' ideas, who emphasised 'Holism' of the physical and spiritual aspects of being (Dastile, 2013). Du Bois coined Afrocentric in the 1960s to explain his work in the Encyclopaedia Africana (Bay, 2020). Following this, the term was used by Black activists in America during the late 1960s, who fought for the representation of Black people and called for an Afrocentric approach in their training courses for African studies. More recently, the theoretical conceptualisation of Afrocentrism became linked to Molefi Asante's seminal work, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, in 1980 (Oyebade, 1990).

The focus of this study is on Black South African men and women's perceptions of masculine and fatherhood notions, particularly, focusing on unpacking individual and collective perceptions, expectations, and experiences of masculinity and fatherhood, including

understanding the positive and negative aspects of being a man, a father, and a husband within the participants' contexts. In this regard, I link Africentric to Interpretive-phenomenological ideas (see Chapter 2, p. 26) since the focus is on how participants make sense of their experiences and realities within their natural settings. The Africentric approach places the experiences of Africans at the centre by focusing on the knowledge and experiences of African people. This resonates well with the main arguments of interpretive sociology since the focus is on capturing the knowledge, perceptions and experiences of social actors and their views of the social world.

Afrocentrism argues that African people unconsciously adopt Western worldviews and perspectives rather than looking at knowledge from an African perspective (Mamaza, 2001). This study's participants were born into an African context; it is a key to their reality and their way of being in the world. Therefore, the researcher applied Africentrism as an ontological and epistemological lens to understand and describe the role of tradition and the natural environment in Black South African men and women's construction and understanding of manhood and fatherhood. This study employed the Interpretive-phenomenological approach and the Africentric approach as parallel partners.

This chapter starts by focusing on the main ideas and contradictions of the African perspective of human personhood, rooted in the principles of Ubuntu. The chapter highlights the main ideas of the Africentric scholars (Molefi Asante, Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye, and Bernard Matolino) and their conflicting views on African human personhood.

### ***3.2 The African-centered approach: Africentric view***

Asante viewed Afrocentrism as the result of the Black cultural nationalists' philosophy that emerged in the 1970s in America, aimed at reconstructing (Mkabela, 2005) Black people's notions about race and society. Asante argued that Afrocentricity places African ideas and contexts at the centre when investigating and analysing African ways of being (Bangura, 2012). Afrocentricity is built on the assumption that the African geographic and social location is essential when studying African descendants; therefore, these should be the starting points in understanding African culture and behaviour. He elaborated by stating as follows (Asante; 1991, p. :179-180):

'Afrocentricity is the most complete philosophical totalisation of the Africans being-at-the centre of his or her existence.'

Therefore, the concept of Afrocentrism represents the quality of beliefs and perceptions formed in the interest of African people and reflecting on their lived experiences and traditions. Afrocentrism emphasises the importance of acknowledging common cultural traits among different people and collective dependency among African people.

Afrocentrism challenges African American scholars to recognise African-centred consciousness in African morals, thoughts, and beliefs. Asante argued that African Americans need an epistemological system that will challenge structural forces governing knowledge construction and dissemination (Asante, 1991). In his view, this can be achieved through conducting research, reporting, and writing from the African standpoint. Afrocentrism emphasises African ideas when studying and analysing African behaviour and tradition. It strives to describe and ground people's history, experience, perspective, and reasoning within Africa's context. Afrocentrism relocates African people's historical, social, philosophical, and political

positioning. Asante argued that it affirms Africans as active agents in knowledge creation and proclaims the African worldview's universality (Adeleke, 2015). It represents deeper epistemological frames that unite African people and prevent African people from being subjected to Western notions and realities (Dastile, 2013).

Afrocentrism is rooted in the principles of Ubuntu. The core belief of Ubuntu is grounded on the notion that 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu,' a Nguni idiom meaning (when translated to English), 'a person is a person through other people - I am because you are; you are because I am!'. Nelson Mandela (2010, p. 151) stated as follows:

'In Africa, there is a concept known as Ubuntu – the profound sense that we are human through the humanity of others; if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others.'

From the above quotation, it is evident that Ubuntu allows us to recognise others (men and women, fathers and mothers) as humans and encourages communitarian existence regardless of structural social prejudices or unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. The philosophy of Ubuntu embraces humanity and collectiveness rather than individualism. Horsthemke (2018) describes Ubuntu as a guiding principle of African humanism. Nwoye (2017) explains that humans are born and develop through the influence of and interaction with others. Molefi (2017) states that Ubuntu translates to understanding personal identity in the context of being with others. Ubuntu is closely linked with the ideas around African communalism; this study focuses on unpacking the notions of African human personhood and the direct and indirect role of collective efforts in shaping African human personhood, masculinity, and fatherhood.

As Nwoye (2017) mentioned, the concept of 'Africentric' outlines the distinctive role of African culture and tradition in creating human personhood. This study focuses on how participants construct and draw meaning and understanding of masculinity and fatherhood in the South African context; thus, I opted to use the ontological concept of Africentrism in describing and understanding the lived experiences of participants in the study. Hoekema (2008) argues that human personhood cannot be understood outside an individual's cultural context. In the context of this study, I refer to culture as the overall reality of African persons, focusing on the lived experiences of individuals within the context of their overall societal reality.

The Africentric perspective views reality through a holistic lens (both – and) rather than a dualistic lens (either – or) (Nwoye, 2017). In the African context, communal existence takes precedence over the reality of an individual's life experience (Menkiti, 1984). African scholars highlighted in this thesis view African life and human personhood as being built on the premises of communitarianism. However, these scholars disagree regarding the accuracy of the characterisation of the African social structure, providing different accounts of African life and what it entails. This has resulted in similar and opposing interpretations of African human personhood and African social structure, particularly in contexts where Africans are exposed to the Western concepts of individuality, individual rights, and individualistic ways of being.

Some scholars claim that African human personhood includes being able to live with others and being morally grounded. African human personhood is viewed from a holistic lens of soul, spirit, and body before collective acceptance. Therefore, African human personhood and communal living are subject to different interpretations, and the understandings thereof are also created within different contexts. The concept of community stems from the assumption that people share essential cultural traits and allegiances. Therefore, a community is often described as a group of people living together, sharing, in some instances, lineage and kinship, history, belief, and political systems and ideologies. Eurocentric thinkers view this explanation of community

in the African social setting as disregarding the individual's rights and freedom. In some contexts, the principles of Ubuntu are applied to one's intimate social group, which still seems to present and preserve individualistic rather than collective social norms and values.

The researcher drew on the insight of African Philosophers, particularly regarding attaining the status of African human personhood, since this study focuses on how participants collectively and individually formulate notions of masculinity and fatherhood within their social settings and networks. Attention went into understanding how a community defines and regards a good man, father, and husband and the influence thereof on the perceptions and conduct of the participants within the community. Menkiti's account of African human personhood has received support and criticism from various philosophers (e.g., Kwame Gyekye, Marya Schechtman, Godwin Sogolo, John Mbiti, and other African philosophers); however, the researcher views his contribution as relevant to the sociological description of collective existence.

### ***3.2.1 An African perspective on human personhood***

The notion of human personhood is linked to the earlier work of the Nigerian philosopher Ifeanyi Menkiti (Menkiti, 1984, Beck & Oyowe, 2018 and Molefi, 2018), who is known for advocating for the radical communitarianism version of personhood (Matolino, 2011). In his paper titled 'Person and Community in African Tradition Thought,' Menkiti provides a different and descriptive view that outlines what he perceives as the distinction between the Western and African attributes of human personhood (Menkiti, 1984). In the African context, a person is defined in relation to the communitarian existence. In contrast, according to Menkiti, in the Western context, a person is defined by the 'isolated static quality of logic or reasoning'. From his views, Menkiti describes African human personhood as a socially sanctioned activity (Matolino, 2011). The primary assumption is that, to gain the social status of personhood, one

should obtain socially acceptable ways of living, live a productive life, and maintain good relations with others.

Matolino (2011) highlights the views of Placide Tempels, who argues that 'Umntu – the living' has to do with being one with the Creator, clan brethren, family, and descendants. Tempels added that an individual should have a similar ontological relationship with his/her patrimony, the father, or male lineage (Matolino, 2009). Therefore, an individual needs to be understood in relation to his/her patrimonial associations. In Western and African contexts, a child is believed to stem from a male seed. Ikuenobe and Etieyibo (2020) explains that the human species is nurtured to become 'umthombo' – 'the sprout of a seed' when translated into English. This entails nurturing and socialising a child into adulthood – 'ukukhulisa umntwana' in Xhosa, 'ho hodisa ngwana' in Sesotho, and 'raising a child' in English. Therefore, it is crucial to understand paternal lineage, customs, and traditions. This also provides a sense of belonging and confirms one's legitimacy and sense of being. Furthermore, it allows one to internalise the customary norms and values passed down by the descendant and gain an understanding of the bond between the Creator and the descendants of a lineage. A child gets introduced to society through rituals such as name ceremonies, followed by rites of passage to puberty and adulthood, including marriage and childbearing. A child may not have attained the status of personhood; by virtue of being of a human seed, one has the *potential* to achieve the status of personhood.

An individual is expected to demonstrate desirable moral attributes to members of the community. It is worth highlighting that the word 'umtu' inherently includes notions of excellence concerning behaviour, attitude, and actions; thus, describing an individual as a social being is insufficient. In the African context, personhood is constituted by one's patrilineage and intimate relations with his/her community. The quality of relationships one can achieve and maintain indicates one's ability to be identified as a person. The one who is perceived to be a

person manages to possess a creative personality and productive life and is also able to maintain constructive relations with others. The ability to maintain good and healthy relationships demonstrates personhood. The point of significance in this concept of African human personhood is not to define or unpack the biological determinism of a man or father but rather to describe an image of a man or father held by African communities in relation to his conduct, thought patterns, and social relations.

The early Nigerian thinker, Ifeanyi Menkiti, uses the concept of man interchangeably with that of a person. He provides a normative view of African personhood and the process a human being undergoes to achieve the status of personhood. Molefi (2017) describes Menkiti's contribution as a metaphysical conception of African human personhood, which needs an ontological, anthropological view and understanding of the multifaceted attributes of human beings. He argues that one cannot be a normal functioning human being without being placed in an environment with others, thus the notion 'I am, because we are'. Therefore, a person's identity is understood as 'being with others' rather than unique personality traits and leading life as an individual (Molefi, 2017). Furthermore, personhood in this context is viewed as reliant on the environment/community rather than on individual characteristics (Menkiti, 1984).

An individual's transformation process to personhood requires collective assistance. Menkiti (1984) describes the environment as the communal world rooted in collective facts into which human beings are born. The communal world entails various traditional customs that serve as an incubator in socialisation and forming personalities. Communal relationships play a vital role in personal understanding and identity. Individuals in the collective world need relationships to develop personal identities. The ideas of a person (*umtu*) are centred around the principles of excellence and plenitude of force at maturation (Matolino, 2011). Matolino added that a person lacking these essential attributes is often described as '*ke mtu po*', which means 'this is

not a man/person!' when translated into English. Subsequently, the attitudes and actions of others are aligned with this notion.

Menkiti views human personhood not as static but as evolving and attainable over time (Matolino, 2011). According to Menkiti (Menkiti, 1984 and Beck & Oyowe, 2018), human personhood is not the result of one being born of a human seed but rather a status one must strive towards attaining. Therefore, an individual can fail to obtain the status of African human personhood since others bestow the status. He argues that a person becomes a person once he/she has gone through the process of incorporation into the community. This not only occurs in the early development stages of human life but is a gradual process that entails socialisation into a community. This notion of African human personhood is similar to masculinity and fatherhood. The concepts of masculinity and fatherhood are social constructs; therefore, being a person is not determined by one's biological or physiological anatomy. Ontological progress begins at birth, with a child referred to as an 'it'. To elaborate further, using the pronoun 'it' (as translated into English) is a recognition and justification of the lack or absence of moral values. In this context, 'it' refers to the one with no individuality, personality, or name. This is symbolic of the absence of moral status, unlike in the case of adults. It is, therefore, socially acceptable in an African context to refer to a child as 'it' since a child has no moral account; however, it is socially unacceptable to use a similar pronoun to refer to an adult who has accumulated some level of moral status.

Menkiti describes a person as a human organism that needs to go through social and traditional evolution to reach the level of being a person (Beck & Oyowe, 2018). The community is critical in transforming a biological entity into human personhood by prescribing social norms and values. This change entails learning the social rules, values, and expectations concerning the conduct of an individual. The process allows an individual to shift from being a biological human entity to personhood by internalising acceptable moral behaviour. It enables one to attain the

full complement of excellence from others, the status of social self-hood, and the achievement of self-identity (Menkiti, 1984). The biological fathers are responsible for ensuring that children are fully integrated into the family and community to learn about their identities and social customs, norms, and expectations (Sonnenberg-Smith, 2019). Social location and relations impact an individual's understanding, perceptions, and interpretation of gender, gender roles, and expectations. The community plays a critical role in the process of social and traditional evolution since community members are the ones who impart and prescribe that which is acceptable and unacceptable. By undergoing these processes, an individual can identify as part of the community and can, therefore, establish relations with others. The African human personhood entails being able to take part in community life. Menkiti states that a man is defined by reference to the social environment. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the community to determine and bestow the status of human personhood (Menkiti, 1975; and Beck & Oyowe, 2018).

Nelson (2003) argues that an individual develops moral capacity once they can narrate their lived experiences. The ethical dimension of consciousness is often taught through African tales, idioms, and proverbs (Hoekema, 2008). Hoekema (2008) viewed an individual's capability to do what is perceived as right or wrong as symbolic of fulfilling or failing to act under morals prescribed by society. Moral accountability is identified as one of the critical attributes of African human personhood. It entails taking responsibility for one's actions and aligning with the expectations of others about shared tasks and expectations. In most instances, individuals are evaluated according to their actions and held up as examples to be modelled or avoided. As seen and as narrated, moral functioning and ethical sense have to do with a person's ability to fulfil various obligations and responsibilities prescribed by the community. For Matolino (2011), the ability to internalise societal moral expectations are epistemological growth. Internalising and remembering societal moral codes and then applying them in one's daily conduct demonstrates the success of epistemological growth. This view resonates with Alfred

Schütz's ideas (refer to Chapter Two: p. 26) on the importance of internalising knowledge and being able to apply the knowledge in different contexts.

According to Menkiti (1984), moral functioning and ethical sensibility convert a non-person into a person in a normative sense. Therefore, an individual's psychological capabilities need to be developed in a way that will enable him/her to participate in accordance with what the community prescribes. The community requires maturity and wisdom to count as a person. The community expects an individual to use his/her moral functioning and ethical sense in a proper manner. This requires an individual to participate fully, appreciate community life, and comply with the collective's moral values and ethical expectations. For Menkiti, collective participation and recognition are essential indications of maturity.

Molefi (2017) describes moral status as patient- and agent-centred, arguing that individual members of the community are expected to respect others and adhere to social norms and values. Those who live according to societal norms and expectations are considered persons, and those perceived to have failed to adhere to social norms are considered non-persons. Molefi (2017) added that acquiring human personhood is moral and ethical agent-centred. Individuals who adhere to social norms and morals are recognised as having characteristics of personhood.

Menkiti (1984) highlights the importance of self-identification, whereby an individual can view him/herself as having attained personhood. However, he considered fitting into a social structure in some ways as more valuable than self-identification or biological and psychological identification as a person (Beck & Oyowe, 2018). Individuals' sense of identification is the result of collective realities. The social environment provides proper scaffolding and support to

enable an individual to grow physically and psychologically like other human persons; this scaffolding includes social and ritual transformation (Beck & Oyowe, 2018). Therefore, personhood is attained as individuals partake in social and communal life and fulfil various social responsibilities and obligations.

Furthermore, Menkiti focuses on the role of maturation and language in becoming a person. The idea of a 'Umntu - person' is used normatively to signify human moral achievements. Moral progression is a crucial element in understanding the concept of personhood. The idea of 'Umntu - person' includes an idea of excellence and abundant force of maturation. Maturity is viewed as an indicator of good moral functioning and ethical sense. According to Molefi (2018), the core African ethical attributes include collective solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, humility, human dignity, and inclination to the principles of Ubuntu. Maturity involves one's capability to deliberate on rationality and morals.

Raising a child includes introducing and accustoming the child to a lineage and community's core values and norms. Through this process, an individual learns the ethical and moral norms of his/her family and the community. However, this does not imply that an individual masters ethical conduct but is rather exposed to the behaviour that is desirable or favourable. People go through different stages of life, which may require the fulfilment of certain rituals and traditions that impart moral and ethical teaching. During the different phases of one's existence, some teachings or instructions are masked in myths and secrecy. They are exclusively known by elders or those who have passed through those rites of passage. One example is going through the initiation process: teachings of the ritual are known only by the elders and those who have undergone the rituals (Ikuenobe & Etieyibo, 2020). Storytelling and proverbs convey history, collective expectations, social norms, and ethical reasonings. Age becomes the determining factor in each one of the stages of life before reaching the stage of ancestorhood. It is imperative to understand that Africentric thinking is based on the belief that

one does not disappear with death. On the contrary, ancestors do not go out of existence at the point of physical death; they are considered part of the living community because they have been integrated into society and their communities.

Gyekye argues that Menkiti's claims on African human personhood are overstated and exaggerated; however, it is worth noting that his contribution is close to Menkiti's arguments. Unlike Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye acknowledges the physiological and spiritual makeup of a human being *before* paying attention to the role played by the community in constructing personhood. He argues that Menkiti's work needs to acknowledge an individual's makeup, rights, and talents. For Gyekye, personhood is an automatic quality that can never be lost or acquired (Ikuenobe & Etieyibo, 2020). Individuals have subjective legitimacy regardless of their social status. People are born into a society and culture, not with a culture; people are born naturally and stem from a human seed. Therefore, people cannot tell when one becomes a complete person. Being identified or perceived as morally worthy plays an essential role in attaining the status of human personhood. The ontological progression occurs over time; time is an important and relevant factor in gathering the person's excellence as he/she ages.

Gyekye argues that those who have not acquired the status or lived up to societal expectations do not turn into non-persons; instead, they are considered ethically unworthy or irresponsible moral agents, yet they remain individual human beings existing within the community (Matolino, 2009). Therefore, one does not lose citizenship or the right to live in society. People rationalise their obedience to and involvement in collective expectations and norms. A man does not lose his masculine traits, fatherhood responsibilities, and, in some cases, privileges if he deviates from societal norms and expectations.

Gyekye argues that a person can lead a life not attached to communal expectations, traditions, and morals (Matolino, 2009). People are not reduced to being animals or objects should they fail to adhere to and conform to social norms. However, in some instances, they may be sanctioned by community members for not acting according to the expectations and rules. Gyekye's notions are similar to the arguments of many scholars who describe masculinity and fatherhood as a social construct rather than a biological determination. Being a man is not synonymous with being a father. Societal expectations may be expressed in relation to masculinity and fatherhood; however, it is an individual man's choice to adhere to, conform and carry out those expectations. Whether a man conforms to societal norms or exercises his parental rights, he remains a man (existing in a community) and biologically a father to his children. Therefore, he may be considered an irresponsible man/father and, in some cases, will be deemed less masculine due to his failure to not conform to societal expectations and notions.

Gyekye proposes different conceptions of a person; however, the crucial ones are rooted within the ontological and normative sense. The normative sense comprises moral or normative beingness. According to Gyekye (1992), a person is made up of three distinct entities: okra (the soul), sunsum (the spirit), and nipadua (the body). Gyekye maintains that the okra (the soul) guarantees human life and bears human destiny. The absence of okra in human life denotes death. Gyekye describes sunsum (the spirit) as the basis of one's personality and nipadua (the body) as the material component of the person that is perishable after death. Therefore, human beings exist in the context of the soul, spirit, and body. This view emphasises the belief that humanhood is biologically determined and constituted of spiritual and social components.

Personhood advocates for the recognition of the collective relationship that enhances the potential for human growth and development that strives toward the collective good. It seeks to explain the concept of humanity and communitarian living. Attaining the status of

personhood is a process of ongoing, reflexive, and introspective endeavour to reach a unified collective effort (Musana, 2018). Musana (2018) states that African cosmology emphasises the interrelated view of natural and supernatural beings. This alludes to the belief that life is not limited to the physical being but extends to the spiritual presence. Personhood promotes the view of being a human in the context of spirit, soul, and body (Mcintosh, 2018). Also, personhood transcends from physical life to the presence of an individual afterlife. This implies that ancestors are perceived as people who existed in this world in the context of kinship, even though they are, at the same time, mystical beings with spiritual authority and power over the living. The spiritual attribute of personhood moves between human lives and is linked to human bodies. Some experiences of the natural senses are attached to an individual's supernatural understanding and encounters.

According to Berger and Luckmann (see Chapter Two, Section 2.2.2 p. 13), "the patterns and regulations in human life are structured around human consciousness". Therefore, "a person has the ability to think morally and to act accordingly, via morally responsible actions". Human beings are conscious beings (Gyekye, 1992). In his argument, Gyekye acknowledges the partial role that the community plays in shaping one's moral values. Although the community is often seen as determining whether or not someone has personhood status, an individual uses rationality to choose and execute the desired lifestyle. Moral reasoning and actions draw a clear distinction between human beings and non-humans. The capacity for moral and ethical reasoning is given through birth, reaching its full actualisation in the community and over time. An individual becomes a person once they choose to perform moral acts in the community that promote the well-being of others (Majeed, 2017).

Communal existence has always been at the heart of African tradition and culture. However, changes in society have brought about a greater emphasis on individualism. As a result, conduct and ethics tend to be seen as personal or private concerns. To some people, ethics and morals

are unnecessary in attaining psychological fulfilment as individuals and social beings. However, ethical reasoning goes beyond psychology and/or the needs of the individual mind and heart. The community should not only be viewed as a physical assembly of people; it also encompasses the collective ideas of its members. Community members can share ideas on desirable mutual behaviours; every community has stipulated behaviours for its members. Furthermore, attaining the status of personhood contributes to an individual's sense of collectivism and belongingness (Majeed, 2017). Therefore, personhood is closely tied to the quality and path of communitarianism. The quality of one's actions and behaviours determine if one is, or is not, mindful of collective expectations. Similar to the status of personhood, communitarianism emphasises moral and collective good, both of which can be acquired or lost during the course of a person's life.

Gyekye (2011) adds that the status of personhood is earned in the moral arena. Therefore, one is viewed as a person if one conforms to attributes and qualities viewed as ethical by others. This view indicates that the status of personhood is given by the community, not inherited through birth. However, he further explained that one is not expected to be morally perfect since human beings make mistakes. Gyekye (1992) also maintains that the African language sometimes provides the impression that the community defines what constitutes and confers the status of personhood. However, he rejects the view that the community fully defines and confers personhood. Instead, he views the process as interdependent. It is also crucial to highlight the role played by one's natural settings since the behaviour and actions are often expressed in relation to other people, animals, or things. This resonates with the main arguments of the social construction of reality whereby people co-create the meaning of their lifeworlds (refer to Chapter Two<sup>35</sup>). Also, co-creating reality is crucial in developing societal norms and social institutions.

### 3.2.2 The four domains of communitarian support

Communitarianism is at the centre of Ubuntu, thus the saying 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'. It promotes a sense of interdependence and solidarity. It also provides a sense of belonging or being part of a group that demonstrates kindness, compassion and respect. Ramollo (2022) identified four domains of support that enable and promote communitarian support. The following domains are often displayed by one's intimate cycle; in some cases, they are also shown by members of the community.

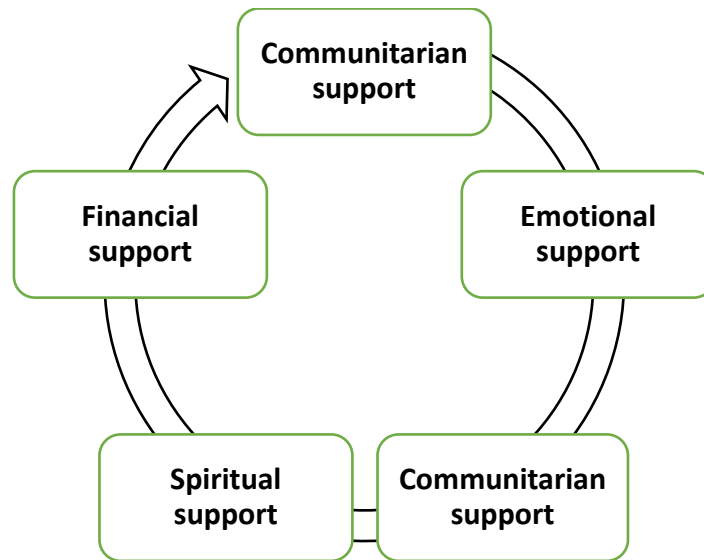


Figure 1: Four domains of communitarian support (Ramollo, 2022)

- **Emotional domain:** Emotional well-being provides individuals with a sense of interdependence, whereas emotional instability promotes a sense of alienation among families and communities. Ubuntu bestows communities with the feeling of moral obligation to support fellow human beings, particularly in times of emotional distress, since the emphasis is placed on values such as compassion, care, generosity, and respect. Ubuntu propels individuals to provide emotional support willingly. The emotional domain sometimes places tremendous pressure on some as it entails taking responsibility for one's family and communities.

- **Communitarian domain:** The concept of *umtu ngumuntu ngabantu – I am because we are* – indicates the significance and understanding of social connectedness. Acknowledging the presence and interest in one another encourages communitarian solidarity and shared values. The shared value system within communities promotes a bond that brings community members together and enables the collective to address social challenges that affect them and invest in collaborative efforts. Social ills and delinquent acts jeopardise collective solidarity. In most cases, men are expected to address some of the social ills in their communities.
- **Spiritual domain:** Personhood, the core trait of Ubuntu, recognises the spiritual connection between the soul, spirit, and body. It also acknowledges the relationship between the dead and the living. This aims to instil the knowledge of one's descendants, ancestry, and traditional customs and rituals. The assumption is that the deceased lives beyond the physical world and still forms part of the family and community. Ubuntu inspires goodwill among people, where individuals view themselves as being in solidarity with others. Similar to the emotional domain, the spiritual aspect encourages respect, forgiveness, and compassion for others. Being morally and ethically sound, respected, and respectful symbolises Ubuntu's rich quality of humanness. Participants refer to respect as a form of demonstrating humanness and humility.
- **Financial domain:** Unlike other aspects (physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and financial), collective existence in the financial domain is practised and experienced differently. Individuals tend to focus on personal survival rather than providing financial assistance to others. The shift in focus from collective to individual interest threatens the critical principles of Ubuntu (care, empathy, and support). This alludes to the socioeconomic dynamics that often affect the quality of life of communities and social cohesion among community members. Men and fathers are often judged on their ability to provide financial resources to meet the needs of their loved ones. Financial provision is often used as a crucial indicator of positive masculinity and fatherhood

qualities. Men who do not have the financial means to meet the needs of others are often perceived as less masculine and as 'bad' fathers. This expectation spills over into how the community perceives and treats individual men who can and cannot provide financial support to others.

Masculinity and fatherhood are acquired social statuses and are often judged in reference to one's relations and interactions with other men, women, and children, ultimately with society at large. This study focuses on the social construction of masculinity and fatherhood; therefore, attention was paid to applying the Africentric lens to view and understand the phenomenon of fatherhood.

### ***3.2.3 Acknowledging the notion of selfhood***

Contrary to the main ideas of personhood, Mauss (1985) provided an analytical distinction between *moi* (selfhood) - awareness of one's individuality - and *personne* (personhood), where individuals perform the social role as part of the collective. Different views of individualism and personhood are recognised through an individual's understanding, experiences and expectations of manhood and fatherhood. Various communities have different ideas of the cosmology of personhood, and the experiences of individuals have been influential in defining the main attributes of personhood. Irrespective of different understandings and characterisations of personhood, the qualifying traits of personhood are centred around the belief and ideologies of collective good, morality, and ethical sense of individuals in the community. At times, personhood overlaps with Western philosophy, outlining the importance of self-awareness, consciousness, and human functionality (Mcintosh, 2018). The African viewpoint of personhood constitutes the human person's collective, traditional and cultural attributes and the spirituality of human personhood. African human personhood is described and understood in the context of socialisation (the process of transferring the knowledge of

traditional rituals) and culturalisation (the process of transmitting the knowledge of cultural practices) (Mcintosh, 2018). This entails undergoing different rites of passage (e.g., a child's naming ceremonies, initiation rituals, marriage, and successful reproduction) throughout one's life course to be elevated to the level of personhood. McIntosh's view resonates with Alfred Schütz's main idea relating to the stock of knowledge passed down from our predecessors (refer to Chapter Two p. 30).

### ***3.3 Understanding fatherhood through the lens of Africentrism***

Without minimising or disregarding the importance and role of the biological father, Mnacana, Okeke, and Fletcher (2016) highlight that fatherhood in the African context is a shared responsibility of men within the extended family and community. In the absence of a biological father, other men in the family and community assume the responsibility of meeting the needs of a child. Campos (2008, p137) views African fatherhood as a multidimensional construct that should not be reduced to the presence or absence of a biological father. Mkhize (2004, p5) adds that children belong not only to the biological parents in the African context but also to the paternal and maternal families and the community. Adult figures in the family and community often assume the active responsibility of nurturing a child's well-being. However, this does not diminish or exclude the significant role played by the biological father in instilling knowledge about their traditional identity and belonging.

Campos (2008, p137) describes the participation or involvement of a father in the African context as a complex phenomenon that goes beyond financial provision. Mnacana et al. (2016) state that, in most African communities, the role of a father is to be an intercessor between his family and ancestors. A father is seen as a person who has a close connection with Qamata, the God of our forefathers; thus, he is seen as a bridge between his family and ancestors. A father is responsible for teaching his children about his family's traditional customs and rituals and activating their link with uQamata by performing traditional rituals. Without the biological

father, uncles and other members of his clan can fulfil these responsibilities. Nathane and Khunou (2021) outline the role of '*bomalome*' (uncles) in stepping into the duties of a biological father. Nathane and Khunou (2021) describe *bomalome* as social fathers who can provide human capital, which entails imparting social and traditional traits and ways of being. However, *bomalome* may be unable to provide the strong family ties linked to the biological father's presence.

### ***3.3.1 Traditional kinship customs, values and expectations***

Notions around the absence of biological fathers are centred around the gendered assumptions of the roles of a mother and father when parenting a child (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). At times, fathers live in one household with their children without being actively present in their lives. Mothers are often expected to socialise, nurture and be more involved in their children's daily activities; thus, they are often perceived to be the primary caretakers of children. The focus on the biological father, mother, and child relationship has overlooked men's role in their broader social settings. In this study, the researcher acknowledged the African proverb, 'it takes a village to raise a child', by paying attention to the collective effort of raising and socialising a child. Grounded in the African philosophy of Ubuntu, fatherhood is outlined in the study as a communitarian effort whereby men carry out the responsibility of fathering children, including those who are not their own; this contrasts with the more Western view of one individual relating to another individual (Sonke Gender Justice et al., 2021: p. 53). It is important to highlight the traditional kinship rituals and responsibilities bestowed upon fathers. Subsequently, I reflect on the positive and negative aspects of these traditional kinship rituals.

In most instances, men have solid relationships with children through the course of their lives in the form of kinship. On the one hand, the kinship norm entails a wide range of care practices and responsibilities for men. On the other hand, it can disturb biological fathers from active

involvement in their children's lives since other men may also be actively involved in the socialisation process of a child. Richter, Chikovore and Makusha (2013) state that some African men might not be able to father their biological children, or they may not acknowledge paternity if they are unable to pay *inhlawulo* (damages when translated to English) or *lobola* (bride wealth or dowry when translated to English) upon impregnating a woman. Some may wish to avoid taking up the added responsibility for children and family. The traditional custom and process of *inhlawulo* holds unmarried men accountable for their biological children. By paying *inhlawulo*, a man is admitting to having impregnated a woman. The aim is to restore the woman's and her family's dignity and legitimise the pregnancy even though it is out of wedlock.

The recognition of the biological father for his child represents the embodiment of lineage, which is often crucial for a child's identity and provides patrilineal knowledge (Richter, et.al, 2013). In the African context, one's identity is often linked to one's patrilineal line. Therefore, it is important to have patrilineal knowledge to gain insight into that lineage's traditional customs and practices. This also gives an individual an understanding of lineage history and ancestry, which might enhance an individual's sense of belonging. *Inhlawulo*, in some instances, grants a child access to his or her patrilineal lineage and traditional customs. However, the traditional custom can alienate fathers who do not have the financial capacity to pay damages and provide for their children. Due to the strenuous economic climate, some men cannot pay for *inhlawulo* and damages; therefore, they may not have access to their children or be granted the opportunity to establish meaningful relations with them. This also includes teenage fathers who might still be in school when they impregnate a woman (Swartz & Bhana, 2009: p. 3).

Traditional African fatherhood is often associated with an authoritarian, distant, and somehow violent patriarchal figure (Ratele et al., 2012). Black African fathers are perceived as disciplinarians who might resort to violence while instilling discipline. This can cause tension

between fathers and their children, especially when fathers do not have good relations with their children yet resort to violence to enforce discipline upon children. However, the new image of Black fathers that has surfaced over the years features men who seem to practice more liberal fatherhood traits. These men subscribe to modern fathering practises and relational characteristics beyond financial provision and protection.

A man receives respect from other men and women within the Black African community once he becomes a father. Like African human personhood, fatherhood status depends on social acceptance and recognition. The material context of fatherhood is often important when attempting to understand the relationship between fathers and their children and between fathers and the mothers of their children. The status of fatherhood is bestowed upon men who are perceived to take care of their families and model appropriate behaviour in their communities. Fatherhood consists of social, moral or ethical, traditional, and economic aspects that enable men to understand who they are and their place in their families and communities (Richter et al., 2012). Furthermore, economic factors take precedence over other aspects; a father is often expected by his children, the mother of the children, family, and society to be able to provide for his family financially. This can undercut the efforts of Black men who invest in meeting other needs of their children.

Demonstrating positive masculine attributes is crucial for the well-being of children and women. Although there is no blueprint for parenthood and fathering, children who have actively present father figures tend to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour (Ratele et al., 2012). Like masculinity, femininity, and motherhood, fatherhood is not homogeneous and static. Fatherhood evolves in accordance with time and context. Therefore, I reflect on the modern image of manhood and fatherhood<sup>78</sup>.

The relationship between fatherhood and early childhood experience is complex and often inconsistent since it varies from individual to individual. Cabrera et al. (2000) and Richter et al. (2013) argue that men who are fathers tend to parent their children as their own fathers (biological or social fathers) did. Therefore, the meaning and practices of fatherhood are associated with gender identity, which is shaped by men's experiences with their biological fathers and other male figures. This is based on their stock of knowledge, as highlighted by Alfred Schütz (refer to Chapter Two, p. 29). Fatherhood can often entail repetitive enactment of actions and behavioural patterns in the family context, and these patterns can persist across different generations of men who are fathers within the family.

### ***3.3.2 Family and communitarian traditional customs and rituals***

African human personhood recognises the traditional customs and rituals that a person undergoes. These rites of passage occur in different stages of human life over time. These rites of passage primarily instil moral values and ethics related to a particular lineage, tribe, and community. Also, to pass on awareness of desirable and undesirable behaviour, attitude, knowledge, and virtues that the community aspires to and prescribes. In African society, men from different walks of life undergo rites of passage to gain more insight into the social values, roles, and expectations specific to manhood and fatherhood. The transition from boyhood to manhood is a family affair as well as a communitarian effort. Initiation schools are often referred to as bush schools that are organised by elders of a particular tribe and community (Van Rooyen, Potgieter & Mtezuka, 2012).

Within South African Black ethnic tribes, the rite of passage that ensures the transition from boyhood to manhood is undergoing initiation school. Twala (2007) and Ncaca (2014) outline the significance of the initiation school in the process of transitioning from boyhood to manhood. The practice of initiation school differs from tribe to tribe; however, the one common aspect of this custom is that it is often a communitarian affair. According to Twala

(2007), initiation school is the most celebrated stage of human development for Africans. Before initiation, boys are not regarded as having to accomplish the status of personhood. They are often viewed as sub-human beings.

Going through the initiation school is perceived as a sacred ritual; young men who have gone through this ritual are perceived as warriors who have mastered the virtue of becoming real men with the knowledge and understanding of the social responsibility attached to manhood and fatherhood. Undergoing the initiation ritual is symbolic of gaining the status of manhood and acceptance as a human person in society. Besides personal names, initiates use surnames and clan names (Twala, 2007). The aim is to teach initiates about their paternal clan names; thus, they are often expected to recite their clan names. The paternal clan name plays a significant role in relating to the family identity and connects the initiate to those who have departed this earth, namely ancestors (ibid). According to Ncaca (2014), people describe ancestors as older men who are deceased and those who belong to a particular clan or tribe; thus, the custom is considered a communitarian effort. Ncaca (2014) also describes initiation school as a practice that seeks to graft a young boy into his ancestral lineage. A boy child is often expected to honour and appease his ancestors, family, community, and society; this includes those who are still living and those who have passed on. Though attention usually goes to the surgical procedure of the tradition, initiates' ancestry plays a significant role in sustaining the well-being of an initiate throughout the process. The assumption is that ancestors will protect the initiates during this journey until they are reunited with their loved ones.

This traditional custom surpasses the biological process of circumcision; it focuses on teaching men about the roles and responsibilities of being a man and leaders in their respective families and communities. Though the actual happenings of the ritual remain a mystery to those who have not undergone the process, the emphasis has always centred on the latent function of the practice: Preparing boys to become responsible men in the community.

Furthermore, the rituals performed prior to and during initiation school differ from one tribe to another and from one community to another. The common aspect of the process is that initiation requires active community involvement. There is often a community of men who have gone through the process and have assumed the role of being the initiator or teacher or just a mentor guiding young men going through the process. The role of the initiator is to ensure that the ritual aligns with the values and customs of a clan and family. As society evolved, the initiation ritual lost significance among young men. The ritual has posed health threats; in some cases, it has resulted in fatal for young initiates. Thus, some young men choose to go through a surgical procedure conducted by modern physicians.

Recent years have shown that young men are less interested in going to initiation schools. This can be ascribed to various factors, such as the intervention of Western medical procedures, risk of mortality, urbanisation, migration, changes in the meaning and significance of the practice, or devaluation of the practice by young men.

### ***3.4 Concluding remarks***

This chapter discussed the contribution of African scholars who highlighted African ways of being and pointed out differences between Western and African ways of being. This chapter also presented the argument of Molefi Asante, who maintained that the African location, people, and their realities should be central to research on Africa and Africans. From this viewpoint, Africans share their perceptions, beliefs, and experiences during research and are co-constructors of knowledge creation. The chapter highlights the core principles of African philosophy: Ubuntu. Ubuntu is one of the most valued and aspired attributes to be acquired. The African scholars Gyekye, Matolino, Menketi, and Molefi argue that Ubuntu is the makeup of African human personhood; it emerges from and promotes collective existence.

This chapter highlights that African human personhood status depends on collective views, norms, expectations, and principles. The community confers this status, and it depends on the public's perceptions and interactions with individuals. Adhering to the principle of 'Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu,' an individual is judged based on their behaviour and actions towards others and the level to which they can conform to the community's expectations. African human personhood is, therefore, a conferred and acquired status dependent on the perceptions of others. However, Gyekye argues that the communitarian characterisation of African personhood is exaggerated. In his view, the attributes of African personhood are psychological and spiritual. Communitarian validation is secondary to a person's psychological and spiritual being. Similar to the notion of African human personhood, community members and society at large have subscribed to expectations regarding masculinity and fatherhood.

Adhering and conforming to societal expectations determines the level to which a man is considered a real man and a good father; an individual can fail or succeed in being a father and man. Fatherhood in the African context is a shared responsibility. Thus, the African proverb stating, 'It takes a village to raise a child'. Uncles are viewed as people who can step into the role of fatherhood in the absence of the biological father. Their part is not to replace the biological father but to secure a child's well-being. On the one hand, this can be viewed as a communitarian gesture filled with selflessness. On the other hand, this comes with the burden of taking up someone else's responsibility. In Africa, a father is seen as being closer to uQamata. Therefore, the father is responsible for activating the relationship between the Creator, his ancestors, and his children. It is the responsibility of a father to instil discipline in his children. However, this may strain the relationship between a father and his children, particularly when violence is used to instil discipline. The ritual of inhlawulo presents challenges for fathers who do not have the financial means; it can also be viewed as the possible reason for the biological father's absence.

## CHAPTER FOUR: GENDER PERSPECTIVES

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*“In life, every man has twin obligations - an obligation to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children; and he has an obligation to his people, his community and his country” - Nelson Mandela (1994)*

### **4.1 Background information**

The quote above by Nelson Mandela (1994) resonates well with this chapter’s focus, namely, to unpack societal notions and expectations regarding masculinity and fatherhood. It can only be through observation and lived experiences that Nelson Mandela was propelled to view man's life as comprising twin obligations, which are personal and communal. It also resonates well with the principle of Ubuntu (see Chapter Three, p. 16). I intentionally used the word *propel* as Nelson Mandela interpreted and practised his masculine and fatherhood traits during the Apartheid years when there was severe political oppression of Black people in South Africa. Irrespective of the political landscape and history, most men (young and old) still carry the pride and/or burden of this twin obligation. According to Harry (2022, p232), Nelson Mandela realised the natural and spiritual interconnection between men, family, and community. His focus was to assist people in reconnecting with structures that seek to benefit and provide a sense of purpose, belonging, and recognition. Harry (2022, p238) added that the existence of human beings is often interpreted in relation to their social roles (i.e., father, son, brother, friend, and neighbour). These roles provide a sense of belonging, identity, purpose, and connection; they also help one understand life and one’s social relations.

An important aspect of understanding life and one’s social relations is unpacking and exploring gender, gendered relations, and the dynamics thereof. These foci are central to Feminist Studies and Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities. Lemelle (2010: p. 2) credited Ann Oakley for introducing the concept of gender to the discipline of sociology. In her conceptualisation, Oakley referred to sex as the physiological anatomy of men and women and gender as a social

construct characterised by traits of masculinity and femininity and guided by social norms and expectations. Also, masculinity and femininity exist within the socially constructed attributes that stem from the gender roles ascribed by society and social expectations associated with the male and female sexes. The field of masculinity is highly contested and has grown tremendously, particularly in Western countries (Reeser, 2020). Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity scholars have alluded to the fact that masculinities are not biologically determined but instead socially constructed; however, the forms taken by a human body precede any socially constructed manifestations of gender, so biological sex remains important in constructing the lifeworlds of individuals. Nonetheless, the literature describes fatherhood in the African context as having more to do with kinship, social roles and communitarian engagement than with fatherhood as a biological process. This study focuses on the social location of participants where masculine traits are constructed and practised, as well as the participants' lived experiences and interpretations of masculinity and fatherhood. Lemelle (2010: p. 3) view black masculinity as a strain since Black men's socialisation is associated with social feminisation and the stereotypical notion of hypermasculinisation.

Furthermore, this research focuses on the contributions of bell hooks. hooks is an African American scholar who speaks mainly from and about the Afro-American context of masculinity, fatherhood, and relations and power dynamics between Black men and women. I deem it important to reflect on the work of bell hooks because she speaks openly about her observations of Black men's experiences. The experiences of heterosexual African men and fathers are not as well documented as those of the LGBTQ+ community and women. The researcher also drew on the insights of bell hooks regarding the different levels of engagement between the feminist movement and masculinities as well as the relations among men, with women, and within (mainly African) communities.

The chapter briefly discusses the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the emergence of critical studies on men and masculinity. The chapter also presents the theory of Inclusive Masculinity, developed by Eric Anderson. Even though the theory of Inclusive Masculinity was developed in the Western context, its central ideas address different kinds of masculinities and resonate well with the core principle of Ubuntu (see Chapter Three, p. 42), where the emphasis is on the collective rather than an individualistic approach. Following this, more 'conservative' notions and expectations of masculinity are outlined, including discussions about how societal norms and normative expectations (co)construct and influence men's experiences and perceptions of fatherhood.

The analysis is informed by the researcher's interest in highlighting masculinity and fatherhood's positive and negative aspects, as shown in the literature and revealed in the data. This even-handed approach fits well with the thinking and motivations of third-wave feminists, which is discussed next.

#### ***4.2 Third-wave feminist contributions to understanding masculinities***

In her book titled 'We should all be feminists' Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014, p40) describes gender as an:

'Uncomfortable and irritating conversation for men and women and at times a dismissible topic since there might be suggestions to address gendered social problems and changes in the status quo. People would rather talk about human rights instead of addressing the challenge of dominance and oppression by one gender to another or even among the same gender.'

Despite the discomfort and sometimes disinterest that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speaks of, feminist scholars have invested in unpacking the social relations between men and women for the longest time. The third wave of feminism has evolved out of, and often side-by-side with,

other waves of feminism. The argument of the so-called 'radical' feminists has been centred around the toxicity of masculinity, male privilege, and oppression of women: Men and their masculine behaviour have been investigated mainly by women holding prejudiced notions. As a result, the makeup of male traits, as described by radical feminists, is centred around emotionless, brutal, and inhuman sub-species that derive pleasure from dominating and violating women in all spheres of life. This description almost became a social norm and definition of masculinity.

Early gender studies by feminist scholars focused on unequal power distribution; these scholars focused on issues like heterosexualism, patriarchy, power, and sexism. Their concerns were based on dysfunctional relations between men and women and, to some extent, on Black men's (in)ability to master and fulfil social morals and expectations. Also, some scholars associate Black masculinities and fatherhood with being absent or uninvolved in their families and communities. Lamb (2000) added that masculinity and fatherhood have been of interest in social sciences, and efforts have been invested in unpacking and addressing the social ills caused by men in society. The focus on the negative attributes of masculinity and fatherhood does not always consider the role of contributing factors such as socioeconomic and political status in social relations and interaction. It also minimises the efforts of some men who are not contributing to the social ills caused by other men. Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of sociology (refer to Chapter Two, p.23 ), described the term 'social interactions' in relation to the behaviour and actions of social actors and the meaning thereof (Lamb, 2000). The actions of an individual are often measured according to behaviour and actions sanctioned by the community or larger social group. Because social norms and expectations are socially constructed, they may not be based on or in tune with a person's internal intuition or instincts.

Despite these drawbacks, the role played by first-wave feminist scholars has been instrumental in highlighting the unjust treatment of men towards women. This feminist wave is often

associated with the work of the English author Mary Wollstonecraft, who highlighted gendered inequalities within the political sphere (Frank, 1996; Mack-Canty, 2004). Globally, women had no voting rights and, to some extent, were declared unfit to participate in the political arena.

Carrying forward the baton of the first-wave feminist scholars, the second-wave feminists' paid attention to various legislative policies that affect women's lives. The second-wave feminists raised women's consciousness and attended to multiple forms and levels of oppression; they created the slogan 'public is private - private is public' (Mack-Canty, 2004). These feminists borrowed the main ideas of political theories, such as Marxism, socialism, and psychoanalysis, to home in on, describe and express different forms of oppression existing in modern society.

Moving on from the work of early 'first-wave' feminist ideas and what is often regarded as a confrontational approach towards men are third-wave feminist scholars, many of whom successfully provide empirical explanations of what it means to be a woman in a male-dominated society. Their theories play a critical role in investigating patriarchy and unpacking the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system towards men as well as women. In this regard, the contributions of third-wave feminist scholars, particularly bell hooks, resonate well with Alfred Schütz's description of how people perceive their lifeworld and make sense of their daily lived experiences (Chapter Two, p. 26). Also, third-wave feminist scholars encourage feminists to recognise and address different forms of systematic and social prejudices experienced by various people within different contexts, emphasising the collectiveness and interdependency of marginalised groups. These arguments also echo the core values of Ubuntu, as outlined in Chapter Three (p. 42).

The radical feminists believed women are a better species than men and should be afforded similar political and economic opportunities. They strived for solidarity between women and sisterhood bonds among women since they experienced similar forms of oppression. However,

queer scholars and women of colour highlighted the existing inequalities in the feminist movement. Queer scholars and women of colour argue that their social experiences and locations do not provide them with similar experiences as White middle-class feminists. Scholars such as bell hooks, Thornton Dill, Patricia Hills Collins, and Baca Zinn critiqued the feminist movement for providing a homogenous image of a woman and a description of womanhood. These discourses led to the third-wave feminist movement, which began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Gloria Anzaldua and bell hooks, among others, advocates for the intersectionality of race and heterosexuality. They urged the feminist movement to acknowledge women's differences, social contexts, and experiences (Mack-Canty, 2004). The third-wave feminist scholars embraced diversity among marginalised groups and addressed the intersection of race, gender, and exclusion of diversified groups within the movement and society. The theory of intersectionality by Kimberly Crenshaw is one of the influential contributions of the third-wave feminist movement thus far. The theory acknowledges the significance of understanding the influence of different social locations and contexts.

This study recognizes the theory of intersectionality and acknowledges the role played by the intersection of race, gender, ethnicity, and classism in shaping human experiences. The researcher aimed to understand masculinity and fatherhood within the context of African human personhood embedded in the principles of Ubuntu and Inclusive Masculine Theory.

#### ***4.2.1 The analytical lens of bell hooks***

hooks reflect on the starting point of the feminist movement, explaining that the movement was founded by heterosexual women who had experienced men as unkind, cruel, and unfaithful (hooks, 2000: p. 45). These women were hurt and enraged by men. They channelled their frustration into becoming the voice for women and advocating for the recognition of women's rights and the emancipation of women. Ironically, during this period, many men were radical thinkers who called for and fought for social and political justice; however, they held

conservative views on gender and sexist ideologies. bell hooks' choice of words (cruelty, violence, oppressive and lack of loyalty, anger, and pain) is interesting since those are the words often used to describe the interaction between men and women. These words have become society's gendered notions and how people define and understand gender relations, power, and attributes. This description of gender could be the reason behind the discomfort that Adichie refers to while attempting to describe people's views of gender. This reiterates the argument of Luckmann and Berger, who referred to language as a form of objective and subjective reality (see Chapter Two, p. 35) (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012: 95). People's stereotypes shape their understanding and actions.

In her book, titled 'Feminism from Margins to Centre', hooks (1984, p67) describes the feminist movement as follows:

'Not only as a movement aimed to end gender segregation but also a movement that should provide a platform for men and women to engage in the struggle for freedom and systematic oppression equally.'

The first- and second-wave feminists deflected attention away from improving the relationship between men and women. They did not encourage men to partake in the struggle against sexism. Although the radical feminist thinkers realised that the problem lay with a system of patriarchy and sexism rather than men, they maintained that all men are oppressive and have similar benefits of patriarchal male privilege. At the same time, women are victims of men and sexist acts (hooks, 2002: p. 44). Even though the first- and second-wave feminists viewed masculinity as the leading social crisis, hooks argues that society's problem is patriarchal masculinity rather than masculinity itself. Not all men are anti-women or anti-women's emancipation; arguing that all men are anti-women promotes division between various genders. Due to the intersection of race and classism, men do not derive similar and equal patriarchal masculine benefits. Black men in stressful and unprivileged circumstances do not

derive similar privileges to those in privileged positions. They are, too often, declared to have failed at being 'real' men.

Though some men supported the feminist movement during its inception phase, the conservative media and anti-feminist men attempted to discredit it by portraying feminists as queer women who hate men (hooks, 2000: p. 45). This response, among others, generated resistance among the general public. Furthermore, it negatively impacted men and women since the women who associated with the feminist movement were often challenged and viewed as rebels, and their intimate relations were jeopardised. Ironically, the heterosexual women who were involved in the early stages of the feminist movement had intimate relations with the same men who had difficulties in understanding and accepting feminist thoughts.

Traditional and religious beliefs also contribute to the gendered stereotypical notions of men, women, family relations, roles, and responsibilities. Though some households are headed by women who are sole financial providers for their families, society still believes that domestic work and child nurturing are mandatory responsibilities of women irrespective of the presence or absence of men in the households, all because male dominance is viewed as acceptable (hooks, 1984: p. 69). Thinking that patriarchal and sexist ideologies would be absent in a female-only space is wrong since some women associated with the movement's political agenda embrace patriarchal gendered notions. hooks maintain that 'patriarchal' violence is directed at other men, women, and children: It is often acceptable behaviour for more powerful individuals to control others through various forms of coercive force. Also, home is a space where sexist attitudes and views are formed and practised (hooks, 1984: p. 68). Men and women are socialised to internalise and normalise patriarchal, sexist ideologies. Although Black men do not experience oppression similarly to Black women, hooks (1984; p. 46) asserted that society often disregards how men suffer the consequences of sexism and patriarchal

expectations of masculinity. Attention is often directed to male privilege but ignores male pain. hooks (ibid.) argued as follows:

'Sexist oppression of women cannot be excused by recognising ways men are hurt by rigid gender roles and expectations from women and society at large. Therefore, the first- and second-wave feminist movement disregards the fact that not all men derive similar or equal benefits from the social systems of patriarchy since they do not hold the same socioeconomic and socio-political positions in society.'

Some Black communities believe that racism has wounded Black men to the extent that they are deprived of economic opportunities and the ability to lead and provide for their families (hooks, 1990: p. 74). However, Black men and women have been comrades in the struggle for liberation and socioeconomic opportunities; thus, their combined voices in the feminist movement matter. The argument that Black men are more affected by racism than black women also perpetuates unhelpful ideas about dominance and masculinity. Importantly, hooks noted that Black men should not be exempted from interrogating misogyny and, ideally, should strive to create different, opposing, and positive views of masculinity. Black men's position of not being resourceful does not exclude their capacity to assert their power over Black women and their bodies, or any other woman, in oppressive ways. It also does not justify their ill social acts or deprive them of the masculine authority and privilege in society.

According to hooks (1984: p. 68), women of colour, queer women, and White women have also been comrades in the struggle for women's recognition, emancipation, and equality. However, White women are often presented as more vulnerable to sexist conditions than other women. A reason for this is that through the movement, White middle-class women were more able to express their dissatisfaction and frustrations in public and private spaces. However, this was less the case for women of colour, who were in the same position of oppression and sexism but whose situation was, and still is, made even worse by racism. This highlighted differences

in the socioeconomic and racial dynamics amongst those participating in the first- and second-wave feminist movements.

The third-wave feminist thinkers responded to inequity with a call to embrace diversity in the feminist movement. Also, the third-wave feminist thinkers called for recognition of race, classism, and heterosexism while challenging sexism and classism within the feminist movement (Mack-Canty, 2004). For this reason, third-wave feminist scholars strive to develop a political and empirical explanation of multicultural inclusion and why they embrace diversity and difference among women and recognise male pain. hooks (1990, p77) challenged the progressive liberation struggle and the feminist movement to invest in collaborative efforts to end all forms of oppression.

#### ***4.3 Hegemonic masculinity and the emergence of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity***

The concept of hegemony was coined by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian sociologist whose interest was vested in class relations in a capitalist economic society (Litowitz, 2000). Gramsci (a Marxist follower) used the term to critique the exploitation and dominion of the elites over the working class. The term hegemony is used to characterise the class distinction in a modern capitalist society, where a hierarchy of classes determines relative dominance and subservience. Later, Raewyn Connell (1977), an Australian Sociologist, tapped into the concept, using it in relation to masculinity. This sparked an investigation into masculinity and the power dynamics thereof and contributed to the emergence of critical studies on men and masculinity. According to Connell (2001), historians and anthropologists have indicated that there is more than one pattern of masculinity; different societies and historical periods construct and define masculinity differently. Connell aimed to describe the socially stereotypical notions related to masculinity. Also, masculinity is socially constructed with gender roles that stem from the traditional norms that promote patriarchy and subordination and submission of women and children, including the notion that a real man can give financial provision to those around him.

South African scholars Linda Richter, Rachel Jewkes, Kopano Ratele, Malusi Langa, Robert Morrel, Sachumzi Mfecane, Tamar Shefer, and Mzi Nduna researched and wrote about social relations between men and women, men and other men, men and children, men and their communities, as well as men and their behaviour, including risky behaviours and health behaviours. Their contributions to the field of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity created a pathway to acknowledge the challenges related to masculinities and fatherhood, particularly in the context of South Africa. Some of them proposed possible interventions to mitigate these challenges.

The hegemonic view of masculinity implies that gender is non-negotiable. Therefore, social expectations associated with gender are also non-negotiable. However, it pays little attention to the social locations where social expectations are formed and practised. It also ignores that some boys and men view these social expectations and stereotypes as burdensome. Feminist theories and the concept of hegemonic masculinity play a critical role in investigating patriarchy and unpacking oppressive aspects of the patriarchal system toward women. Feminist theories also contribute to developing essential studies on manhood (Mangezvo, 2015: p. 33-36, Anderson & McCormack, 2018). Scholars in the field of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity argue that the socially set gendered roles and expectations harm masculinities since men are forced to accept the harmful conventional ideas of what makes a man a real man (Langa, 2020: p. 14).

Scholars working in critical studies on men and masculinity strive to unpack how masculine powers and privilege are normalised globally and, to some extent, applauded. However, men often transgress social norms. Furthermore, Mfecane (2018) reports that humans are creatures of material and immaterial components, both of which play a part in being a man and undertaking a set of practices in a given social environment. The material component is enacted

by the physical human body performing social acts. The immaterial components consist of unseen elements which greatly influence people's characters and behaviours. The material components of the everyday performance and display of manhood and fatherhood shape one's understanding of manhood and fatherhood. Also, one's sense of masculinity and fatherhood is often influenced by the structures of gender relations between other men, women, and children. Edwards and Jones (2009, p214) stated as follows:

'Masculine identities are constructed through social interactions, social expectations, putting on a mask to conform to these expectations, wearing the mask and struggling to begin to take off the mask.'

Ratele (2008) argues:

'Masculinities are better seen as created at both the social and psychological levels, something males do and establish in ongoing activity in relation to females, to other males but also with their inner lives. One of the most troubling questions confronting researchers of male lives is how to analyse males who are powerless in relation to other males but simultaneously members of a powerful gender group compared to females.'

South African political history has influenced our understanding of masculinity, particularly Black masculinity. During colonialism and apartheid, socioeconomic inequality, classism, and racial divisions polluted people's understanding of gender identity. South African Black men were referred to by many White nationalists as 'boys' and existed within subordinate and marginalised positions. In the democratic dispensation, gender politics have changed; however, the position of many South African Black men is still the same. Particularly, those with no financial resources remain marginalised and confronted with challenges of new masculine identities that have emerged. Many White South African men still represent hegemonic masculinity, and there remains no unified approach to shaping masculine identities and

practices (Spjeldnaes, Moland, Harris & Sam, 2011). Although South African masculinities are changing, class and race remain factors that influence gender-based experiences and practices.

#### ***4.3.1 The Theory of Inclusive Masculinity***

The notion of hegemonic masculinity has contributed to creating a platform for exploring discourses on the makeup of masculinity and masculine practices. Raewyn Connell's (1977) contribution to hegemonic masculinity focuses on hierarchal power relations among men and domination over women and children. Men are expected to maintain and sustain to achieve hegemonic power over other men and women (Connell, 1977). Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is a social process that has institutionalised masculinity so that some men are culturally exalted above all marginalised men (Anderson, 2008). Also, the notion of hegemonic masculinity embraces the old and damaging patriarchal tradition of male dominance.

Connell's contribution triggered interest, which resulted in the investigation of how men in the American fraternity system constructed masculinity (Anderson, 2008). Anderson's study focused on finding and exploring more inclusive behaviours among heterosexual men and changing the dynamic of peer group cultures among men in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) (Anderson & McCormack, 2016). Anderson's fraternal investigation demonstrated how men admired hegemonic patriarchal masculine traits and how the fraternal system is notorious for producing and promoting patriarchal masculinities and institutionalising gendered discrimination, misogyny, racism, and homophobia. Anderson (2008) added that men in the fraternal space seem to want to distance themselves from any subordinate status, as men in the fraternal space recruit and select people who demonstrate the desired dominant and physical traits.

Anderson (2008) further explains that the type of masculine traits exhibited in the fraternity space is often considered to be based on sexual aggression towards women and that heterosexual male fraternity is formed and practised against women's bodies; thus, fraternity

spaces are for men to be indoctrinated into normalising sexual harassment and demonstrating sexist traits. One result is that heterosexual misogyny has become embedded within the language used to refer to men's relations with women and other men, and misogyny has also become indoctrinated in men's moral conduct in fraternities. Anderson's views resonate with Berger and Luckmann's description of the role of language as an objective and subjective way of making sense of the everyday world (refer to Chapter Two, p. 35). Therefore, the stereotypical notions of male dominance and female submissiveness, to a large extent, have become part of societal norms and gendered interactions. Anderson (2008) further argued that the antifemininity approach might compel some men to deny their sexual orientation by trying to demonstrate their heterosexuality. However, marginalised people are likelier to have different masculine norms and expectations. Stemming from these arguments, Anderson investigated the construction of masculinity and spaces where male notions are formed and practised (Hearn, 1997).

Anderson (2008) describes inclusive masculinity as an 'encompassing form' of masculinity, particularly for progressive men who do not subscribe to the traditional/ hegemonic notions of masculinity. He developed an 'inclusive masculine theory' through engagement with literature and grounded analyses of the data from qualitative studies. The theory assumes that inclusive behaviours of heterosexual men exist in their relations with other men, women, and children. Furthermore, inclusive masculine theory highlights men's gendered behaviour within social settings. Though Anderson's theory of 'Inclusive Masculinity' paid little attention to the intersection of race and class, McCormack (2014) found a way around this by applying Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the symbolic economy of class to investigate the dynamics of working-class men.

Following Anderson's interest in how contexts shape the construction of masculinity, Swain (2006) proposed that personalised masculine identities before adolescence often differ from the dominant form of patriarchal masculinity. Children demonstrate inclusive traits of masculinity and learn about the chief attributes of manliness when socialised and learn social

norms and ideologies. In some instances, less dominant masculine characteristics are present within the low ranks of the male hierarchy. Those who do not conform to the traditional notions and practices of masculinity tend to be less concerned about the perceptions of others. However, they might be critiqued for behaving in 'feminine ways' and 'lacking' appropriate masculine attributes.

The theory of inclusive masculinity calls for the stratification of manhood to become less hierarchical and promotes more diverse practices of masculinity. The theory argues that the majority of heterosexual young men are inclusive in their masculine practices (i.e., they recognise various sexual orientations and reject homophobia); they have an emotional connection with other men, recognise the rights of women, and include women as well as their peers from the LGBTQ+ community in their friendship networks (Anderson & McCormack, 2016).

Roberts (2013) also applied the theory of inclusive masculinity when he investigated heterosexual men who worked in the service industry, which is very 'people-oriented'. He discovered that men who participated in his study demonstrated inclusive and less dominant masculine traits in their work environment. Roberts (2013) argued that the behaviour of his participants caused profound changes in the attitudes and working relations with other men and women, even though early research declared men with less dominant masculine traits as feminine and incongruent with being 'real men'.

The inclusive masculine theory highlights the emergence of the '*new age*' men who do not conform or subscribe to hegemonic patriarchal attributes and practices of masculinity. The characteristics of the new age men include the ability to express emotions, being actively present as biological and social fathers, and refraining from engaging and practising dominant masculine traits. Inclusive masculinity theory calls for the deconstruction of patriarchal masculinity and the construction of liberal forms of masculinities. According to Anderson and McCormack (2014), inclusive masculinity emphasises inclusive attitudes towards gendered diversity and treating women with respect and dignity. Since patriarchal notions of masculinity

are rooted in various social institutions and acted out within institutional policies, inclusive masculine attributes should be constructed and implemented outside as well as inside these institutions.

Like any other theory, the theory of inclusive masculinity received criticism. O'Neill (2015) maintains that it focuses on reified masculinity rather than how men practice their masculinity. Critics also state that the theory reflects on the burden of masculinity and pays little attention to men's interest in retaining and maintaining masculine-gendered privilege. For Nagel (2010), Anderson's study overlooks the privileged positions of his participants: White heterosexual middle- and upper-class sportspeople who lived in the UK and the US. Anderson minimised the role that his sexuality played in the outcomes of the study, particularly participants' views of homophobia (Nagel, 2010). It is unclear whether the inclusive forms of masculinities can co-exist alongside the traditional forms without struggling over dominance (ibid). Irrespective of these criticisms, the theory of inclusive masculinity still provides a fresh perspective, non-toxic traits, and, subsequently, non-toxic practices. Anderson's contribution resonates well with the core principle of the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Chapter Three, p. 42), whereby people recognise the existence of others, understand that they are part of the wholeness of society, and act equitably towards others, including those who may be different from them.

#### ***4.3.2 Traditional and progressive notions and practices of masculinity***

McDermott, Pietrantonio, Browning and McKelvey (2019) found that social norms provide a schema of what is expected of someone in any given situation. Various gender roles and norms are socialised messages directed at men and women about what is expected of them based on their biological anatomy. There is a large body of knowledge on the social construction of various masculinities. People often view themselves as passive subjects that have inherently internalised prescribed social roles or socialised into traditional norms. Lomas (2013) considers human beings as agents actively constructing gender in their interactions. It is undoubtedly

better to see gender as the continuous construction and reconstruction of social interactions. To this end, Lomas (2013) describes gender as a verb rather than a noun, something one does or practises over time through interactions with others, rather than some 'thing' one is or has. This view is similar to Weber's view of people being social actors (see Chapter Two p. 23).

Itulua-Abumere (2013) focuses on the sociology of gender studies, collective behaviour, practices, morals, perspectives, and experiences. Society is governed by social and traditional norms and expectations which guide human behaviour and interaction. This includes gender and gender roles and responsibilities. Masculinity is often explained and described in relation to behaviour and attitude. Therefore, masculinity is associated with one's behaviour resulting from the social conduct of a person and their social location, with prescribed social attributes often falling under traditional masculinity's broader categories and ideology. Men in society cause social ills; those social acts are often considered typical and normal behaviour of real men.

In his book, 'Liberating Masculinities', Kopano Ratele (2016: p. 5) states that there are men who understand their relations with others and the challenges presented by feminist scholars. However, some are resisting and battling to acknowledge the feminist contribution. Some men think of masculinity mainly in the context of their relationships with women, children, and family. Men's daily experiences shape their perceptions, understanding and practices of masculinity. Ratele (2016: p. 6) also highlighted the following:

'Heteropatriarchal and traditionalist men feel emasculated by women's demand for gender and sexuality equality.'

Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity scholars found that the construction of masculinity assumes that masculinity is fluid, multiple, and flexible (Langa, 2020: p. 13). Contemporary research no longer describes masculinity as a single construct but rather as a plural social construct: Masculinities. Also, according to Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities writers,

masculinity is a set of evolving historical and traditional practices (Ratele, 2016: p. 61 & 69). In contrast, traditional meanings of gender are often expressed by men and boys as though they are fixed and biologically imperative.

Studies on masculinities highlight the struggle between upholding the traditional practices of masculinity and the desire for modern and liberal, yet still respectable, practices of masculinity. Traditional masculinity highlights the ideas of masculinity embedded in traditional ideology, norms, and rules (Morrell, 2006). For Everitt-Penhale and Ratele (2015), traditional masculinity is an epistemological blind spot in some social science investigations since it involves a lack of clarity on the construction of masculinity. The concept of 'traditional' masculinity is often viewed as a representation of negative aspects associated with masculinity or the opposite of modern traits of masculinity. However, in everyday use, the concept usually refers to what makes a man a 'real man'; this is not static or stagnant as it changes over time and across different traditions and contexts.

Men's sociological, socioeconomic, and socio-political positions influence their views and practices of manhood (Ratele, 2016: p. 16; Jewkes & Morrell, 2018). As much as masculinities evolve, it is complex to define or describe masculinities since various social contexts contribute towards what is perceived to be a '*real*' man. In most cases, masculinities are rooted in traditional practices. Itulua-Abumere (2013) emphasises the role of media in normalising and promoting traditional masculine traits. In some cases, the media normalises certain attributes associated with stereotypical gender roles and expectations (i.e., 'she is such a good woman/nurturer,' 'he is a real man/father'), which are all based on the list of socially constructed gender attributes or gendered boxes identified and to be ticked by members of the society.

Studies on masculinity often reflect on the social construction of masculinity in relation to intersecting attributes such as race, class, and ethnicity rather than reflecting on the lived

experiences that shape individual and collective views of men and women in constant interaction (Lomas, 2013). However, as much as masculinity varies from one culture to the other, it also varies within the same culture based on the socioeconomic position and political opportunities of individuals who belong to that cultural group. Different men have different lived experiences, and their natural environment shapes their construction and modification of their conception of masculinity.

Itulua-Abumere (2013) found that the construction of masculinity is also embedded in various social institutions. The notion that men and women have distinct psychological and emotional traits built around the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity is globally accepted and normalised, although it is becoming less so. Reeser (2020) reported that for men in the workplace, there is often a relentless rejection of anything associated with feminine traits, such as displaying emotions associated with crying, compassion and gentleness in public. Men are instead expected to express anger and lack of empathy. Some men enact their masculinity through emotional detachment since the emotional display is associated with feminine traits. Therefore, some men hide or suppress their emotions to adhere to stereotypes and expectations. Emotional restrictiveness has proven to be problematic for men due to it being a contributing factor to men's mental health-seeking behaviours. The notion that men cannot engage with their emotions and express emotional care or seek psychosocial and behavioural support is potentially detrimental to their mental well-being.

According to Rees (2020), there are consequences and expectations for men to be perceived as rational, practical, problem solvers, and confident. Masculinity and even femininity are portrayed as enacted by free agents rather than actors subscribing to expectations that require them to play out normative roles. This implies that masculinity is like a performance on a set stage with a script that men must memorise and perform. During socialisation, this script is internalised and reinforced by family, educational institutions, media, and society at large. These institutions reward or punish gender (in)appropriate behaviour, and children learn

through this via observations and imitation, particularly from those they admire in their social context.

Rees (2020) highlights the expectation that men will have a stable socioeconomic position and be self-sufficient. In this regard, Ratele (2016: p. 20) and Langa (2020: p. 61) emphasises the role of fashion sense in shaping how Black men are positioned and perceived. In most instances, a well-dressed man is described as a man who dresses in exclusive and expensive Western designer labels and smells good, not easily accessible to an average man. The garments indicate financial status, the ability to blend with or even outshine his peers, and the potential to attract the woman he desires (Ratele, 2016: p. 27). Fashion clothing plays a huge role in forming masculine notions and confidence, particularly among young Black African men. Richards and Langa (2018, p87) found that young Black men often use fashion to assert their masculine identities and social class. This presents unnecessary peer pressure; it differentiates individuals and groups from others. It presents challenges of dominance over other men who choose not to conform and those who wish to conform to fashion trends but do not have the financial means to do so.

The African traditional expectation is that women are responsible for their household on a day-to-day basis and oversee household finances (ensuring that the family's daily needs are met), while men provide the financial means for the family (Harry, 2021: p. 187). Harry (2021: p. 187) added that a man is responsible for making crucial financial decisions since he is leading the family and is the one who provides for and protects the family and, to some extent, his community. Jewkes and Morell (2018) maintains that impoverished men are in a stressful climate as they cannot live up to their and others' ideas of 'successful masculinity'. As a result, many resort to violence to maintain power and dominance, as identified by Reeser (2020). From an early age, a boy child is taught that violence, competitiveness, and aggression are typical traits of a real man. A boy child is introduced to an organised social institution that promotes competitiveness. Abrahams, Mathews, Martin, Lombard, and Jewkes (2013) explained that experiencing or witnessing violence from early childhood increases tolerance

and acceptance of violence. Often, older people associate the violent behaviour of young boys with normal 'boyish' behaviour.

Though women can also engage in violent activities, Jewkes and Morrell (2018) and Abrahams et al. (2013) found that men are more likely at risk of engaging in violent activities. Violence, particularly intimate partner violence, is often used as a form of power and expression of frustration or anger. It is used to 'correct' behaviour associated with women's disobedience of conservative gender roles, challenging masculine authority and privilege, or settling matters related to finances. According to Statistics South Africa (2022: p. 14), 989 South African women were murdered between July and September 2022. Approximately 13701 cases of assault were reported, and 4379 perpetrators were family members (ibid). Furthermore, hypermasculinity is often associated with risky behaviour, such as having multiple sex partners, increasing an individual's chance of contracting sexually transmitted infections (e.g., HIV) and excessive consumption of alcohol, which compromises their health.

According to Stoltenberg (2004, p41), scholars often invest efforts in describing how heterosexual men assert and use power in their various contexts. Still, less attention goes into unpacking how men attain and maintain power in their social contexts. From early development stages, men inherently gain power and privilege as their birthright, which might affect their relations with other men and women. Men often seek other men's validation of self-worth by conforming to social notions and expectations. A man's identity and status of manhood are often conferred and confirmed by other men; this notion is similar to the idea of attaining the status of African human personhood (see Chapter Three p.44). Women are seldom perceived as reliable witnesses to validate a man's quality of manhood. Through behaviour, actions, and interactions, heterosexual men believe they are better positioned to assess and assert another man's capability of being seen as a real man. Also, individual men tend to conform to traditional norms and expectations comprising privilege, power, and superiority above women, children and people of non-heterosexual gender orientations.

Stoltenberg (2004, p43) maintains that male power is usually perceived as the natural expression of masculinity and an inherent biological trait of the male species.

Often, studies on masculinities are directed towards unpacking and understanding the traditional perspective and how successive generations are brought into a school of thought. Less attention goes into men's lived experiences, how these shape their re-interpretation of tradition and their resulting practice of potentially damaging or progressive masculine notions. Furthermore, social location is often associated with an individual's (and collective) memory and consciousness related to past and present experiences of 'traditional identity. Ratele (2016, p84) added that traditional masculinity is perceived as primitive, static, and rigid while modern masculinity is associated with the liberal and progressive notions of masculinity. Most African masculinities are, therefore, perceived to be the ones upholding the traditional notions of manhood.

This study responded to several gaps and needs in terms of exploring masculinities. There is a need to consider how social norms affect and impact men's daily experiences. There is also a need to investigate the spaces in which men are introduced to expectations and model them: Their lasting impression and memory of the persons they modelled and how they choose to model those persons. Furthermore, it is essential to focus on the influence of those who do not adhere to the expectations, such as those who are progressive in their masculine practices and deviate from traditional social norms and expectations. Although the efforts of such men often go unrecognised since attention is usually focused on toxic masculinities rather than positive masculinities, it does not mean that progressive masculinities are unseen; they exist and thus can also be modelled.

#### ***4.3.3 The concept of positive masculinity***

South African scholars Linda Richter, Rachel Jewkes, Kopano Ratele, Malusi Langa, Robert Morrel, Sachumzi Mfecane, Tamar Shefer, and Mzi Nduna explored and published about social

relations between men and women, men and other men, men and children, men and their communities, as well as men and their behaviour, including risky behaviours and health behaviours. Their contributions to the field of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity created a pathway to acknowledge the challenges related to masculinities and fatherhood, particularly in the context of South Africa, proposing possible interventions to mitigate these challenges.

Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities explore some men's ability to resist damaging norms of traditional masculinity and focus on masculine practices that are more inclusive and beneficial to men and others. Transformative and progressive masculinity entails negotiating and renegotiating hegemonic citizenship and re-defining traditional norms that seem to be damaging men (McDermott et al., 2018) in the case of those who cannot live up to social expectations of them, as well as for those who strive to attain egalitarian relations with other men, women, and children.

Ngozi Adichie (2014: p. 26) noted how patriarchal masculinity works to condition younger boys, teaching them to be ashamed for expressing fear and demonstrating traits of weakness and vulnerability. These are considered attributes that deviate from being a real, unshakable man in society. When people see these responses, they may question the younger boys' masculine abilities and may subsequently disregard and disrespect them. Only in recent years have men begun to explore their gendered behaviour and contribution to society. However, the focus was directed at finding solutions to the social ills caused by men.

According to Lomas (2013), studies on men have focused on stereotypical notions and damaging masculine traits, focusing less on men who are able or trying to go against traditional ideas and expectations. Elliot (2003) added that some social constructionists see the essentialist myths and stereotypes of the men's movement as a threat to the image of a new man. In his book titled 'The Rational Male: Positive Masculinity', Rollo Tomassi (2017: p. 221) describes the feminist movement's efforts in promoting egalitarian equality as a double-edged

sword. On the one side, women are gradually reaping the rewards of their struggle. In contrast, on the other side, men are viewed as toxic when they do not subscribe to the feminised world, even when their masculine practice is outside the scope of what society expects. Tomassi (2017: p. 225-226) stated as follows:

'Men keep guessing and doubting their social masculine security while subscribing to the feminine definition of healthy and non-toxic masculinity as the only legitimate definition since anything that deviates from this definition is labelled toxic masculinity. Men are conditioned to feel uncomfortable about their masculinity. Their discomfort results from conventional masculine traits fostered during socialisation and the description of gender roles, norms and values.

Lamb (2013) advocated for men to be granted a safe space to express their social observations, interactions with others, and thoughts. For Lamb (2013), men can provide insightful analysis of their lifeworld, experiences, and emotions around their and others' sensitive encounters. Notably, some men were fortunate to have been socialised in contexts that encourage alternative practices of masculinity, whereby they are encouraged to express and voice their emotions (ibid). Therefore, some heterosexual men are not ashamed to show their vulnerable, softer masculinity and their desire for emotional connection and intimacy, and usually, those who can are also able to demonstrate affection and care for others publicly. These are men who deviate from the gendered stereotypes and social expectations. Elliot (2003) states that the attributes of the new image of men are as follows:

'Sharing the domestic work with women, socialising children in a different manner and caring environment. Men who acknowledge that showing emotions is total humanity.'

According to Englar-Carlson and Kiselica (2013), the concept of positive masculinity is often used to refer to the traditional masculine traits that are positive, strength-based, and potentially used to improve the lives of men and those around them. It also acknowledges

men's adaptive attributes and virtues that promote self and others' well-being and resilience. The positive masculinity framework highlights the potential of men for who they are rather than for who they are not. The focus is not solely on addressing what is wrong with men but rather on identifying attributes that empower men to improve their lives and those around them. Also, positive masculinity is built on the assumption of the positive contribution that men can bring, including their ability to maintain progressiveness in the presence of rigid or unhelpful traditional notions. It also aims to assist men in reflecting and focusing on masculine, positive attributes such as being good, creative, successful, kind, caring, present, and capable outside gendered stereotypical notions and expectations.

Englar-Carlson and Kiselica (2013) developed a model that associates positive masculinity with positive psychology. Although this study highlights positive masculine traits in participants' lived experiences and interpretations concerning masculinity, the researcher did not use the model but rather, through observation and interaction with participants, recognised men who are not conforming to damaging notions and expectations of masculinity and who are trying to change the narrative of what it means to be a man, particularly a Black South African man.

Furthermore, Ratele (2016, p86) emphasises the urgency for critical and traditional consciousness/awareness of actions on and by men and/or masculinities. Scholars need to challenge traditionalists' oppressive notions of tradition without dissolving the traditional customs and rituals that might contribute to the makeup of what constitutes a man in some contexts. Ratele (2016, p87) aimed to sensitise researchers to not 'other' themselves and the men they choose to investigate but to critically reflect on the Western lens often used in the Studies on Men and Masculinity.

Like femininity, masculinity is not homogenous; therefore, in gender-masculinity discourse, there is a need to describe masculinity, including the social positions and contexts of different men, in an inclusionary way. Impoverished and illiterate men differ from rich and literate men;

thus, their lived experiences, interpretations, and practices of masculinity will vary. Everyone has an individual story to tell; therefore, it is to the detriment of men who are liberal and progressive in the way they practice their masculinity that scholars report only on the misconduct of men or social problems caused by men.

Also, the notions of 'tradition' and 'culture' interchangeably tribalize African men and women. This language of 'tribalism' in relation to African men was used in the previous authoritarian political dispensation in South Africa to demarcate a clear distinction between men from different races and ethnic groups. It has contributed to the gender discourses on traditional versus modern masculinity. Thus, looking deeper into the locational context is needed where masculine traits are formed, interpreted, and subsequently practised.

The South African government makes great efforts to address gender issues; however, the feminine and LGBTQIA+ agendas often take precedence. Matters related to heterosexual masculinity appear not to receive as much attention. Therefore, heterosexual masculine transformation and empowerment are usually at the periphery of gender discourses. Those who focus on men's agendas focus on the social ills done by men, stereotyping men as perpetrators of violence against women and children and removing the possibility of men being victims of violence or even crime. Men are also vulnerable to physical, emotional, and sexual violence, health problems, and systematic issues that arise from the patriarchal society, similar to their female counterparts, but this tends to be disregarded and put aside.

Gender is often discussed and debated within the context of her story, not recognising his story. This often leads to the crucifixion of all men for the sins of others, blaming all men for actions that may not be theirs. This may be due to the more significant financial interest in investing in women and the LGBTQIA+ agenda rather than investigating heterosexual masculinities, particularly marginalised cohorts of men. It also reflects on the act of exclusion by financial

donors of ordinary men who might not conform to Western norms and descriptions of masculinity.

Upholding the social notions of masculinity, or the lack thereof, is one of many challenges associated with masculinities. Social scientists have demonstrated much interest in the phenomenon of fatherhood. The connection between manhood and fatherhood seems obvious since men are fathers, and fathers are men. However, this connection has its complexities. The following section discusses the expectations and experiences of fatherhood.

#### ***4.4 The social phenomenon of fatherhood***

Across various cultures, the link between masculinity and fatherhood is generally close. However, Morrell (2006) and Hobson (2004: p. 246) found that biological attributes such as fertility or procreation have little effect on the concept of fatherhood. Richter et al. (2013) confirmed that the biological contribution (of a man) to the conception of a child does not turn a man into a father. Nonetheless, the gendered role and social expectations for masculinity and fatherhood tend to be similar to a large extent.

Furthermore, the meaning of fatherhood and its role is constructed over time. Thus, as Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth and Lamb (2000) and Richter et al. (2013) explained, boys become fathers. Furthermore, men become fathers to boys, who are likely to become fathers as they grow older. Studies focus less on the complex developmental processes that give meaning to fatherhood and how fatherhood is formed and practised. Often, less attention goes into unpacking factors contributing to changes in a father's involvement in his children's lives. Also, there is little evidence related to the influence of role models in teaching the social values and notions of fatherhood or what it means to be a father, particularly to boys as they develop into adulthood.

Similar to the concepts of femininity and masculinity, those of motherhood and fatherhood continuously evolve. Thus, there are changing descriptions of what men and women view and experience as their procreative roles. Fatherhood roles and expectations have evolved, including moral and ethical guidance, gender role modelling, breadwinning, financial support, and, lately, active physical involvement (Lamb, 2000). It is evident that 'fatherhood' is complicated due to the lack of one singular expectation of the tasks, attributes or competencies of fatherhood, particularly where it exists outside the context of the ideal nuclear family structure. Cabrera et al. (2000) argued that fatherhood has ceased the normative expectation. Fatherhood has become voluntary and essential to the quality of masculinity (ibid). Spjeldnaes et al. (2011) described fatherhood as a lens that can be used to investigate and unpack the phenomenon of the absence of male figures in the family structure.

The desire to understand the concept of fatherhood has generated considerable interest among researchers and theorists, particularly in the difference between family types and parental roles (Cabrera et al., 2000). The ecology of family life is continuously evolving, including children growing up in the presence or absence of their biological fathers for various reasons. The changes in family structure present different demands for children. Exposing children to different types of fathering might also affect children's psychosocial competencies and school achievements (ibid). This calls for alternative knowledge and understanding of parenting that would accommodate various family structures and culturally diverse terminologies of fatherhood.

#### ***4.4.1 The journey to fatherhood***

The transition from boyhood to manhood takes different forms in various societies and is closely associated with socioeconomic circumstances (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). It also entails integrating cultural and social perspectives. At this stage, individual identity is based on a meaningful life philosophy and a sense of sex role identification. The path into adulthood

involves taking responsibility in different social settings and contexts. Therefore, manhood and fatherhood are negotiated and renegotiated, varying across cultures.

Spjeldnaes et al. (2011) found that men's aspirations to become parents indicate the willingness to take on the responsibility of caring for a child. In poor environments with limited opportunities for education and work, the aspiration of fatherhood is an essential expression of the willingness to take on responsibility. African men, particularly those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, often factor their experiences of race, ethnicity, and kinship into their definition of fatherhood. These men tend to be marginalised in society, at work, and at home. Socioeconomic development forms a huge underlying dimension of variability in family values across different cultures. An individual is often linked to a family that follows cultural practices and lives within the constraints of culture. The well-being of children is tightly connected to the socioeconomic development of a family. Spjeldnaes et al. (2011) also highlighted the influence of social location in expressing masculinity and fatherhood (e.g., between the men living in urban areas and those in rural or traditionally oriented locations).

Cabrera et al. (2000) describes fatherhood as embedded in collective efforts. Men who do not conform to gendered stereotypical notions and expectations from childhood tend to be more 'involved' fathers in their adulthood. Fathers who seem more liberal and view gender as equitable tend to demonstrate the desire for active involvement in the activities of their children. They are less likely to expect their children to conform to the stereotypical notions of gender. Also, fathers often play many roles within their families and communities; each is linked to specific ideas, competencies, and action patterns (ibid). Unlike motherhood, where women are expected to possess motherly instincts, little information reveals how men learn to be fathers. There are expectations regarding fatherhood; however, there is less information about when these roles are integrated and enacted over the life course. Changes in societal values and phenomena, such as the absence of biological fathers, have weakened the link between responsible masculinity and the presence of responsible fathers. A man can use his discretion to decide on his role as a father based on social norms and expectations. However,

it is worth appreciating men who take up the role of fathering outside the traditional context (social fathers, non-residential fathers, single fathers, and fathers of adult children) since they produce and demonstrate a new image of male parenting.

According to Lamb (2000), scholars have extensively explored how fatherhood has been defined. Attention went to understanding the significance of father involvement, paternal influence on a child's development, and the influence of the father's participation in their children's lives. Lamb (2000) found that there has been quite a narrow operationalisation and conception of fatherhood in the past three decades. Fatherhood has been limited to gender roles and social expectations, and less attention has gone into understanding the father-child relationship. The researcher focused on the relationship between participants and their biological fathers in this study. Cabrera et al. (2000) highlights that men do not father their children in a vacuum: as children proceed through various developmental stages, the fathers also develop new fathering skills. Parenthood thus evolves with children's developmental stages.

The father's childbearing age and biological and social maturity levels influence the father-child relationship. Often, young men become fathers without desire or intention, affecting how they parent their children. Lamb (2000) associates the father's positive parenting with whether the pregnancy was intended or desired. Unwanted childbearing has unintended and unrealised long-term consequences for children; fathers may be less involved, less affectionate, or interested, or have less support in the lives of their children whose birth was unintended. Adolescent parenting is associated with the high risk of absent biological fathers or uninvolved fathers, which poses a massive threat to a child's well-being. Transitioning to parenthood for adolescent males often becomes a crisis for their children and young mothers (Lamb, 2000; Swartz & Bhana, 2009: p. 3). Furthermore, young fathers are confronted with limited psychosocial and economic resources and social support needed when raising a child, unlike older men who have the intention and desire to have and raise their children. Swartz and Bhana (2009, p28-38) explored teenage fathers' views regarding the role of fathering. They found that

teenage fathers are confronted with the fear of fathering a child; some are scared of their parents' reactions. Also, they view fatherhood as a responsibility that older people assume. Their understanding of responsibility is linked to their sense of masculinity. Responsibility is often associated with financial provision and emotional stress that might damage their social reputation. Teenage fathers view themselves as being forced to be grown-ups, which might distract their social life. They also view fatherhood as a role that increases the demands of financial resources to provide and care for a child's needs. In some instances, teenage fathers compromise their ambition to further their studies or complete school. Depending on an individual's development stage, the timing of fatherhood sets men on different life trajectories.

Clowes, Ratele and Shefer (2013) describe fatherhood as one of the crucial social indicators associated with successful masculinity. The crucial aspect of being a father also carries the stereotypical socioeconomic burden of heading the household and sole financial provision. Between 1830 and 1940, women were primarily involved in family businesses and factories, indicating that mothers have always been active in the workforce (Cabrera et al., 2000). Women are sometimes the primary financial providers, although men are still expected to lead the family or household. This suggests that the social expectations related to masculinity are just a short distance from the expectations of fatherhood. Fatherhood adds another crucial layer to the field of Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities. In addition to conservative ideologies and expectations of fatherhood, other contributing factors to the absence of biological fathers include unemployment, poverty, income inequality, and migration (Ratele et al., 2012). These factors have undermined men's abilities to meet the acceptable social norms and roles of fatherhood. Therefore, the status and recognition of fatherhood are not bestowed upon some men since they do not conform to the set social roles and expectations. Then, they are perceived to have failed at being good fathers to their children. This calls for social researchers to investigate the true meaning of what entails being a good father.

#### **4.4.2 The phenomenon of absent biological fathers**

In a patriarchal society, the biological father's absence is seen as problematic and capable of generating socially 'ill' behaviour. Recent studies identify the absence of biological fathers as the primary source of many social ills and outline the significant role of the biological father's presence in the mental and physical well-being of boy children transcending to manhood (Clowes et.al. 2013). The absence of a biological father in the life of a boy child is perceived as depriving them of models of manhood. For centuries, this perception has been upheld in a global heteronormative and nuclear family structure, envied by many and a lived reality for few. Cabrera et al. (2000) identified the following five ways in which paternal absence affects children:

- Absent or little relationship with a co-parent and their paternal lineage.
- Single motherhood is often associated with economic insufficiency or struggle.
- Emotional distress and social isolation that might stem from the absence of a biological father.
- Psychological distress might emerge from the feeling of rejection or abandonment by the biological father.
- Negative effect on the child's socio-emotional well-being, learning process, and behaviour.

The phenomenon of absent biological fathers denotes a negative connotation to fatherhood, particularly about Black men who are fathers. The absence of a biological father is twofold: fathers who are physically, emotionally and financially absent and fathers who are physically present but do not offer any emotional or financial support to their children. In some cases, children may reside with their biological fathers and yet have no relationship with their biological fathers. Nathane and Khunou (2021) found that the biological father's absence often overclouds Black masculinity. The influence and role of present social fathers (grandfathers, uncles, men who are next of kin, and those in communities) often receive less attention than the influence and role of absent biological fathers. The idea and reality of the nuclear family

structure are foreign to most Africans since there is always a collective effort in raising a child, even those whose biological fathers are or have been present.

The concept of fatherhood and its role and responsibilities need to be clarified. Therefore, this study focused on the social involvement of Black South African fathers in participants' lives. The intention is to move away from the detailed discourses of the reasons behind the absence of biological fathers and instead focus on men as fatherhood role models and/or on men who influenced participants' lives. This is without minimising the impact of the absence of biological fathers in participants' lives. The researcher thus also focused on how participants narrate their experiences of being fathered by biological and social fathers and the lessons they have learned from their interactions related to fatherhood and fathering.

The absence of biological fathers, mostly among Black communities, in the lives of their offspring is a growing concern in South Africa (Sonke Gender Justice, Human Science Research Council & Stellenbosch University, 2021: p. 53). In many cases, biological fathers are physically, emotionally and psychologically absent and also do not provide for their children's needs. Fatherhood and manhood in South Africa are often understood to involve providing material resources, which is problematic because most of the country's Black African population faces unemployment and poverty.

Migration, residential separation of partners, and delayed marriages have disassociated fatherhood from childbearing. Richter et al. (2013) found that men not only father their biological children; they father children in their extended families and communities. The nature of the extended family structure, most common in the African context, allows men to father children who are socialised in their households. This implies that most men find themselves acting out the role of fatherhood even though they may not have biological children. In some instances, men may not actively father their own biological children due to residential separation. Still, at the same time, fathers reside with their children in the same household. Sonke Gender Justice et al. (2021, p. 53) reported a slight increase, from 48% (in 2017) to 61%,

of South African men living with children in the same household. This indicates that 61% of South African children live with a male figure in the same household (ibid). In most cases, men are expected to leave home and search for employment opportunities while leaving women behind with the responsibility of looking after their children.

In his pursuit to find his biological father, Mcintosh Polela's book titled 'My Father, My Monster' alludes to his desire to find closure in what happened in his early life as a young boy. Mcintosh indicates that he always wondered if his biological father had thought or cared about him and his sister since he abandoned them for 26 years (Mcintosh, 2018: p. 184). Mcintosh also indicates that he had questions that he needed to ask his father about the things that occurred before he and his sister were relocated to live with their maternal grandmother in the village.

According to Mcintosh (2018, p. 185), he needed his father to account for the weight hanging over his shoulders; he needed his father to acknowledge the pain he caused by murdering his mother. To his surprise, he was advised to assure his father that he did not want anything from him and his family; 'I was advised to say I needed to see and talk to him' (Mcintosh, 2018: p. 181). He described this as saddening as he is expected to be apologetic for the tragedy that his father caused. Yet, he intends to find his father and inform him that he is forgiven. Mcintosh's story is an example of the many children in search of their biological fathers, seeking answers relating to their father's absence and understanding of their patrilineage while hoping to form meaningful relations with their biological fathers. The use of alcohol and exposure to violence at a young age seems to be a reoccurring phenomenon as far as fatherhood and manhood are concerned.

#### **4.4.3 Uninvolved fathers**

The phenomenon of absent biological fathers centres around the gendered assumptions of the roles of a mother and father when parenting a child (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). At times, fathers live in one household with their children without being actively present in their lives. Mothers are expected to socialise, nurture and be more involved in their children's daily activities, perceiving them as the primary caretakers of children. Focusing on the biological father, mother, and child relationship has overlooked men's role in raising children within their social context.

Ratele et al. (2012) found that the notion of 'my father is/was there for me' is a common phrase used to describe a biological father's presence and involvement in a child's life. The absence of the biological father is often associated with the physical absence of a father or being unknown by a child. This provides a different form of understanding of what the absence of fatherhood entails. A father may be physically present; however, his lack of active involvement in his children's lives is perceived to cause his absence. Failure 'to be there for his children' is the root cause of his absence.

In his Memoir titled 'A Father is Born', Tumiso Mashaba (2021, p. 16) describes the relationship with his father as uneasy and precarious. Mashaba (2021, p. 18) explains that his father would be present with his family but distant and absent since he was occupied with his thoughts and would not engage with any of his family members. Before his father's absence, Mashaba considered him his hero since he would share exciting tales. Growing up, they enjoyed spending time with their father. They lived with their father in the same household; however, at some point, their father was uninvolved in their lives.

I used the critical lens of Africentric, Interpretivism, and Feminist views to explore challenges that emerge from the conventional gender notions and expectations irrespective of the changing climate where these notions are formed and expected to be executed. The researcher focused on the influence of male and female figures who are/were instrumental in shaping and

impacting of an individual's' lives. Grounded in the African philosophy of Ubuntu, fatherhood is outlined (in the study) as a communitarian effort whereby men carry out the responsibility of fathering children, including those who are not their own, rather than an individual relating to another individual (Sonke Gender Justice et al., 2021: p. 53).

#### ***4.5 Conclusion***

The chapter highlights the contribution of the feminist movement and scholars around gender discourses. The third-wave feminists, particularly bell hooks, emphasises the importance of interrogating and understanding male privilege. She found that human beings are socialised to accept social norms and usually have internalised patriarchal notions around gender. She added that the intersection of race and classism does not grant men equal patriarchal power and dominance. Though men derive some benefits from being men, not all men have equal access to socioeconomic and political resources. This does not take away the fact that men experience pain, and often, society (including the feminist movement) ignores male pain. She argues that men and women fought for emancipation; therefore, they have been comrades in the struggle for economic and political freedom. This emphasises the collective efforts invested in the liberation struggle. It also highlights that human beings are interrelated; one gender cannot exist without another.

hooks further reported that men experience different forms of oppression and prejudice than women and that their pain is worth acknowledging and recognising. Since the agenda of the early feminists focused on the toxicity of masculine behaviour and attitude, hooks emphasised the efforts of individual men who have attempted to change the narrative from toxic masculinity to positive and progressive behaviour and relations with other men, women, and children. According to her, this confirms that the societal challenge lies with patriarchal masculinity and, subsequently, the practices thereof, not with masculinity itself.

Society tends to determine the attributes of masculinity and fatherhood. This chapter discusses the progressive ideas and traits of masculinity outlined by Anderson's theory of inclusive

masculinity. The theory of inclusive masculinity resonates with the principles of Ubuntu, reiterating that human beings are interdependent. Therefore, masculinity can increasingly be understood in the context of modern- and new-age men, who are more considerate and accommodating to other men, women, and children.

The understandings and descriptions of the concepts 'masculinity' and 'fatherhood' are similar yet complex. Men are often confronted with the struggle of upholding socially correct attributes of being a man and a father. The relationship between men and their social environment receives less attention, while attention goes to the wrongdoings of men in society. This chapter highlights information from the literature on harmful and positive traits of masculinity and fatherhood. The chapter also connected the reviewed literature to the theoretical constructs of Interpretive Sociology, the Africentric perspective, and gender, including the image of a progressive and new image of a man and a father.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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### *5.1 Introduction*

The research paradigm and design selection are guided by the nature of the phenomenon being investigated and the study's overall aim(s) (Creswell, 2009: p. 22). Chapter One (p. 18 - 11) briefly introduced this study's research aims, objectives, and questions. Qualitative researchers conduct qualitative research to describe people's views through storytelling and/or text, among other methods of expression. This study explored how participants make sense of their lived experiences and the memories of events that impacted their lives, subsequently allowing them to narrate their perceptions, understanding and lived experiences. The study also explores how language is used to construct and co-construct social realities. This provided insight into how people use their inherent stock of knowledge (refer to Chapter Two: p. 30), experiences, and language to make sense of their social environment.

This study describes the participants' experiences from where they are situated. I recognize participants of this study as co-creators of knowledge since the study is based on their knowledge, understanding, and memories as much as it is based on theoretical foundations and insights provided by the reviewed literature. Participants shared their lived experiences through narratives and contributed to the knowledge production and understanding of the phenomenon from where they are situated.

The study is located within the interpretivist and social constructivist epistemology, described in Chapter Two (p. 26). This study borrows the Africentric lens (see Chapter Three, p. 41) to explore the phenomenon of masculinity and fatherhood in Mangaung, South Africa. The study is also a narrative inquiry that aims to describe the lived experiences, relations, and perceptions of men and women concerning masculinity and fatherhood. Narrative investigations allow researchers to explore people's stories about their perceptions, experiences, and

understanding of their social environment. The study was concerned with constructing and interpreting masculinity and fatherhood; therefore, social constructivist and interpretive methodologies were used to research participants' views and lived experiences.

This chapter provides the epistemological accounts of the study. The chapter also describes the entire process of the study (i.e., sampling method and selection of participants, study location, data collection methods, quality of data, data interpretation and analysis methods, and ethics protocol).

### ***5.2 Epistemological account of the study***

The epistemological foundation of the study focused on the fact that people construct reality; therefore, as a researcher, one must focus on their constructions to understand their reality. Thus, the researcher explored how participants construct social realities as individuals and as collectives through their stories, social interactions, and how they make sense of their world.

The study is rooted in a qualitative paradigm. Creswell (2009, p. 22) described qualitative research as exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social and human phenomena. The qualitative paradigm is an umbrella term that entails several research approaches focusing on describing and understanding individuals' perceptions and the meanings they create from their distinctive experiences. This is achieved by reflecting on and exploring people's experiences and using these experiences as a starting point in understanding social realities. Flick (2018: p. 3) explained it as follows:

'Qualitative research aims to uncover the in-depth understanding of social realities by making invisible societal patterns visible.'

The qualitative paradigm enabled the researcher to recognise the differences in perceptions, attitudes, emotions, and behaviours that quantitative approaches cannot capture or identify. The qualitative paradigm, therefore, focuses on describing and understanding how people make sense of and experience their world (Coetzee, Rau, & Wojciechowska, 2019: p. 7). The qualitative paradigm created a platform for participants to express their true emotions.

Interpretivism and social constructivism are approaches found within qualitative research. Interpretive-qualitative research recognises that any interpretation of reality or claim to truth and knowledge is fluid and represents only one perspective in a multitude of equally justifiable ones (Creswell, 2009: p. 26). As a result, people develop a sense of the subjective meaning of their experiences. Often, these meanings multiply and produce different notions, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to acknowledge the differences in people's perceptions and experiences. Researchers also need to recognise the complexities around the meanings of life and experience without limiting the purposes and experiences into a few categories or ideas about life.

The interpretive and social constructionist approaches are grounded on the two key assumptions:

- Through interaction and engagement, human beings create meaning and interpretations of their life world.
- Historical and social happenings influence how people make sense of their world.

Accordingly, qualitative researchers seek to understand the historical and current social contexts influencing participants' perceptions and understandings of their social environment and circumstances. The researcher is often interested in the processes of interaction among individuals and the living context of people.

The study also focuses on indigenous research methodologies' ethno-philosophical grounding. In her book titled 'Indigenous Research Methodologies', Bagele Chilisa (2019, p. 119) described ethno-philosophy in the African context as a system of thought used to describe, analyse, and understand the collective worldviews of diverse African people as a unified body of knowledge. Ethno-philosophy highlights people's experiences encoded in their language, tradition, stories, and values. It considers the place where learning is constructed, stored, and can be retrieved to serve as literature. Chilisa (2009, p. 120) maintained that community language, stories, and songs might serve as methods that can be triangulated with conventional data collection methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Indigenous language reflects on the patterns and structures that influence how people think, behave, and, subsequently, act. Interpretive researchers commonly use language analysis. The forms of language, such as proverbs and metaphorical sayings, legitimise indigenous people's value systems, thought processes, and lived experiences; thus, it is crucial to incorporate indigenous languages in research processes to not lose the meaning and context of the participants' contributions.

### ***5.2.1 The narrative approach***

According to Coetzee et al. (2019: p. 3), we live in a world where people share their experiences via storytelling. This study used the narrative approach to understand what participants perceive as authentic and meaningful. Coetzee et al. (2019, p. 5) added:

‘When people tell coherent and meaningful stories embedded in a particular context, they reveal insight into our own and other people’s experiences. Narratives provide accounts of how particular phenomena came to be what they are, how they take on different meanings in different contexts, and how individuals do/ perform/ constitute social life.’

From the quotation above, the narrative approach focuses on how people experience their surroundings and make meaning of their social lives. The narrative approach begins with telling and retelling stories of ordinary people as they reflect on their lived experiences. The assumption is that individuals' views of life can be well understood from the lenses they use to look at life. De Vos et al. (2011: p. 310) described reality as being individually and collectively constructed; therefore, the subjects or participants should be actively involved in the continuous process of narrating reality. The narrative approach not only lists events that have occurred in the lives of participants but also links these events in time, context, and meaning (De Vos et al., 2011: p. 310). Narrations give the researcher insights into how participants make sense of their experiences, memories, lifeworld, and realities. The researcher then describes, analyses, and retells their stories (Maree, 2016: p. 76).

Researchers collect different versions of narratives through in-depth conversations. The different versions of narratives are often a combination of past and present occurrences and, therefore, also involve people's memories regarding a phenomenon. Memory refers to one's ability to retain, recall, and retrieve information from the past. Coetzee and Rau (2009) described memory as one's capacity to remember or recall the information stored in one's mind, adding that remembering is a notoriously unreliable process. Retrieving information regarding life events or experiences is a complex process involving the perspectives of individuals and the shared perspective of people around us. In this study, participants retrieved information regarding their past relations, interactions, and experiences relating to men, women, children, and the community.

### ***5.2.2 The role of memory in qualitative research***

Memory concerns the information people can retrieve and how they retrieve it. Coetzee and Rau (2009) state that social settings influence people's memories, and these memories and their recall are often co-constructed. Memories in narrative inquiry enable the researcher to

connect participants' past experiences to their present realities. Memory work allows the researcher to describe how participants recall and narrate a phenomenon. It assists researchers in understanding the complex yet varied nature of people's experiences. Also, it evokes the emotions of participants and researchers regarding a specific event, allowing the researcher to retrieve the feelings stemming from what the participants recall. This also gives the researcher the privilege of understanding the positive and negative experiences of participants that shape the participants' formulation of reality. In this study, participants were comfortable disclosing pleasant and unpleasant experiences to the researcher and research assistant. To some participants, this approach served as an emotional and spiritual healing space since they could share incidents and feelings that they had not disclosed before or have been some form of burden to them.

### ***5.2.3 Interpretivist and constructivist approaches***

I employed the constructivist and interpretivist approaches in the study. The constructionist view is that reality is socially and personally constructed; there is no single truth; rather, a narrative reality changes continuously. The constructivist approach states that reality lies within the experience of people and is mind-dependent (Gergen, 2015: p. 4). Thus, the constructivist approach maintains that reality is confined within the context of time, space, and people (individuals and the collective). Therefore, an individual's perception and experience of reality might differ from the reality of a group. This approach allowed participants to share their ideas about and experiences of their construction of masculinity and fatherhood and comment on their thoughts regarding the social/group's perceptions, experiences, and attitudes.

Similarly to the constructivist approach, the interpretivist approach views reality as not objective but subjective and socially constructed. Willig (2017) elaborated as follows:

‘Interpretation is at the heart of qualitative research because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and the process of meaning-making.’

The interpretivist approach highlights people’s ability to construct meaning out of their reality and seeks to understand social reality and happenings through the meaning people create and attach to them (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). The approach proposes that people’s knowledge of their social world influences their behaviour; it focuses on how people construct ‘common sense’ and use constructed common sense for a practical purpose. It also focuses on how this ‘common sense’ becomes objectified and institutionalised, resulting in, for instance, norms that are considered realities. Observing participants in their social settings allows the researcher to better understand participants’ perceptions and views of their world and describe and interpret how participants interact with their social world.

#### ***5.2.4 Indigenous and Africentric research approaches***

This study employed indigenous and Afrocentric research approaches. The fundamental principles of these paradigms align with the second and the last aim of the study, respectively: to explore and critically engage with the ‘Lekgotla’ as an indigenous method of data collection and to critically examine Lekgotla as an indigenous data collection context and method. The indigenous research paradigm emphasises the perspectives and methods derived from indigenous knowledge, languages, and experiences of indigenous people (Chilisa, 2009: p. 97). Indigenous research methodologies are influenced by the work of critical scholars and feminist thinkers as well as by the notion of decolonisation. According to Chilisa (2009, p. 97), indigenous research methodologies challenge researchers to use indigenous knowledge when constructing concepts and theoretical frameworks and developing data collection tools. Also, the indigenisation of traditional research methodologies requires approaches (methods, literature, and language) used by the researcher to be embedded in the knowledge and tradition of those who are investigated. Participants engaged with the researchers in their

language within natural settings. In this study, data collection instruments and consent forms were translated into the participants' native language. The data was also collected in the indigenous language(s) with which the participants were comfortable.

The Africentric paradigm regards the researchers and participants as partners in producing knowledge that authentically represents the social context of African people (Mkabela, 2005). This paradigm supports the post-colonial research methodologies that encourage researchers to view participants as study subjects and custodians of knowledge. The Afrocentric paradigm requires researchers to immerse themselves in the realities of African people. This study did not disregard the Western methods but incorporated them while placing African people's knowledge, views, and context at the centre of investigations. Both the Africentric and the qualitative-interpretive paradigms hold that people use interpretative patterns to give meaning to their native social contexts.

#### ***5.2.5 The feminist methodological approach***

This study also utilised a feminist methodological approach, which is congruent with qualitative research. The feminist approach investigates the construction of gender, sex, and sex roles in modern society, originally to illustrate the systematic exclusion of female experiences in scientific scholarship (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: p. 237). Also, the feminist methodology was initiated by the second-wave feminists to illustrate the marginalised position of women in society and different social institutions (Sprague, 2018). The positivist feminist research philosophy undermined the subjectivity of those involved in the research project and the contribution of the methodology to the social science (ibid). This study, including other authors' and writers' work, highlights how a feminist approach has moved on from an exclusive focus on women and is also used to focus on men. Often, feminist scholars criticise social science research for masculine and patriarchal biases. The primary assumption of the feminist methodology is that men and women are different. They view, experience, and interpret social

reality differently, and female experiences often need to be better articulated. The feminist approach highlights the significance of acknowledging gender in understanding human relations and social processes (De Vos et al., 2011: p. 228-231). It is for this reason that female voices were included in this study.

Interpretivist, indigenous research methods, and the feminist approach place people's lived experiences at the centre of social research; therefore, it is crucial to consider people's lived experiences before attempting to understand the social relations between them. The study focused on the lived experiences and views of ordinary men and women. In this study, the researcher explored how participants perceive and make meaning of their everyday experiences. The feminist approach encourages researchers to be mindful of individual biases, politics, and privilege. A feminist standpoint reminded the researcher to be aware of her race, gender, and preconceived or stereotypical gendered notions (Alcoff, 1991) and not impose on participants or their narratives normative notions of manhood and fatherhood held by many South African Black women.

### ***5.3 Participant selection***

The researcher sought deeper insight into the participants, their experiences, and their social position. Therefore, the study was conducted in a social location to understand how participants' social settings influence their social interactions and experiences. Also, the researcher encouraged participants to describe and understand the lens participants use to make sense of their lives, their views of the world, and their experiences. This gave the researcher and research assistant first-hand experience and knowledge of participants and their living environment.

Participants comprised Black South African men and women who were born in South Africa and spent most of their lives living in South Africa. Participants reside in Mangaung and are

within the age categories of 18 to 65. This range allowed for differences and similarities in young and elderly men and women's constructions, perceptions, definitions, experiences, and interpretations of masculinity and fatherhood. Including different age groups also assisted with establishing how the constructions, perceptions, and expectations regarding masculinity and fatherhood have changed or stayed the same over time.

Black South African men and women from various socioeconomic backgrounds participated in the study. This assisted with interpreting the extent to which their socioeconomic position influences their construction, perception, interpretation, and experience of masculinity and fatherhood. Black African men and women from three ethnic groups (Basotho, Batswana, and Xhosas) participated in the study. The presence of different ethnic groups in Mangaung made it possible to interpret the role of ethnicity in shaping the understanding and interpretation of masculinity and fatherhood, as well as identify and analyse differences and similarities that emerged.

Black South African men and women who are biological or social parents participated in the study. Men and women who have never parented also participated in the study (given the inclusivity of indigenous approaches to research and the role played by members in the wider community to act as parents for children in their communities). They were included as they will have memories or experiences of their fathers/ surrogate fathers or ideas about fatherhood that they construe from social norms, images, stories, and wishes.

I used non-probability sampling in the study (Maree, 2016: p. 197; De Vos et al., 2011: p. 228-231), namely purposive and snowball sampling. By using purposive sampling, the researcher selected a sample that comprised the characteristics or attributes of the population that served the purpose of the study (De Vos et al., 2011: p. 392). Community leaders assisted with recruiting participants as they permitted access to engage with community members. Community leaders were older men between the ages of 40 and 65 and thus also formed part of the targeted age group.

Snowball sampling enabled me to locate members of the targeted population known by the gatekeepers and some study participants. Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants for the focus group discussions and Lekgotla gatherings. The ethical implications of snowball sampling will be discussed in the ethical considerations section of the study. Because participants were drawn from different educational and socioeconomic levels, some were more articulate than others. Thus, data was collected until saturation was reached, in other words, until no new ideas and trajectories arose.

#### ***5.4. Study site***

The primary study area was Kagisanong, commonly known as Rocklands, one of the five sub-townships of Mangaung in Bloemfontein. However, some participants relocated from Kagisanong to the suburban areas within Mangaung. Mangaung is one of the largest towns in the Free State Province, with townships subdivided into Batho Location, Botjhabela, Phahameng, Phelindaba, and Kagisanong (SA histories, 2018).

Bloemfontein was established in 1846, and residential areas for Black and Coloured South African residents were founded in 1861 (SA Histories, 2018). Black African residents were grouped and placed in residential areas according to ethnicity. Due to internal migration and informal settlements, Black South African residents were dispersed throughout the townships. Since the transition of South Africa to democracy in 1994, race and ethnicity no longer play a role in determining residents' residential areas or dwelling places. The researcher chose the Kagisanong sub-township because it is where she established a professional relationship with its community leaders, who are the gatekeepers.

### *5.5 Data collection approach*

I approached the data collection phase from the viewpoint of the phenomenological, focused life story, life story interview, and ethnographic interview. The phenomenological interview approach describes participants' experiences, feelings, perceptions, and understanding of a phenomenon and the meanings participants ascribe to these (Roulston & Choi, 2018: p. 235). The study participants reflected on their lived experiences and described their perceptions, emotions, understandings, and expectations regarding masculinity and fatherhood. Participants also reflected on the community expectations and their encounters with others relating to the gendered norms and expectations.

Chilisa (2012, p178) described the focused life story interview, one method of the indigenous research paradigm, as a process whereby participants reflect and describe their story concerning their connection with themselves and the people around them. Participants can remember and talk freely about their experiences, including difficult circumstances, with focused life stories. I used interview guides to assist with creating a platform for participants to remember and share their lived experiences (see Appendix D). Chilisa (2012, p177) stated as follows:

'An in-depth life story interview intrigues relational ways of interaction, and it provides an understanding of how people are connected and their environment'.

Storytelling enables sociologists to understand how people interact and live with each other (Coetzee et al., 2019: p. 3). The individual's process of reflection is also based on the wisdom gained through life experiences and norms of community members. Knowledge and questions around knowledge are often found in the wisdom and beliefs of community members who may have or have not been schooled in the formal education system (Chilisa, 2012: p. 177). Chilisa's view resonates with the idea of Alfred Schutz in terms of people's stock of knowledge, knowledge they inherently internalise. A focused life story interview enables the researcher to access a large body of knowledge from sages not documented within the written literature;

thus, community members (particularly elders of the community) were involved in the research process. The use of focused life story interviews is well positioned within the narrative and phenomenological approaches since the focus is on participants' lived experiences and retrieving their memories.

The ethnographic interview is often referred to as an informal conversation interview (Allen, 2017; Heyl, 2001: p. 367) and requires the researcher to establish a good relationship and interactive engagement with participants and the community. Ethnographic interviews are based on the process of interaction and negotiation. By establishing good relations with participants, the researcher may be considered a confidant during the interview process. Ethnographic interviews are characterised by trust, mutual respect, and openness (Warren & Hackney, 2011). This was achieved by establishing a good relationship with community leaders and community members who became participants. The engagement between the participants, research assistant, and researcher was based on respect and openness, subsequently leading to trust.

The ethnographic interview allowed the researcher to gather in-depth knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon from the participants as well as the community as a collective. Participants were asked to reflect on the expectations and interactions of their social contacts and other community members. Social scientists, such as the researcher, use ethnographic interviews in the following instances:

- To capture the lived experiences of participants and communities.
- To co-construct knowledge and understanding of social practices and happenings with participants and the community.
- To unpack the meaning of specific events, actions, and rituals with participants and communities.
- To allow participants and communities to express the meanings they ascribe to their life experiences and circumstances in their languages.

### ***5.5.1 The gendered approach of data collection***

Since the study focused on masculinity and fatherhood, the researcher, being a woman, appointed a suitably qualified and experienced male research assistant. The researcher believes that men are more likely to be open to discussing issues on masculinity and fatherhood with another man rather than a woman. However, the researcher interacted directly with female participants since she believes that women are more likely to share their experiences relating to masculinity and fatherhood with another woman. The researcher and research assistant were responsible for the collection of data.

Although there is less information on the role of gender when collecting data, there are some prescriptive and descriptive notions relating to this issue. However, unmatched gender interviews can present some challenges in data collection. The matched interviews between participants and an interviewer (based on similar gender and other attributes such as race and age) may create space for trust and openness (Warren & Hackney, 2011). Therefore, gender interviews should be understood in the context of preconceived notions regarding a specific gender.

In this context, I became a non-participant observer while the research assistant conducted interviews and focus group discussions with male participants. I observed the interaction between the research assistant and participants as I sat quietly behind them, taking field notes; this was to create a conducive environment as they engaged with the research assistant. Also, the researcher could not engage with male participants and probe further questions about their responses since the discussions were around their lived experiences and related sensitive topics. Being a young Black woman, the researcher was aware of and had to adhere to the traditional practice of respecting the traditional authoritative position of men, particularly

older men, in society. This is deemed one of the limitations of matched gender interviewing; however, it provided participants with comfort and freedom of expression.

The matched gender interview produced in-depth discussions between the researcher and female participants and the research assistant and male participants. The research assistant also observed the researcher's interaction with the female participants. This approach showed that, in the case of this study, gender does play a role in the process of data collection, especially for a gendered subject matter.

The researcher and research assistant were non-participant observers when community leaders led the Lekgotla gatherings (see paragraph 5.6.3, below); this is symbolic of respecting and adhering to the traditional practice of Lekgotla. Lekgotla is an indigenous method used to resolve challenges in African indigenous communities.

Another consideration was the age gap between the participants, research assistants, and researchers. In traditional African customs, elders can discuss sensitive issues such as masculinity and fatherhood. Since the research assistant and researcher were younger, they were allowed to observe and allow elders to engage. The researcher knew this method might be perceived as promoting patriarchal notions and engagement; however, she intended to discover the platform men use to engage on issues related to masculinity and fatherhood without challenging or changing how this is done in the community. Respecting the norms in the research context enabled the researcher to gather rich and detailed data directly from the participants and attendees. Furthermore, the postmodern approach holds that gendered interviews should be based on the nature and meaning of the study to participants and interviewers, considering that an interview is a social interaction (Warren & Hackney, 2011). In this study, the social interaction of the researcher and participants was guided by the

traditional customs and the principles of African philosophy, which is Ubuntu (refer to Chapter Three, p. 19), emphasising the importance of demonstrating respect towards others.

### 5.6 Data collection methods

Table 1: Data collection phases, methods, and sample size

Data Collection Phase	Data Collection Method	Sample Type	Sample Size
Phase 1	In-depth interviews. Researcher was a non-observer.	Purposive Sampling	30 participants (20 males and 10 females)
Phase 2	Two focus group sessions with seven participants per focus group.  Researcher was a non-participant observer.	Purposive and snowball sampling	14 male participants
Phase 3	Two Lekgotla gatherings with 20 men per gathering.  Researcher and researcher assistant were non-participant observers.	Purposive and snowball sampling	40 male participants, including the gatekeepers

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants: their gender, age and ethnicity. The focus of the study was men’s (co)construction, interpretation and experiences of manhood and fatherhood; thus, the focus was on recruiting a larger number of men. Informed by the contribution of bell hooks and the third-wave feminist movement (refer to Chapter Four,

p. 73), I thought it was important to echo women's voices in this study on men since women in South Africa raise young men. The total number of participants was 84, of which 74 were men who participated in in-depth interviews, focus groups and Lekgotla gatherings. I had 10 in-depth interviews with female participants; the research assistant was a non-participant observer. Most of the participants were between the ages of 21 and 80. This enabled the researcher to capture the lived experiences of young and older men, particularly older men who have gone through various stages of human development and have extensive lived experiences of manhood and fatherhood. Participants who took part in the in-depth interviews and focus groups are from diverse ethnic groups: 21 participants are Basotho, 12 are Batswana, and 11 are Xhosa. The nature of Lekgotla gatherings did not allow the researcher to document the participants' ethnicity.

Data collection instruments (in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and Lekgotla gatherings (see Appendix D: Data Collection Instruments) were first piloted to gain insight into how questions worked, the language preferred by participants, and the best way to translate the questions. A semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions guided the interviews and focus group discussions. However, due to COVID-19 regulations, the researcher could not pilot data collection instruments for Lekgotla. The research assistant, participants, and the researcher adhered to COVID-19 protocols during the data collection phase. Data was collected over nine months due to the pandemic. This enabled the researcher and research assistant to better understand the community and participants.

The interview guides were piloted (the researcher and research assistant are fluent in all four languages). They translated questions themselves, using pilots as an opportunity to test if and how questions work and the best way to solve the questions). Once the necessary adaptations were made to the pilot questions, the final questions were translated into Sesotho since the majority of the participants preferred Sesotho and English. The following sections describe the methods used to collect data.

### ***5.6.1 In-depth interviews***

The first method used was in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews entail verbal interaction between the researcher and the interviewee (selected based on their knowledge, experience, and/or attributes related to what is investigated). In-depth interviews can be conducted face-to-face, telephonically or virtually. For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face.

According to Coombes, Allen, Humphrey, and Neale (2009), in-depth interviews enable the researcher to understand the lives and experiences of participants (individuals or groups) from participants' perspectives. The researcher and participants engaged and reflected on feelings, emotions, beliefs, and experiences. In-depth interviews provided rich descriptive information that enabled me to see the world through the eyes of the participants (Wager et al., 2012: p. 133). The in-depth interviews helped generate new insights. Also, I used in-depth interviews to investigate sensitive and complex phenomena regarding masculinity and fatherhood. The research assistant and the researcher visited gatekeepers and some community members prior to collecting data to establish good rapport, mutual trust, and respect. This allowed them to explain the nature of the study and what participation entailed. They also had the opportunity to assure the participants that their contribution was important and valuable. The research assistant and the researcher provided a platform for participants to feel comfortable.

Data collection started with informal discussions with participants. The researcher and research assistant began each session by going through the information leaflet relating to the nature of the study and what participation in the study entailed. Thereafter, participants had to complete and sign the consent forms to grant permission to start with data collection. The researcher and participants signed the consent forms; participants received a copy of the signed consent form. This was only applicable to in-depth interviews and focus groups. The social setting of Lekgotla gatherings is not conducive to giving all participants copies of the

consent form. However, the community leader went through the information leaflet, explained to all participants what the study was about and allowed participants to raise concerns if there were any; all participants gave verbal consent. Anthropologists often use verbal consent in their ethnographic studies. Participants were afforded the platform to express their views and experiences at length. I used in-depth interviews since the study focused on individual and collective perceptions and interpretations of masculinity and fatherhood. Participants were requested to reflect on their relations and experiences concerning masculinity and fatherhood. The study focused on a sensitive issue; therefore, in-depth interviews assisted in creating a platform that encouraged participants to voluntarily describe their lived experiences and express their emotions and views.

Participants indicated the time and most suitable venue for the in-depth interviews; the intention was to ensure the participants were comfortable if in-depth interviews took longer. In-depth interviews lasted approximately two (2) hours. Gaining access to participants can be challenging and time-consuming when conducting in-depth interviews. COVID-19 presented challenges relating to the scheduling of interviews, particularly with female participants who are mothers with children in school. Some appointments had to be rescheduled, while others were cancelled. Irrespective of those challenges, we adhered to the regulations (completing the COVID-19 screening questionnaire before interviews, using sanitisers, wearing masks, and maintaining social distancing).

### ***5.6.2 Focus group discussions***

The researcher also collected data via focus group discussions. Focus group discussion produces different perceptions, perspectives, and experiences as participants engage in groups rather than individually. Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2017) found that focus group discussions often overlap with in-depth interviews concerning the data type they can produce. Both focus group discussions and in-depth interviews can unpack research questions such as the how and

why of human experiences, beliefs, behaviours, and perceptions. Discussions were audio recorded with consent from participants (Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms and Gatekeeper Consent Forms).

For Morgan and Hoffman (2004), the focus group discussion is beneficial when investigating diverse and similar views across participants. Focus group discussions allow the researcher to ask questions to several participants simultaneously; this might bring out aspects that did not emerge during the in-depth individual interviews (Babbie, 2016: p. 313-314 and Rubin & Babbie, 2016: p. 435). Participants in a focus group discussion tend to share similar and different experiences. Therefore, the focus group discussion was used to capture participants' individual and collective views, perspectives, and experiences and to foster interactions that enhance the in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences.

According to Suwankhong and Liamputtong (2015) focus group, the discussion is one of the most flexible methods the researcher can use and can exceed the researcher's expectations since participants are in conversation with each other. Two focus group discussions (see Table 1, p95) initiated a conversation among participants, and participants voluntarily reflected on and shared their experiences, similar and contradictory opinions, perspectives, understanding, and reactions. This provided a platform for participants to engage and converse about issues relating to masculinity and fatherhood.

In order to gain active involvement and insight from participants, focus group discussions require a well-designed data collection instrument, a conducive environment, and a skilled moderator/researcher. Organising and conducting focus group discussions, especially during COVID-19 restrictions, could have been a better process; however, the researcher had to implement measures to ensure upholding a good standard of these discussions as well as adherence to the COVID-19 regulations. The research assistant is an experienced researcher

with an educational background and an understanding of qualitative research, particularly narratives. The research assistant facilitated the focus group discussion while I observed and took field notes.

Chilisa (2019, p182) compared focus group discussions to talking cycles often happening within villages and communities. She explained that talking process are based on sharing views and experiences, and there is mutual respect between those involved in the cycle. Within a group, participants engaged and challenged those with similar and/or contradictory notions; realistic information can emerge from such engagement. Participants can question, complement and conquer what others say; this assists with checking the reliability of the information provided.

In Africa, people often form a circle around the fireplace, underneath a tree, and during celebrations or traditional rituals (Chilisa, 2012: p. 182). In this context, there is mutual respect, and individuals have the opportunity to express themselves. The talking cycle encourages and symbolises a sense of belongingness and unending compassion for each other. It also represents equality among those who have formed a circle. A sacred object is often passed around the circle from one speaker to the next. The one who holds the sacred object is given a chance to speak uninterrupted while the rest of the group listens attentively with the hope of non-judgement until the speaker passes on the object to the next person. Participants and researchers formed a circle around the table. Due to the COVID-19 regulations, no object was passed around the circle. The focus group discussion entailed elderly and younger participants. The intersection of age and ethnicity ignited stimulating engagement between the young and old concerning the understanding, expectations, and interpretation of masculinity and fatherhood. Participants contributed to the group discussion without interruptions; each participant had a chance to give input. At times, there was a rotation of inputs and questions around the table. Throughout the discussion, participants demonstrated respect and compassion for each other.

Prospective participants withdrew from the study since they were in close contact with people who tested positive for the virus, and others feared contracting it. It was effort-intensive to arrange the focus group discussions and find an accessible venue for participants where COVID-19 regulations would be adhered to, particularly maintaining social distance. Regardless of the challenges, the researcher found a venue that participants could access, enabling them to adhere to the COVID-19 regulations. Participants were requested to complete the COVID-19 screening questionnaire, masks were made available in case participants forgot to wear masks, and we disinfected the venue before the meeting; participants had to sanitise their hands or use alcohol wipes upon arrival. The venue allowed space for social distancing.

### ***5.6.3 Lekgotla as data collection method***

The last method of data collection was Lekgotla. Lekgotla is a Sesotho word; in Setswana, it is Kgotla, and Indaba is isiXhosa, which means, when directly translated, council gathering or assembly of men. Lekgotla is also known as a chief's court, where only men in the community gather to address a wide range of disputes and challenges relating to the community, and women are not permitted to attend the gathering. The chief or herdsman usually chairs the discussions; each member gives input based on their experience, opinion, and expertise. Rasweswe (2023) described Lekgotla as a platform in which the indigenous Sub-Saharan African community is used to discuss and reach agreements on issues related to the community. Pienaar (2017) and Nare, Pienaar, A.J. and Mphuthi, (2018) described Lekgotla as a problem-resolution practice that deals holistically with the psychological and sociological issues affecting investigated communities.

According to Rasweswe (2023), Lekgotla is rooted in the notion of Ubuntu, as participants often respect others' opinions and their understanding of the lifeworld. It also encourages

meaningful and interpersonal disclosure between the researcher and participants. It dismantles the power dynamics between them by recognising all parties involved as equals and (co)contributes to resolving challenges confronting the community. Lekgotla gatherings were used to inform the researcher about the multiple realities of communities similar to Western methodologies since they reflect ontological and epistemological properties across African descendants (Rasweswe, 2023).

Nare et al. (2018) stated that Lekgotla provides men within the community the opportunity to retell their own stories and reclaim their dignity, which can easily disappear during the process of Western research methods. It allows the research process to occur in the participants' natural settings and enables the researcher to obtain deeper insight from the participants regarding a phenomenon. Lekgotla gatherings are governed and guided by traditional cultural principles. The intention is to create a platform where men could engage in matters related to them as fathers, husbands, and community members.

For this study, the eldest community leader led the discussions. The researcher and research assistant adhered to the traditional customs and principles by remaining in the background, taking field notes, and observing the discussion among participants. It is important to note that women do not partake in Lekgotla gatherings; therefore, there is no representation of women's voices. Lekgotla gatherings focus on issues relating to traditional gathering practices, respect, power dynamics, trust, ethics, and recognition of individuals and communities (Rasweswe, 2023). I experienced these gatherings as a platform that allows men to engage and challenge each other on matters relating to their well-being and the well-being of others. The researcher also witnessed young men seeking guidance from older men and men encouraging each other and holding each other accountable for their behaviour and actions in the community. Through these meetings, men in Kagisanong could converse with other men in

similar or different circumstances. Men discussed desirable and undesirable behaviours and experiences and exchanged ideas on handling societal expectations and pressures.

#### ***5.6.4 Using field notes and observations***

The research assistant and the researcher used observations throughout the data collection. Mulhall (2003) clearly distinguished between structured and unstructured observations. Unstructured observations were utilised due to the nature of the study. Unstructured observations are grounded within the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms and are a vital ethnography method. It acknowledges the importance of understanding context and co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants.

Unstructured observation provides evidence that the data collection process continuously evolves. The focus is on the behaviour and attitudes of people in their natural settings. Understanding people's social context is highly important in the interpretive paradigm since it provides the context in which multiple realities are formed. Unstructured observations played an essential role in capturing participants' emotions and reactions as they recalled past and present experiences.

Furthermore, the researcher and research assistant took field notes. Field notes are an essential component of qualitative research. Field notes enhance the data quality by providing a rich context for analysis (Philippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes assist with constructing thick and rich descriptions of social contexts. The researcher must focus on what is happening in the environment and the interaction between participants and their environment. The researcher can take field notes while collecting data or after collecting data. This process compels the researcher to reflect on what happened while collecting data, the verbal and non-verbal cues of participants' responses, and identify biases that the researcher might have had

before, during, and after going into the field. I reflected on my thoughts and emotions after every interaction with participants. Through these reflections, the researcher realised the deeper emotional engagement and impact of the study not only on the participants but also on her as the researcher (see Chapter Six p. , 289 ). I also reflected on how data collection provided a healing platform for participants since some mentioned being enabled to express their emotions.

The researcher recorded reflections, questions, actual events, participant statements, actions, and emotions to better understand the data collection and its processes and the contexts within which participants' perceptions, values, beliefs, and social realities occur. This supports an in-depth understanding of the meaning participants ascribe to social dynamics (Wager et al., 2012: p. 91). The researcher sought and obtained participants' consent to observe and take field notes (see Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms and Gatekeeper Consent Forms).

## ***5.7 Processing and Analysis of data***

### ***5.7.1 Data Processing***

As mentioned, data was collected in the participants' native language. Participants indicated they preferred to be interviewed in Sesotho, the dominant language in Bloemfontein and the Free State. The research assistant and researcher transcribed the audio data verbatim and translated the transcriptions into English. After that, the researcher checked the translations and ensured that the words of the participants were not changed and the meaning was not lost in the translation. Field notes were also transcribed.

### ***5.7.2 Data Analysis***

Yin (2016, p184-189) highlighted the following five phases of qualitative data analysis:

- The compiling phase entails compiling all the field notes in functional order.

- The disassembling phase involves assigning new labels and codes into fragments or pieces. The researcher can repeat this phase; Yin (2016, p184) described it as a trial and error process since it aims to refine the labels or codes. It is also used to recognise fragmented pieces of data and group them into different groups.
- The reassembling phase concerns the rearrangement and recombination facilitated by graphically depicting data and arraying fragmented data pieces in tables or lists.
- The interpretation phase aims to recompile the database and produce a fresh perspective of the study. This phase focuses on using the reassembled material to create a new narrative.
- The concluding phase entails drawing conclusions from the coded or labelled data set. The interpretation phase informs this phase and stems from undertaking the mentioned phases of qualitative data analysis.

Data analysis is an ongoing process that requires the researcher to revisit the original set of data, the literature, and the theories in a circular, ongoing, hermeneutic process of meaning-making. In this process, inductive and deductive reasoning are used. Inductive and deductive coding provides the researcher with new information that might stem from data collection and existing literature and theories. Deductive coding is having pre-set and pre-defined codes formed before the researcher starts the data coding process. Deductive reasoning examines data using a priori codes (codes already existing/ developed from theoretical constructs, information from the literature review, and actual research questions) (Reichertz, 2014).

The number of codes with deductive coding is limited since they come from theoretical concepts and reviewed literature. Therefore, In this case, the researcher could establish codes relevant to the reviewed literature. Academic investigations are driven by theoretical frameworks that can be converted to coding (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). I reviewed data from the theoretical lenses employed in the study and information in the literature reviewed and identified key constructs from the theoretical lenses used in the design of this study,

namely phenomenology, The Social Construction of Reality, Gender Theory, and the Afrocentric Perspective were distilled into guidelines for a priori codes/issues for data analysis.

Inductive reasoning encompasses instances where insights are led from the data. Inductive reasoning allows for the emergence of new or unexpected insights from the data themselves and is subsequently labelled and coded. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) explained that qualitative researchers are known for formulating codes that stem directly from the collected data. Researchers often use phrases that participants used directly rather than using a more 'theoretical' vocabulary. By doing this, the researcher stays closer to the data and gives a clear picture of what happened in the field.

By working systematically with data, the researcher can provide a credible interpretation of the collected data. It also enables the researcher to create several codes that capture the complexities and diversity of data. Using line-by-line coding, the researcher can depict precisely what happened. This is the approach I to analyse data.

Qualitative researchers must interpret and analyse spoken words and various text types, including transcriptions of spoken words and field notes. Interpretation and analysis of data yield different insights, from a direct translation of a text to a deeper reading of a text to the elaboration of meanings of a text, all of which intend to truthfully represent the original story while adding texture by contextualising the narratives in social theory.

Analysing the content of a story enables the researcher to determine the moments that the narrator identifies as noteworthy and meaningful. This allows the researcher to develop themes across stories and cultures describing similar life events. Also, researchers may discover themes that may be absent in other stories, confirming their uniqueness to a single narrator or culture. The narrative analysis goes deeper into uncovering the spoken word's causes, explanations, and effects. This study determined themes by the study questions, aim, objectives, theoretical lenses, literature review, and other themes stemming from participant

engagement (Maree, 2016: p. 93). The researcher used the semi-structured interview schedule to identify and investigate emerging insights and patterns of inquiry related to a phenomenon.

Data analysis was conducted in three different stages. The first phase entailed data immersion (Green, Willis, Hughes, Small, Welch, Gibbs, Daly, 2007), involving the researcher familiarising herself with the data. Transcribed data and translation were crucial in familiarisation with the data and helped the researcher to engage deeply with the data. I often revisited the audio recordings, field notes, and data transcripts.

The second phase entailed coding: Developing, testing, and applying categories of meaning. During this process data, I examined participants' statements for meaning and then allocated a label that captured this meaning. Meaning labels thus gather data into meaningful analytical units (Flick, 2018). Initial codes are then examined for links and relationships; where these exist, codes are grouped into broader subcategories and categories. Aspects of narrative analysis were applied, such as links in time and participants' explanations of causality in the sequencing of events (Flick, 2018).

The third phase entailed grouping codes and categories into themes and patterns. Wager et al. (2012: p. 231) stated that thematic analysis clearly explains how various participants experience a phenomenon. Thematic analysis assisted the researcher in identifying similarities and differences in terms of participants' views and experiences of a phenomenon. I drew thematic categories from the patterns identified in the data collection instruments and common themes from participants' responses. The researcher also applied an interpretative phenomenological analysis as a philosophical grounding to understand and interpret qualitative data; it provided ways of making meaning of units of data and understanding the data as a whole (Maree, 2016: p. 111). The interpretative phenomenological analysis focuses on describing meaning hidden in the literal meaning of a text. Thus, it assisted me in gaining insight into the bigger picture regarding the phenomenon under study.

As noted earlier, language is central to constructing reality and identity. The researcher considered how participants used language to describe their realities. This entailed identifying recurring terms, names, phrases they use, and metaphors and analogies in their narratives. The researcher focused on participants' speech patterns and cultural phrases and ideas; these enabled her to identify power relations and the construction of dominant social norms and patterns.

### ***5.8 Quality of data***

Qualitative research strives to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena. It acknowledges the multiple realities of people and different insights from different and similar worldviews. Qualitative researchers refrain from engaging with exact and quantifiable findings but rather focus on describing and interpreting evolving human realities. Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the study's findings are trustworthy.

Several techniques were used to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of data and findings, including triangulation of data collection methods, piloting of instruments, and establishing and adhering to sound ethical practices. The researcher disseminated a preliminary report of analysed findings to the participants of the study (and, in the case of Lekgotla meetings, to the community leader who spearheaded the meetings) for their comments and criticisms and mainly to ensure that the information captured during data collection correlated with the information they provided.

### ***5.9 Ethical considerations***

The researcher obtained formal ethical clearance from the University of the Free State's Ethics Committee (Ethics number: UFS-HSD2019/2096, issued on 14 February 2020 – see Appendix A, p. 352). After attaining ethical approval, the researcher appointed a male research assistant. He signed a contract stipulating the terms and conditions of employment (see Appendix B, p.

352), including binding ethical arrangements requiring him to adhere to ethical principles. Appointing a male research assistant symbolised the researcher's recognition and acknowledgement of the gender difference between the researcher and male participants. It also assisted the researcher in adhering to the traditional customs of Lekgotla gatherings. Appointing a male research assistant allowed male participants to narrate their stories and share their perceptions more comfortably and hopefully authentically.

The appropriate ethical principles (i.e., informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation) were adhered to (see Appendix C, p. 357). The researcher used snowball sampling as a method; participants recruited other potential participants. This had ethical implications for informed consent and confidentiality. To uphold ethical principles during snowball sampling, the researcher provided all participants willing to recruit others with a document to guide recruitment; it contained essential information about the research, its purpose, and what participation entails, and provided contact details for follow-up questions or concerns about the study.

The researcher obtained participants' consent to make use of an audio-recording device. Data was stored on a password-protected computer. Participants used pseudonyms during the recording. The researcher also sought permission for the gatekeepers' to lead the Lekgotla gathering/s. It should be noted that gatekeepers are sometimes unwilling to sign formal consent to assist and/or participate. In these cases, they were given the option of recording their spoken consent. In this study, gatekeepers agreed to sign the consent form (see Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms and Gatekeeper Consent Forms).

No payment was given to participants for their participation. However, the researcher gave participants who participated in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion a R200 grocery store voucher as a gesture of appreciation. Also, refreshments were served after the

focus group discussions and Lekgotla gatherings. The researcher used her research funding to pay for the refreshments.

During the interviews and discussions, participants reflected on their lived experiences of manhood and fatherhood. Some participants recalled hurtful or traumatic events they had encountered. The researcher informed such participants that they could seek debriefing via the counselling psychologist, Mr Chweenemang, an independent registered counselling psychologist. He provided a maximum of three debriefing counselling sessions for individual participants. It was the responsibility of the researcher to pay for those debriefing session/s. Participants were informed that debriefing sessions were voluntary. Mr Chweenemang's contact details appeared on all the informed-consent forms so that participants could contact him directly.

### ***5.10 Summary of the Chapter***

This chapter outlined all the details of how data were collected and analysed, with whom, where, and in what languages. The narrative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, how they made sense of their experiences and the meaning attached to their experiences. The chapter demonstrated how I applied indigenous research methods in the study. Indigenous research methods were used in conjunction with interpretivist and constructivist approaches. The chapter highlighted overlaps and differences between indigenous and conventional Western research methods. I approached data collection from the notion of recognising participants as co-constructors of knowledge with the researcher and the social environment's role in constructing knowledge. The chapter also outlined how the researcher approached the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: AN ORIENTATION TO CHAPTERS 6, 7 & 8

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Main findings are discussed in three chapters, in line with key foci of the analyses.

**Chapter Six: Being a Person** explores data in the light of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, *umtu ngumuntu ngabantu*, and the contribution of African scholars (i.e., Gyekye, Matolino, Menketi, Molefi Motsamai, Nwoye and Temples) to unpack what constitutes an African person. These scholars present an African person with a sound moral and ethical compass. The emphasis is placed on communitarian living taking precedence over the individualistic ways of being. They also outline the role of African culture and tradition in creating a personhood. The status of human personhood is bestowed upon individuals by others based on the level at which one adheres to social norms; by not adhering to social standards, one can fail to attain the status.

The concept of *holism* in the African context describes the makeup of a human being as comprising the soul, spirit, and body. The essence of African human personhood goes beyond recognising physical attributes. African human personhood emphasises knowing one's descendants and/or ancestry. This chapter examines how participants adhere to and (re)negotiate the norms and expectations relating to human personhood. It also explores how participants reflected on their experiences of living communitarian lives, including their accounts of the practice of Ubuntu in their families and communities.

**Chapter Seven: Being a Man** explores data in the light of scholars in Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity, and more specifically, the third-wave feminist movement. The reviewed literature (see Chapter Four, p. 40- 45) described gender as fluid and evolving in different contexts. Manhood is defined in plurality and understood to exist within various contexts guided by socially constructed norms, roles, and expectations subscribed by society. From early life stages, men internalise manhood attributes by observing how older men interact and

engage with other men, women, and children. Alfred Schütz referred to the former and current experiences as experiences that stem from an individual's life experience, or as he calls it, their “stock of knowledge”, which informs an individual's perceptions and understandings of situations presented in life (see Chapter Two, p. 4). Therefore, their individual experiences influence how men perceive and interpret their lifeworld. This individual experience is in interaction with social institutions, such as family and educational institutions, which also impart knowledge and understanding of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and actions.

Men are social actors responsible for performing according to socially desirable norms, behaviour, and actions. On the one hand, most men are constantly challenged to adhere to the traditional ideas and practices of manhood. On the other hand, some men aspire to go against the traditional concepts of manhood and are often viewed as less manly. There is a constant battle between upholding traditional norms and adapting to the liberal ideas of manhood and what manhood entails. This chapter highlights the lived experience of participants regarding manhood. Participants use memory to remember men who influenced and shaped participants' understanding and practices of masculinity. Participants unpack lessons they learned through interaction with others relating to manhood.

**Chapter Eight: Being a Father** explores data in the light African fatherhood, which is often associated with the absence of the biological father – caused by various reasons such as migrant labour, teenage fatherhood, not adhering to the traditional customs of impregnating a young woman out of wedlock, and not providing financial resources (see Chapter Four, pp 85). The absence of biological fathers is one factor that threatens the family's ability to effectively play the role of socialisation, nurturing, and protection. The absence of biological fathers clouds the efforts of other men in the family and communities, who also work towards ensuring children's well-being. It is essential to highlight the communitarian process in shaping the knowledge and understanding of being a father.

Like manhood, fatherhood notions are internalised throughout different life stages by observing how others conduct themselves and their relationship with others. Fathers' sociological, environmental, and personality attributes are central in predicting parenting behaviour. This chapter focuses on participants' experiences and practices of fatherhood. The chapter also gives attention to the role of social fathers in shaping participants' understanding of fatherhood.

### *6.1 Introduction*

According to Cornell and Van Marle (2015), Ubuntu encompasses ontological, epistemological, and ethical value systems. Understanding the archaeology of Ubuntu in the African context requires a broader outline of these three lenses (see Chapters Three, Four, and Five). It also requires an in-depth understanding of the meaning people have attached to the concept of Ubuntu and, subsequently, their practice of Ubuntu on a daily basis; thus, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of ongoing influences on how people (re)construct Ubuntu.

Furthermore, the African philosophy of Ubuntu focuses on how people associate and engage in ethical relations within the world they are born into. Facilitating successful ethical connections requires one to engage in the process of reciprocity or mutual obligation, whereby people are obliged to ensure the wellness of others, and it becomes a mutual and reciprocal engagement. Often, people feel obligated to support each other in their respective paths to becoming unique or singular persons (Cornell & van Marle, 2015).

The core values of Ubuntu are respect, compassion, care, sharing, compassion and humanness. Ubuntu is rooted in the premise that *umtu-ngu mtu-ngabantu*, which translates to a person being dependent on others to be a person. Ubuntu is presented as that which makes a person to be a person. In this study, the principles of Ubuntu are used to explore and understand what qualifies a man to be a man and father outside the physiological anatomy assigned at birth. As indicated by various scholars in Chapter Three (p. 19), Ubuntu is also a journey of becoming an ethical human being. Ubuntu affirms and unpacks the cosmology of being an African person (Mkhize, 2004).

This study also focuses on what qualifies a man as a morally sound man and father. This process is often realised through interaction with others. It is also demonstrated through compassion,

care, solidarity, respect, and interdependence. African human personhood is embedded in the notion and action of recognising the involvement and efforts in building human society and adhering to what is perceived to be good for the collective. It aims to restore human dignity, respect, and positive interactions among all. It also strives to establish a community of persons without boundaries, a community that seeks to secure the well-being of others. These views resonate well with the contribution of Alfred Schütz, as he thoroughly explained the concepts of stock of knowledge, human consciousness, and reciprocity (see Chapter Two, p. .26). Importantly, Ubuntu is also a spiritual foundation of life itself.

Chapter Three (p. 44) discusses what constitutes an African human personhood. The chapter provided a detailed discussion of the ontological and normative views of African human personhood rooted in the principles of Ubuntu. According to Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013), the ideal-typical attributes of an African human person, his/her social standing, tradition, responsibility, attitude, and behaviour, are used to instil what is perceived as missing traits of modern African identity. People are born as human beings; however, personhood status is not associated with all human beings. The aim is to locate the distinctive essence of African human personhood, which makes an African person distinct from a Western person. Personhood advocates recognising the communitarian relationship that enhances the potential for human growth and development and strives toward communitarian living and well-being. Feminist scholars (see Chapter Three, p. 22) explored gender-related matters in the context of the interaction and relations between men and women.

In this chapter, I focus on participants' understanding and experiences of communal existence and their relationship with their community members. The chapter also reflects on participants' communitarian living and the practice of Ubuntu in their families and communities, highlighting the traditional customs and spiritual support that aim to qualify the status of manhood.

## *6.2 Communitarian living, expectations and experiences*

Social connectedness is the core foundation of communitarian living. Communitarian living plays a vital role in understanding the meaning that people attach to and derive from their interactions. Attaining the status of personhood is a process of ongoing, reflexive, and introspective endeavour that aims for a unified communitarian way of being (Musana, 2018). This often presents a challenge regarding the representation of Africans; it projects African life and tradition as static and rigid, bound by an unchanging set of social norms and values. On the one hand, the notion of African human personhood promotes the view of Africans as being selfless and community-orientated to the extent that communitarian well-being takes precedence over individualistic aspirations, which is not entirely the case. On the other hand, this notion represents Africans as people who are not evolving and leading a hegemonic lifestyle. According to McIntosh (2018) and Musana (2018), explaining or describing the meaning of being human is often difficult since various views (biological, anthropological, sociological, and psychological) aim to define the essence of being African.

Wiredu (2004) provides ontological and normative perspectives of personhood. On the one hand, the ontological perspective highlights the idea of being human or the nature of being human; human nature entails material and spiritual attributes. On the other hand, the normative perspective reflects on the performance of personhood. The normative view of personhood focuses on excellence and virtue, the quality of the moral status an individual attains consistently through moral and ethical efforts (Motsamai, 2020).

In this section, I explore the ontological and normative perspectives of personhood, highlighting participants' views regarding the social expectations of and experiences with members of their communities. The researcher focuses on the social actions and interactions of participants with their families and communities, including the traditional rituals and rights of passages that contribute to the makeup of human personhood. The social acts of people

that participants identified as having demonstrated the normative view of personhood are also explored.

### ***6.2.1 Communitarian living experiences and expectations***

The African philosophy of Ubuntu is rooted and guided by ethical and moral values in African communities. According to Held (2005), the act of caregiving is practised by a person who is not only motivated to look after others but also who feels morally obligated to meet the needs of others for whom they take responsibility. Letseka (2012) described Ubuntu as humanness, personhood, and morality. Ubuntu, therefore, promotes the notion of morality. Individuals initiated into Ubuntu's moral compass are more likely to treat others with justice, respect, and fairness (ibid). It is, therefore, based on the customs of humanity.

For Chisale (2018), Ubuntu is an unbroken cycle of interpersonal life networks where people are harmonised. In this cycle, there are interdependent and interconnected ethical relations. Ubuntu encourages community people to establish good relations with uQamata, the God of their forefathers, ancestors, fellow men, nature, and the universe. The interdependence of people on each other promotes the idea of harmonious communitarian existence. Furthermore, Ubuntu also acknowledges the desire for holistic well-being and embraces the value of the African worldview of caring, humanness, sharing, respect, and compassion.

One of the participants, \*Jabu<sup>3</sup>, a 77-year-old man who is a pensioner, highlighted the advantages and the disadvantages of communitarian living:

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<sup>3</sup> As noted in the Methodology chapter, all participants' identities were protected by the use of pseudonyms.

*Uhm... the community expects a lot of things from a man. My neighbours are still young; in that street I am like the only old person. Sometimes you find that other women do not have husbands anymore, therefore, they need assistance from a man. Sometimes, when there is a funeral in the community, they would come to me as an elder in the church to assist with the burial of their family member, not understanding that I have to get permission from the church to assist them. When there is a problem somewhere, women in the community will ask a certain man in the community to be called to come and solve the problem, like if she wants to get married, but her family is not around; it is far. So, you come as a man and a father, sit down and discuss lobola and a way forward.*

According to Wiredu (2009), a person who has mastered the moral virtue of personhood is a morally sound adult. Wiredu (2009) maintains that the person must be an adult because he/she has lived long enough to develop his/her moral and ethical capabilities. Possessing distinctive moral capabilities is crucial for moral perfection; thus, a person must have lived long enough to maintain morally sound traits. From the above extract, Jabu is the eldest person in his community, and members of the community view him as a morally sound adult. Community members are also drawn to Jabu's stock of knowledge as they view him as an elder with better knowledge and understanding of crucial social matters, subsequently requiring his assistance related to traditional customs and rituals.

In his response regarding the significance of communal relations and living, Jabu replied:

*You know, if you do not have problems with anyone, even the community members do not care much about you. You are the one that causes trouble for yourself. But if you are person with no trouble and just living well with the people, all goes well. But if you are a person who just passes people by and does not greet, or when there is a ceremony, you do not attend, yet you expect people to come to your place when you have ceremony, they will not come. Even your family will see, even if it comes from far, it will*

*see that you do not live well with the people. The first thing, even if you have your family who stay in the nearby townships, when you die, your neighbour is the first. When your family members come, they will find everything at the neighbour's.*

The above extract illustrates the principle of Ubuntu, *umtu ngumuntu ngabantu*. It demonstrates the importance of living in harmony with others and maintaining good relations with other people to ensure communitarian well-being. The extract also highlights the role of community members, in some instances, as a solid support structure in different and difficult situations that life may present. It emphasises how Jabu makes sense of his interactions with his community, experiences of collective existence, and the meaning drawn through interactions.

As an elder in his community, Jabu reflects on the experiences of modern-day communitarian living:

*This era is not the same as the one before. Before, respect was there, it was a lot. Yes, we, apartheid was a terrible political era, especially for Black people. If you saw the police and they stopped you to ask what is going on, and they say you should come with them to the station, you did so. Today, being man in the community, you have to protect your family and the community. We are experience criminal acts - sometimes you find people breaking into houses of others to steal things people have in their homes.*

*There is no respect for others and authorities. People insult the police; they fight them, the same people that protect them. Those are other people's children, too. They protect the community, so we have to respect them. But the government has taken their rights. They also don't want to lose their job. If you call them and tell them that there is a fight and someone died, they will not come at that time. When they get there, they fall into*

*sin because you fight them, and when they fight back, it will be like, "A certain police harassed me", and now that poor police is going to get into trouble.*

Contrary to the views of most Black South Africans regarding the previous political dispensation (see Chapter Four, p. 45), Jabu provides a different perspective of social order in this era. This is a somewhat controversial view since the previous political dispensation was oppressive and domineering to people of colour in South Africa. More than 5,500 cases of police criminal offences are reported every year. Of these numbers, according to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) Annual Report Statistics, more than 3,500 cases of torture and assault (police brutality) were reported (Safer Spaces. 2024). Jabu's views reflect a double-edged sword. On the one hand, he highlights the latent functionality of the apartheid regime whereby there was social order and unity among people of colour, particularly Black people. People had respect for one another, and there was respect for various institutional authorities. In his view, this encouraged social cohesion and order. On the other hand, he remembers the injustice and dysfunctionality of the administration relating to people of colour, where collective gatherings were perceived to threaten social order. Jabu understands social order in the context of mutual respect and discipline among community members, which aligns with the ethic of collective existence. In this context, Jabu deems respect for one another as crucial in maintaining harmony and healthy communal relationships. In this context, respect and recognition of another person as a human being are contextualised as the core values of Ubuntu.

According to Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013), Ubuntu has been an object of political interest in the struggle to liberate the oppressed. Ubuntu is rooted in preserving and restoring Africans' human identity and dignity. Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013) added that Ubuntu is characterised by the notion of *return*, where politicians, scholars, and ordinary people strive to identify past values to bring about necessary societal changes. The aim is to return to the post-colonial era, which is believed to have been characterised by social order. The notion of return

also comprises the desire to ignite the dignity, culture, traditions, resources, and freedom colonisers took away from Africans. To some, the idea of the return is similar to the notion of African renaissance since the emphasis is on restoring the lost African identity. Imagining pre-colonial life and time is challenging for others since their understanding of the social world and order is constructed in the colonial framework. Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013) also argue that the notion of returning to the original is not new or successful since it is often linked to the idea of African socialism. For this study, the emphasis was not on the political aspirations of Ubuntu, though they played a role in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. Chapter Four (p. 77) outlined the socio-political location of Black masculinities and fatherhood in South Africa. Instead, this study focused on the sociological inclination of the concept of Ubuntu and the interpretation and practices of Ubuntu in one's everyday life.

As he reflected on his experiences of being a man in his community, \*Athandwa, a 39-year-old self-employed man, shared sentiments similar to Jabu's regarding community members placing demands on men in the community:

*Yah, community neighbours sometimes... sometimes they have expectations with good intentions, and sometimes with bad intentions. It is in two ways, but I think majority... you are expected to... Firstly, they want to feel that you are a member of the community, a member of the community. You are a neighbour who they can rely on. That you can be able to play a father figure to the kids in their absence. You will assist; they can come to you. Neighbours are expecting that you should understand when they have needs, when they have concerns, you are there, you can talk to them, they can talk to you. The other side is when they can... they have needs, sometimes they don't have the needs, but they expect you to be a good guy who is always understanding. They don't expect you to come and borrow R5. They want you to get used ... it must be your second nature that you need to know... They don't expect you to ask for R5, but you be the ones that gives it. So, it is things like that which I think is the negative side of the neighbours in the*

*community. But they expect you to be part of the community. They don't expect you to isolate yourself and think you are better. They expect you to be part of the community and understand the challenges of the community. Be the neighbour who is always greeting... those are the basic things that they like. They... it can destroy... neighbours can even kill each other because one didn't greet the other. Everything starts from there; the hate and... others allow jealousy to dominate their space. People who don't look at the better things that happen in someone's life as they can go to a cross-table and talk to you and probably get something that will better their situation. You have neighbours that look at others' success, change, development or challenges in a positive way, and then you have... it is just complicated.*

Athandwa highlighted the advantages and challenges of collective existence. In his view, community members expect him to be integrated into the community, as indicated by his references to their expectations of him being blended into the communal ways of being by adhering to their social norms. Athandwa also emphasises the reciprocal expectations of community members. Alfred Schütz positioned reciprocal actions as a collective effort and understanding of the desirable and undesirable traits in human interaction (see Chapter Two p. 26).

In his response regarding community reaction when the demands are not met and the significance of communal relations and living, Athandwa replied:

*Yes, they treat you bad. They do. They... let us say you will decide that from now, you are not going to have people take advantage of you, and you draw a line. They don't take that positively. Sometimes you are tired of being taken advantage of, like, why are you the only one that must always give money over the fence. Sometimes you draw the line and say no, and they don't take it well. That is when conflicts and hate start. They say you think you are better and stuff like that. The hate and the witchcraft. The birth of*

*witchcraft starts there. Yah. But I never have problems with my neighbours because neighbours are a part of your circle; you have to get along, you have to understand, you have to respect those who have boundaries. If others prefer a “hello, how are you” and don’t provide a space for conversation, you have to understand such things.*

Athandwa refers to his relationship with community members as collegial and respectful. He views himself as part of the community; therefore, he tries to adhere to the typical conduct of the community. Athandwa also presents the challenges of not being fully integrated into the community. In this context, his referral to witchcraft and hate is perceived to go against the aspiration of social cohesion and harmony. In most African contexts, witchcraft is a superstitious belief that stems from the feeling of hatred, and it is often associated with dark spirits. Personhood views the existence of a human being comprising the soul, spirit, and body (see Chapter Three, p. 51). Athandwa views some members of the community as not having bad wishes for their neighbours, referring to having a ‘dark’ spirit’. This is often realised in the actions of an individual concerning their behaviour and interactions with others. In this context, a witch is perceived as pursuing self-enrichment individualistic interest over collective interest and enrichment. Being classified as a witch by fellow community members is a subjective notion that, to some degree, indicates that a person has failed at attaining personhood status by not adhering to the collective norms, values and attitudes. It also suggests that this individual is seen as someone who does not possess a sound moral and ethical compass.

\*Mr X, a 38-year-old self-employed man, reflected on his experiences and interaction with his community:

*Eh... you see that we (group of men and myself) were talking about the other day here, about the role of a man in a society; the role of a man in a community. We previously said that if you are a father figure, you must have the impact you make on the*

*community for the people you live with. So, now it is done in two ways: there are other people who have a wrongful impact on our community; there are few people who impact the community positively. So, as I'm answering your question of what does the community expect from me, they expect me to be their protector. Like, even if I appear there, everybody will say: "I a father figure". But there are men who community members do not trust around their children; in most cases, their behaviour is often seen as problematic, or they might have misbehaved in communities (these are men who do not adhere to social norms and often engage in delinquent acts).*

*It is important for a man to be respected by others, and refrain from being harmful to others. There is a huge difference between being a man who behaves like a boy and a matured man. Being a man includes being a father figure and role model in your community: a man must lead by example. The community you live in, and other communities, everywhere you go, the people who live with you must know that "if we have problems, we can approach you as a man or father". In the community, do things that you know will benefit the people you live with, rightfully so. He had the right influence on them. So, that's what they're expecting from me too. I give them what they expect from me.*

In the above extract, the participant highlighted the ideal-typical and normative expectations of being a man in the community, referring to the expectation of men being protectors. This view resonates well with Alfred Schütz description of typification (see Chapter Two p. 26); the socially acceptable masculine traits include being a good role model, a father figure and a protector. The participants used the concepts of manhood and fatherhood interchangeably. Contrary to the notion that a morally sound adult has gained personhood status, the participants used the two concepts to refer to one's attitude, behaviour, and actions concerning his/her interaction with others. From Mr \*X's view, age is not a determining factor

for one to reach the status of personhood; the determining factors are being able to take responsibility and an individual's moral stands. Also, in his opinion, there is a clear distinction between a man and a father. The locals view a man who behaves childishly as being less manly. In contrast, a father is described as a morally sound man who has grown into becoming umtu, irrespective of age. These two concepts' contradicting perceptions and understanding are explored in Chapter Seven (p. 195) and Chapter Eight (p. 264 ).

For Mr X, community members are hostile when their expectations are not being met. He stated as follows:

*Community is very quick to write off, to reject, criticise and destroy a person even further. That's what I realised when it comes to the reaction given to people who are seen as not conforming to what they want. Instead of finding out why a person is what he is, they reject him, hate him, and as a result, it makes him worse. So, he will go to people like him. So, when they're all together, it's like they're getting along....they are all outcasts and will start being problematic in the community. He then keeps bad company because he is rejected by his community; they write him off. And others takes the information they hear from others about a certain individual and react based on it without knowing the person. I believe community members, particularly women, at times, destroy men because of their perceptions of what a man should do in the community or how he should be. I am also aware that some men (young and old) are problematic in our communities; they engage in bad activities like smoking drugs, break-ins to people's places and stealing from the community. Some of these guys steal from their families just to buy drugs; they steal anything that they can sell. Substance addiction in our townships and community members are not interested to find out what causes an individual to use substances. They reject the person altogether once they realise that you are an addict.*

The participant reflected that men who do not adhere to social norms find a place of belonging with other outcast men. He alluded to the community's lack of interest in establishing good relations with individuals once a man deviated from the collective norms and expectations. The participant highlighted that an individual is judged based on the perceptions of others. This contradicts the ethic of Ubuntu, namely caring for one another and embracing humanity. Even though a man might be rejected by his community, he remains part of the collective since he exists within the context of the collective. He might be viewed as having failed to attain the status of personhood by not meeting standard norms and expectations. However, it does not imply that he is no longer part of the collective. Mr X added that the unintended consequences of perceiving such men as less manly without taking the initiative to find out the possible reasons for them not being able to meet expectations. In his view, women are quick to ostracise a man who does not meet their expectations or conform to social norms. Mr X highlighted that some men commit social ills in communities; however, he believes that community members need to find the root cause of problematic behaviour instead of rejecting a person.

When talking about her views of communitarian living and expectations, \*Sebatso, a 49-year-old unemployed woman, stated that most of her community's households are female-headed. Thus, most women in her community are single mothers. She stated:

*Mostly in my community, there are a lot of women, single mothers, than men and fathers. Now, they rely on men from within the community with regards to protection and them being an example to their children for a lot of things, mostly. "You can be like Mr. So and So", you see? So, our community view men in that sense. Because at least this is a community, one can go to any man and say, "I have a problem with my child, this and that." Even fathers that cannot reprimand their children are able to refer to other men who are fathers and say, "Please, help me with my children." For instance, there is a community group, an only-men group, where they discuss men-related*

*matters and how they patrol around and check crime around the area. So, most of the thing about men here, the community relies on them. Single mothers and children (even some men) see my husband as a father figure; they prefer confiding in him than other men because he is patient with children and he always take time to hear what they have to say, at times he can reprimand the children, children in our community listen to him when he speaks, and he is open to hearing what others have to say rather than ignoring the feelings of others. So, mostly, the children here prefer talking to him. He is a father to every child in our community.*

Sebatatso confirms the African proverb: It takes a village to raise a child. Chapter Four (p. 44) highlighted that most children grow up without fathers. Participants' perceptions, understanding and practices of fatherhood are outlined in Chapter Eight (p. 264). Sebatatso also mentioned the importance of the father figure, particularly social fathers, in raising children. Sebatatso's views highlighted the collective effort of parenting. She also indicates the collaborative effort of men in her community to ensure the safety of community members.

As she reflects on the community's reaction when expectations are unmet, Sebatatso perceives the community as having a negative attitude towards men who do not adhere to social norms and attitudes. She emphasises her feelings relating to the community's reaction by stating as follows:

*I feel bad because, at times, people in the community feel like men are failing them. Yoh, the community get mad; they see them as uncaring and irresponsible men. They really do get mad, to be honest. I think the community really expect a lot from men; some of these men have their families to look after.*

From the above extract, it is evident that adhering to social norms is valuable to community members. It also reflects the pressure of normative expectations on men. Sebatatso's views

resonate well with the twin obligation towards men's family and community, as stated by Nelson Mandela (see Chapter Three, p. 66).

When reflecting on communitarian living, experiences and expectations, Participant #1, during the focus group discussion (FGD1), responded as follows:

*On the issue of a man, a man has always been expected to lead; a lot of things are expected from a man. So, any problem that comes up in the community, men are expected to resolve it and be responsible for it because a woman is not equal to a man when it comes to the physical strength or power. It is difficult to lead our communities; there are a lot of challenges with crime and behaviour of youngsters in our communities – the use of alcohol and substances. Young people behave badly in front of adults, and some parents do not want their children to be reprimanded. There is no respect from the young and old; everyone is the same, and that is not how things should be. It becomes difficult to lead. People get angry when their behaviour is reprimanded.*

From the above extract, the participant equates being a man in a community to leading and being responsible and encouraging others to be responsible. This stems from the socially assigned gendered roles and responsibilities. On the one hand, leading and being responsible for assisting others and encouraging them in the 'right' ways is an honour. On the other hand, it seems like a burden on masculine performance; it can be difficult for individual men to step off the social stage of acting as though they are interested in leading or taking responsibility for others. Though patriarchal notions of gender are socially frowned upon sometimes, and by some individuals, those notions influence people's views and understanding of femininity and masculinity to some extent. The participant describes men as having the power and physical ability to do things women cannot do. To some degree, this comment is informed by people's stock of knowledge in relation to their understanding of the different masculine and feminine

characteristics (refer to Chapter Two, p. 30). Various social institutions instilled this knowledge in people from a tender age and through different life phases. It remains with them until realities in their everyday life, as well as their emotions and understandings, change, bringing about an evolution in their stock of knowledge. Even when people's stock of knowledge has changed, traces can remain of their early, old truths.

Musana (2018) and Mfecane (2018) argue that African society's context and understanding of gender are rooted in patriarchal notions whereby men are the main actors in leadership, protection, and managers of social order. Men are expected to be proactive in ensuring social cohesion and that those who dwell in their surroundings are well protected and cared for. Mfecane (2018) adds that in most societies, masculinity exists as social acts done by men in their communities to be recognised as real men. Men are viewed as guardians of their respective communities, though this can present challenges on how the power that comes with these responsibilities is carried out. In the normative sense, men are expected to defend members of their communities who are dependent and vulnerable. Those with financial power are expected to display the capacity to handle and accomplish complex social tasks (Musana, 2018). Also, most African societies assign roles according to gender. This is not to promote social stratification but to encourage complementary roles to ensure balanced social stability (ibid). Assigning roles to a particular gender also enables collective cohesion, which conflicts between genders should not disrupt.

An elder in the community, Participant #6, speaks of the lack of social cohesion in his modern-day community. During FGD2, he explains as follows:

*As a man and father, it is difficult to involve yourself in what is happening around your community. We are expected have a say in what is happening in our community, but it is challenging. Based on my observation, things are no longer the same. It is like we lost our culture of respect. We are living the life of 'mind your own business'. You are unable to reprimand somebody's child in your neighbourhood because he/she is not your child.*

*But before, we said that a child is raised by the community. If there is a problem next door, it is hard to go and knock and ask what is happening. As I said that we live the life of 'mind your own business'. Unless the person is the one that runs into your yard. So, as life changes and evolves, I see people refusing to accept that it has changed and act like they are still living that old life. For example, how many deaths are there in families while we are still here? Now I don't want to involve myself into issues by getting into a certain yard. I don't want to be a witness. Things are bad now. Now, if you live with your children, tell them to behave themselves and not live the kind of life that is lived. That is how life is lived right now. You are not supposed to involve yourself.*

From the above extract, the participant reflects on communal living and indicates that the community has evolved and ways of being have changed. In his view, modern society is characterised by individualistic rather than collective interests; thus, he used the phrase 'minding my own business'. Informed by his observation and experiences, Participant #6 identifies the lack of respect for others in the community as one aspect that jeopardises social cohesion and fruitful collective interactions. Contrary to the functional characteristics of communitarian living (care, compassion and solidarity, Participant #6 highlighted the challenges of communitarian living by emphasising the lack of interest and support among community members. In his view, the moral values and norms of communities have changed to the point that individual community members prescribe norms that serve their individual interests. Participant#6 added that people no longer conform to social norms and values; the principles of Ubuntu no longer guide them.

As discussed in Chapter Two (p. 36), people use language to make sense of the nature and context of their social interactions. Language consists of elements of communication actions such as greeting, stating, promising, commanding, and judging. It allows an individual to develop a self-living world and be recognised as being an authentic self. Participants listened to the language used to gauge someone's social conduct and manners, emphasising the issue of respect as demonstrated via speech. To most participants, modern society lacks respect.

There is a deconstruction of traditional attributes and values, like respect, dignity, compassion, tolerance and integrity, which removes people from the essence of their humanity. It is the responsibility of the family and community to instil these values since they are considered to reflect the type of family and community where an individual has been properly socialised. These values should not be missing in an African person, even in the midst of rapid social changes, in the context of communitarian living.

Socially constructed gender roles have been critiqued by the feminist movement for downplaying the central role of power in organising features of gender relations. The first- and second-wave feminist scholars paid less attention to the role of social location and traditional contexts shaping individual women's perceptions and understanding regarding interaction and relations between genders. Participants highlighted what constituted a man's role and responsibility in their respective communities. On the one hand, participants described their role in the normative sense of what is expected of a man. To some, it is a great honour and privilege to protect their communities and be recognised as men who can meet their communities' needs. On the other hand, it is a tremendous burden placed on individual men in the community to be seen as the ones who must ensure the safety of vulnerable community members and instil order and discipline in their communities. The burden is heavy given that society has evolved, and there are numerous delinquent acts by community members.

Communal existence is central to the life and cosmology of an African person. Therefore, individualism is seen as a distraction to the interdependence of African people as it threatens the nature of being an African person (Musana, 2018). The true nature of African personhood is experienced in the context of communitarian living. Ideologically, human beings possess individualistic, creative, imaginative, and rebellious traits. Therefore, society consists of autonomous individuals, and social structure results from these individuals' conscious decisions and actions (Mfecane, 2018). Societal structure is a framework within which action takes place; it does not determine how people should conduct themselves since human beings can accept or reject the social structure based on the meaning they have attached to it. This view

resonates well with Alfred Schütz's description of typification (see Chapter Two, p. 27). The data reveals tension between the ideals of traditional African communitarianism and the inclination of humans, including modern Africans, to individualism.

### **6.2.2 Family role and emotional support**

According to Muchanyerei (2020), African tradition has always placed family and close relations with relatives (grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins) at the centre of individual existence. In the African tradition, people who share the same totem and/or clan name are considered close relatives and members of the greater family clan. The crucial role of the family is to uphold, transfer, and protect knowledge relating to the traditional customs and values of the family, tribe and community. This is to instil protective mechanisms against external influences and forces that might threaten the well-being of the family and community. In this regard, extended family members play a fundamental role in supporting one another with finances, food, and housing, as well as emotional and moral support during difficult times. Family plays a significant role in ensuring individuals 'exist' and gain a sense of belonging and identity. Ramollo (2022) states that Ubuntu allows individuals to mitigate challenges they might encounter with the support of their families and communities (see Chapter Three, p. 55). The focus turns to participants' views on the nature of their relationships with members of their families and the expectations and treatment that accompany those expectations. Participants reflected on the support and/or the lack of support that their families provided.

\*Guluka, a 58-year-old self-employed man who has been married for the second time shared the following:

*I have good relations with my family. I was raised by a single mother, and I was fortunate enough that she passed on when I had my own house and family. She moved to my house when we realised that she needed physical assistance to do things and to be looked after. My family played a huge role in shaping and developing me to be the man and father I am. I am in my second marriage, I was married before, and I got divorced.*

*A lot of things went wrong in my first marriage. I had to learn to do things differently in my second marriage. I had to forgive my first wife and remember that she is the mother of my son. She left me with a child, and I had to raise him and make sure that he is comfortable around my second wife. My mother would come visit and assist me with taking care of my son, but for the most part, I was a single parent. She understood the challenges of being a single parent. From this experience, I have learned the importance of cooperation, being supported by family and partnership, making decisions together, between my wife, children and myself.*

When talking about family expectations, Guluka states:

*I grew up under difficult circumstances, my father was quite abusive to my mother and us, his children. Then, men used to beat up their wives and children. My mother used to say 'lepotlapotla le ja pudi', which means do not be too hasty to change your circumstances since you might end up taking a wrong turn. She always wanted me to succeed in life, though she had no financial resources to pay for our education. My mother encouraged me to get married and treat my family and others with kindness. She encouraged me to take time to learn the habits of the woman I decide to marry before I rush into marriage. I think I rushed into marrying my first wife and it ended up in divorce. Now, as a man and a father, I believe my wife expects me to lead our family, be successful in my business so that I am able to take my children to school and save money for their education. I am also expected to be trustworthy and keep my promises, instil discipline in my family and lead a dignified life.*

According to Guluka, his family placed pressure on him that taught him the responsibility of being a man and a father. As he reflected:

*It is a lot of pressure on me, but on the other side, it helps me to focus on doing the right things in life, keeping the right friends, making the right decisions, leading by example and making sure that I work hard to put bread on the table. Well... my mother did not like my first wife; I feel it was unfair to say I should get married, and yet she disliked the*

*person I chose to marry. She did not really trust my second wife, but I had to talk to her. They ended up having an understanding relationship. Well... She lived with us before she passed on. At times, things like this puts a man under pressure because these are two important women in a man's life. You also do not want to be seen as taking sides, but keeping quiet also indicates that you are taking sides.*

*When I am not able to meet their expectations, I have chats with my family and explain my situation. This way, I am able to gain their trust, and they understand why I am not able to give them what they are expecting. It is difficult, but it has worked for me. I have learned patience and being true to myself. I have also learned the importance of communication in a family. I should not assume my wife or children know. I should talk to them.*

*It is tiring at times. I am only human. At times, business does not do that well. Recently, they broke into my property and took some of my work material. I have to start from the start and buy the things that were stolen. On the one hand, I work hard to get myself out of poverty. On the other hand, another person takes you ten steps behind, and you have to start afresh while you have a family dependent on you. It is a sad reality for most men, but I need to lead by example.*

Guluka alludes to all four dimensions (physical, social, emotional, and financial) of Ubuntu that Ramollo identified. Guluka highlighted that his family physically assisted his mother when she was ill to ensure that his mother was well cared for while she was sick. He also highlights his family's financial expectation of him as the provider for his family. He perceives this as a primary expectation of his family. Guluka also emphasises the lack of social cohesion caused by the delinquent acts of others in the community. In his response, Guluka highlighted the emotional burden of these expectations, stating that they are tiring and that he is only human. This indicates that social and family expectations pressure men to head the family and be

responsible for meeting the financial needs of their dependent family members. He further states that he had to ensure his son's well-being after he divorced his first wife.

\*Blessing, a 20-year-old self-employed man, had a 'collegial' relationship with his family. However, their differences led to misunderstanding and conflict. He shares as follows:

*I have learned that family is not necessarily blood-related. Even people who are not blood-related can be family. They might be more understanding of the person you are and be less judgemental. I get along fine with the people I live with, though we have some differences. I was raised by maternal grandparents and lived in an extended family structure with my cousins. My one cousin is very quiet, and he leads his own life. My other cousin is problematic; he's behaviour is problematic. He is addicted to alcohol and substances. Just the other day, community members come looking for him. Apparently, him and his friends got into some mischievous behaviour, and the community seemed angry. We are constantly dealing with such problems. I have learned the importance of behaving well and having good relations with people in the community. Apart from that, I would say my family has taught me the importance of responsibility, loving and caring for those around me. I need to take responsibility for my actions and take good care of those around me. I should not allow people to walk all over me, but at the same time, I should be kind to others and approachable. People should not be scared of me, they should respect me, but they can only respect me if I respect myself and conduct myself in a dignified manner.*

When talking about the expectations of his family, Blessing responded as follows:

*I am always seen as a pillar of the family; this requires me to be a good example to my siblings and resolve problems within the family. People often say I am more matured than my age mates. My family also sees me as a matured person; hence, I am their pillar of strength. I believe my family expect me to guide and motivate my siblings to get educated. At times, I am expected*

*to guide my cousins, even those who are older than me, like the one I have just mentioned (who is always getting into trouble).*

An individual's social relations and moral compass determine the type of relations with his/her community. This entails prioritising and responding to the needs, interests, and welfare of the people in their immediate communities and the broader society. Akudolu (2007) states that African communalism comprises primary virtues such as love, compassion, care, hospitality, solidarity, belongingness, interdependence, interrelatedness, equality, and justice. These virtues set the tone of social interaction and form a solid foundation for an individual's identity. Knowledge of oneself is often discovered through interaction with others, his/her family and community. Through social interaction, an individual becomes conscious of his/her own being.

Talking about his views related to the expectations of his family, Blessing replied:

*A lot is expected from me; being a pillar is a lot of pressure. I feel it is unfair to be expected to take the lead while there are adults in the family. I understand that most of the time, my family would say I am quite matured for my age; the way I do my things and my behaviour are at times seen as being matured, but it also puts a lot of pressure on me. It is being expected to be perfect and excel in everything. I think it is also unfair for my siblings to be compared to me; they have their personal aspirations of how they want to behave or the life they want to lead. Now, they are expected to do things the way I chose to do. My cousin is older than me and I am expected to guide him while he should be the one to guide me. In my view, it puts a lot of pressure on me.*

\* Jabu, a 77-year-old man who is a pensioner, states:

*Well... I have a good relationship with my family. Let me reflect to the family before and after I got married. My parents raised us (my siblings and me) quite well. We did not have much, but my parents tried their best to give us what we needed as children. I had a good relationship with my parents. My mother was a hard worker. She took care of*

*her children and respected her husband and children. I used to think my mother was strict and harsh, but [she] taught us responsibility. She would send us to fetch wood from the mountain before going to school and would punish us if we do not do what she asked.*

*As I got older, she expected me, as her son, to get a job and start a family. I worked at the mines, and I decided to get married. My mother did not like my wife but she is the one who would be on my case about getting married. She did not want me to depend on any woman; she wanted me to be independent and take responsibility over my life. I had to talk to her about her attitude towards my wife, well..... she never accepted my wife, but that did not discourage me from marrying my wife. My wife and me bought our house and lived with our children. To be honest, I do not have any problems at home. I think, as a man, you should be able to miss your home because that is where your wife and children are. You miss home because of the love that is present at home. Some men are scared of their homes because there is no love, warmth and peace. It is important for a man to ensure that his family is secured and looked after.*

Jabu states that his family expects him to provide the financial resources required to meet their basic needs (*i.e.*, food, electricity, clothing, housing, tuition fees and other needs). According to Jabu, it is a man's responsibility to meet his wife's and children's needs. It gives him a sense of pride and joy, knowing that he was able to meet his family's needs. For Jabu, his family's expectations are reasonable since they were what he saw other men do for their families. According to Jabu, his family's expectations are centred around taking responsibility as a man. This includes financial, physical, emotional and social support that he provides to his family and the support and love that he receives from them.

Akudolu (2007) recognises communalism beyond the traditional socioeconomic ideology that emphasises the importance of the community over individuals. Community interest takes precedence over individuals in social relationships. The *I* comes second to *We*; a person is seen

to find fulfilment in interacting with others. Quality of life is dependent on shared norms and values. The traditional African ontology is not solely based on the economic model; people might share their resources, but there is more to living than sharing financial resources. In most cases, people share their economic resources with those with whom they have close, intimate relations. These are more likely to be those they regard as family or people in their immediate social circles. The existence of an individual's joy and fulfilment are perceived to be connected to the interaction of others in their respective communities. The recognition of individuals as umtu (a person) depends on the perceptions of community members based on their conduct as they interact with others.

When talking about the relationship he has with his family, \*Moraka, a 52-year self-employed man, responds as follows:

*I get along well with my family; we look after each other and share what we have with each other. I am the eldest child (my parents' first-born child), and I have been responsible for raising my siblings and, later, my children. I also have a good relationship with my children. My wife, the mother of my first child, is deceased, but we had a good relationship. I also have a good relationship with the mother of my second child.*

In his response relating to the expectations of his family, Moroka explains:

*Mmmm..... being the firstborn son is quite challenging because you have to take a lot of responsibilities, especially when you are raised by a single mother. I had to take adulthood responsibilities at a young age. I would say circumstances forced me to grow up and mature earlier. From the age of 15, I started working. I had to start providing for my siblings and pay for their school fees. My mother expected me to encourage my siblings to go to school and to be a good example to them. Now, responsibility includes providing financial support to ensure that everyone's needs are met and protecting them.*

*I was raised in a household where there was no gender roles; my siblings and I did the house chores and divided the work evenly among ourselves. We took turns to clean the house, wash dishes, do our laundry, clean the yard and so forth. My mother expected us to do so. So, I would say I didn't enjoy being young and carefree. Those were the same expectations from my wife and the mother of my second child. I think the women I have children with expect me to raise our children well, guide them and lead them in the right path, teach them well. I raised my children the same way, and I must say I provided them with better opportunities.*

When talking about his family's reaction when he was unable to meet their expectations, Moraka responded by saying:

*Well, as I said, I started working at a tender age, and I did not get a lot of money, but I think my mother appreciated my financial assistance. I did not get a lot of money, but I was able to put something on the table. There was always pressure to assist in the household, but they appreciated my efforts. I am fortunate because I think my family appreciates my efforts even if I do not meet their expectations. They do get disappointed, but they have never acted funny towards me, like other people would say their families treat them differently, but mine doesn't.*

\*Neo, a 37-year-old man employed in a government department as an accountant, responded as follows:

*I get along well with my family, I grew up in a Christian home. My grandmother was very strict and would expect us to go to church every Sunday; church was a big thing in my family. Growing up in a Christian family, I was taught the importance of believing in the Almighty and myself. I have fond memories of my childhood at church, going to Sunday school at church, and being involved in the church. Church played a big role in shaping the person that I am today. I was taught the importance of honouring and respecting others. I also learned the importance of prayer and believing that all things*

*are possible with God. I mean, I was raised by my mother, and with the little that she had, she managed to take me through higher education, today I am an accountant.*

*As much as we are a Christian family, my family has always had interest in politics. I also got exposed and engaged in politics from a young age. My grandfather and uncle introduced me to the world of politics. I think it was important for my grandfather and uncle to teach me about the historical context of South African politics, so that I am able to appreciate the opportunities I have now. These are two different worlds, but I lived in a households where religion and politics mattered. Other than that, I was raised like any normal child. By normal child, I mean I was raised in a manner that I was taught house chores. I also have a good relationship with my immediate family: wife and son. We have our ups and downs, but we get along well.*

African personhood presents communalism as an unbroken oneness and nurtures the idea of holism. An African person is recognised as an individual and a community member. An individual is connected internally with him/herself (views, belief systems, actions, and behaviour) and externally with his/her natural and social environment. Neo highlighted the role of spirituality in shaping his views and understanding of life. He also highlighted that his religious views influenced how he interacted and conducted himself, as he was taught to respect and honour others. Contrary to the notion of the paternal connection to Qamata (see Chapter Three (p. 58 ), Neo's maternal grandmother played a significant role in passing down knowledge and understanding of Christian values. This resonates well with Schütz's views of stock of knowledge (see Chapter Two, p. 30 ).

Talking about his family's expectations, Neo continues:

*Growing up in a Christian family, I was expected to attend church every Sunday. My grandmother was quite strict about it. There was time dedicated daily for prayer; prayer was a huge part of my family, including fasting and all Christian rituals. Now, being a Christian, one is expected to give tithe and offering. I would tithe every time when I got*

*my pocket money; it was mandatory. I also used my pocket money as an offering. You can only imagine at that age, you just want to buy nice things with a little bit of money you get as a child, but I was expected to give money to the church...[participant giggles]. I was also expected to serve in the church and come back home to do house chores and homework.*

*There was always an expectation for me to do exceptionally well at school. I had to work hard to be in the top three of my grade or at least my class. Everyone had to work to play their part to attain all these attributes in my family; we believe faith requires works. Well... my family was very strict. It was important for them that I do well in life. As for my wife, I think she expects me to be the main financial provider and protector of our family. My son sees me as a superhero. He sees me as someone who is able to give him whatever he wants (money, time, love and attention).*

When talking about his family's reaction when he is unable to meet their expectation, Neo comments:

*As I indicated, I grew up in a Christian household and that come with a lot of pressure. Let me make an example. Purity is valued in a Christian community. One is not expected to have a child out of wedlock, and I had a child out of wedlock. I had to marry my wife since I impregnated her. I didn't marry her while she was still pregnant, but my family expected me to do things right the way I was raised. It presented a lot of pressure for me since I knew I had to either pay inhlawulo or marry the lady, and I decided to marry the lady. I do not regret getting married, but it is something that I had no other option as far as my religious views are concerned. There's this expectation of being a perfect child or human being, having good morals and values. My wife does get disappointed when I am not able to meet her expectations. At times, it causes conflict. But, we always iron things out and find common understanding.*

Understanding that African human personhood comprises biological, spiritual, and social components, Gyekye argues (see Chapter Three, p. 52) that African personhood consists of the soul, spirit, and body. Neo alludes to the role of his religious views in shaping his relations with his family. Though social expectations are set by 'others', it is the individual's prerogative to decide whether to adhere to them. Neo grew up knowing and understanding his religious values and family expectations. However, he is also aware that he has/had a choice to conform to the expectations. Deviating from the prescribed expectations might result in conflict or cause tension. However, it also provides an individual with the knowledge and understanding of the actions considered normal or typical. Neo outlines the consequences of disobeying his religious values, subsequently informing his family's expectations.

### *6.3 Communitarian spiritual and emotional support in the transition from boyhood to manhood*

Rooyen et al. (2012) described the practice of initiation schools in the African context (see Chapter Three, pp 62) as a custom that is entrenched in various indigenous tribes and forms part of traditional and sexual education. In this context, initiates receive oral, behavioural and experiential education; the assumption is that learning takes place by being around and imitating elders. Initiation is a common practice in South Africa, particularly in rural communities, emphasising the development and transition from childhood to adulthood. Undergoing this practice signifies the passage to manhood or womanhood. Furthermore, this custom was established as a sacred rite, the details of which are kept secret. Van Rooyen et al. (2012) state that before initiation, young men and women would be considered in traditional communities as insignificant members of the communities. Additionally, they are often viewed as not being united with the soul or not connected with the spiritual self. Therefore, they are not recognised as fully developed humans.

The practice of initiation school differs from tribe to tribe; however, the one common aspect of this custom is that it is often a communitarian affair. In recent years, communities have

witnessed young men going through the initiation without family and community consent. Also, there are cases of young men losing their lives during the initiation. This raises questions about the safety of initiates and the approaches used when initiating initiates. To some communities, the practice has lost traditional norms and values. Though attention usually goes to the surgical procedure of the tradition, the ancestry of the initiates plays a significant role in sustaining their well-being throughout the process.

Ncaca (2014) describes ancestors as elders (male and female) who are deceased and those who belong to a particular clan or tribe; thus, the custom is considered a communitarian act. Ncaca (2014) also described initiation school as a practice that seeks to graft a young boy onto his ancestral lineage. A boy child is often expected to honour and appease his family, community, and society; this includes those who are still living and those who have passed on. Furthermore, the rituals performed prior to and during initiation school differ from one tribe to another and from one community to another. The common aspect of the process of initiation is the role and active involvement of community members. There is often a community of men who have gone through the process and have assumed the role of being the initiators or teachers or just mentors guiding young men who are going through the process. These men would always guide the initiate and their families in making necessary preparations. For this reason, the following section explores participants' perceptions relating to processes that initiates undertake prior to 'going into the bush'.

Initiation school in South Africa is often referred to as going to the bush by local people in South Africa. This is based on the main assumption that the initiation process should occur in a remote area outside the community, far away in the bush. The custom belief is grounded on teaching courage and being a warrior. It is worth highlighting that the initiates' interactions with the natural environment are crucial since there is a belief that initiates will have spiritual interaction with their predecessors and they will also have divine protection of their ancestors, enabling them to reunite with their families and community.

While initiation in relation to health and masculinity is well-researched in South Africa, there is little research on the subject of initiation school itself. Despite the secrecy surrounding it, participants viewed initiation as a communitarian practice that aims to prepare young boys for the transition to manhood. Participants' knowledge of the custom indicated that the community plays a significant role in identifying and training young men who are about to begin the process. Guluka commented:

*The practice is a process; the community's responsibility is to ensure that these young men are fit enough to go through this process. Perhaps it is my lack of understanding of city life since I come from a rural area, but what I see happening now needs to be corrected. The community plays a huge role in this sense; in my village, the chief and elders appoint experienced teachers and traditional healers to supervise the process according to the traditions of the tribe. Young men who are about to be initiated are identified by the elders in their respective families and communities before going to the bush. Now, as I mentioned, this is a communitarian activity; older men and women participate in this process. At times, women who had sent their children to the bush would comfort mothers of initiates just to assure them their children will come back home safe. Initiation school is not an easy practice for mothers since they are often worried if their children would come back home or not. From my personal experience and observation, this was the role of a community in my transition from boyhood to manhood when it comes to the custom of initiation. However, people in the city do things differently. At times, a young man would take himself to the initiation school without the knowledge of elders or parents. In my view, this is wrong since some of these boys do not know much about the clans [and] their ancestral roots; hence the need to involve elders in this practice.*

Guluka elaborated:

*In recent times, we see young men with little life experience becoming teachers of initiation schools. Initiates should be supervised by older men who are identified by their*

*family or tribe – who know about the tradition of a family. Things have changed now; men who went to the mountains were taught to be respectful and humble, but recently, they behave strangely. They are delinquents and often terrorise their families and people in the community. What is happening currently is shameful. I am scared of these boys; they have brought the dignity of the practice to shame. I wonder what they are taught. It is heartbreaking because I went through the process, and this is not how things used to be.*

In the same Lekgotla group one (LG1), another member added:

*Initiation school is not about an individual. It is about family and lineage of the initiate. Since I went through the practice, I cannot say much about what happens during the initiation – ke koma (it is secret) – that is what we were taught as Batswana. This is what happened back home... boys who are eligible to go through the practice were identified by elders in the family and community. Elders observed our behaviour and attitude. Those who were matured in their actions would be identified and prepared to go through the practice. Family is important in this regard since the custom is based on family tradition, for example, family clan and clan name. Men who went through the process would mentor those who are yet to go through the process. Young men would be separated from their families and friends; at this point, those who went through the practice would come to check up on us, bring food required and teach us songs and how to recite our clan names. Now, this is done by a community of men, and that is where the community plays a significant role.*

In the above extract, the participant outlines the importance of involving families in embarking on the journey of initiation school. This supports the notion of involving elders in the ritual since elders are perceived to have a more profound stock of knowledge passed on to them by

their forefathers of their tribe (see Chapter Two, p. 30). The participant also highlighted the secrecy of the custom of traditional initiation school by referring to it as koma. Twala (2007) describes koma as a highly guarded secret teaching of this ritual. It is often viewed as the soul of the practice and not easily accessible to those who have not gone through the custom. Some men choose not to go through the process of initiation. To some degree, their status of personhood and manhood is often criticised; they are perceived as less manly by men who underwent the initiation custom.

Initiates often communicate by using special coded language only known by them to exclude those who have yet to go through the initiation school. The special code is also used to separate initiates from uninitiates and to draw a clear distinction between those who have gained the status of personhood and those who have yet to achieve this status. At times, the special code used by those who went through the practice belittles men who have not gone through the practice; this is done by using less complimentary names to describe those who have not gone through the custom as moshemane/inkwenkwe (a boy) and exclusion from tribal meetings regardless of his age and knowledge. In the above extract, the participant refers to the happenings of the initiation school as koma, which is symbolic of the secrecy of the practice. As discussed in Chapter Four (p. 73), hooks highlights that patriarchal violence is not only directed to women and children but it is also directed to men by other men. Traditional and religious beliefs and customs perpetuate gendered stereotypical notions and domination of one group over the other, which are often acceptable in the eyes of society. According to Luckmann and Berger (see Chapter Two, p. 36), language represents the people who produce and use it. In this context, those who went through the initiation ritual create secrecy and special coded language. The special code differentiates between those who have gone through the process and those who have not gone through initiation. The special codes are a subtle form of undermining and emasculating men who have not gone through the process, as well as those who choose not to go through the initiation ritual.

Another participant in LG1 stated that:

*I would like just to add one thing: older women in the community also provide support for mothers of initiates. In most cases, mothers tend to get worried when their sons go to the bush. They often worry about the safety. In this instance, older women would give the emotional support and try to assure mothers of initiates that their children will be safe and they will come back home as better men. These women would also advise the mother regarding the preparation for the welcoming ceremony. It is important to avoid crying or having negative thoughts; you find some mothers would cry most of the time when their boys are sent to the bush. Negative emotions and thoughts might cause problems for the initiates while they are away from home. In this case, we trust uQamata (God) and izinyanya (ancestors) will look after, guide and protect these young men. In recent years, parents and communities are not involved in this practice and I think that is the reason why these boys behave badly. I still see them as boys because I do not understand their behaviour. The surgical process is part of the practice, but the aim is to teach young men about responsibilities of men in their families and communities. I think they just want to be seen as men, like their peers who went through the practice; they go to the bush because of peer pressure, not because they are ready to face the responsibility of being men.*

From the above extract, it is evident that the practice of the initiation school is a communitarian custom. Participants outlined the role played by the community in this ritual. Participants also indicates the spiritual aspect of the practice. Chapter Three (p. 58) traced the relationship between the Creator, ancestors, and men. In the African context, the biological father is seen as the one who is much closer to God. Through the father, children can learn and understand their ancestral or traditional identity. African human personhood acknowledges a human's

spiritual, moral and ethical conduct. It is the biological father's responsibility to teach his children about the traditional norms and values that are similar to the teachings of his forefathers; the assumption is that this will enable children to learn and know the ways of their forefathers, who have transitioned from the physical world to the spiritual world. Also, this aims to teach children about desirable social conduct, expectations and moral ethics of their respective communities.

Furthermore, the above extracts emphasise the concept of *umtu ngu mtu nga bantu*. The social support of elders in the community illustrates the ethic of care and interdependence among community members. Though participants highlighted that the practice has changed over time, they also emphasise the role of community members in the transition from boyhood to manhood. Participants also reiterated the main arguments regarding the status of personhood, as discussed in Chapter Three (p. 44). Others in the community bestowed the position of personhood, and making this judgement depended on those who observed the attitudes and behaviour of initiates after they had gone through the practice.

The view of African personhood lies at the core of the African philosophy of Ubuntu. More often than not, an individual is judged based on his/her interactions and relations with others. Moral and ethical reasoning attributes are desirable, as are virtues such as compassion, care, empathy, and interdependency. These characteristics are often demonstrated in social settings and, to some extent, perceived to be naturally inherent attributes of an African person. Furthermore, communitarian existence is not entirely based on the expectations of others but also determined by the nature and quality of interactions and relations one has with others. Through interactions and observation, people gauge the level to which an individual's actions adhere to social expectations and whether an individual succeeds or fails at attaining the status of human personhood. The following section focuses on the activities and behaviour of people whom participants identified as demonstrating Ubuntu's key aspects; participants reflect on the acts and conduct of these people who display the domains of Ubuntu.

#### **6.4 Participants witnessing acts of Ubuntu**

Modiakgotla, a 64-year-old retired teacher, was asked about witnessing acts of Ubuntu, responding as follows:

*My father was a leader in our community and liked assisting people. He worked outside our community but would often come back home with gifts for his children and other children in the community. He did not like seeing people suffering. My father fathered a lot of children in my community; bear in mind their fathers were present. He treated every child in the community like one of his own. We grew up believing every adult is a parent and as a child you should treat them with respect. Elders in the community would reprimand us. We were not only reprimanded or guided by our parents. Now my father would buy Christmas clothes and school uniforms for children in my community; it was a small community. He would even provide financial assistance to some people in the community. I must say I learned the importance of kindness because people were always kind to us, and he cared about people.*

In the above extract, Modiakgotla highlights the financial domain of Ubuntu that his father provided to his community. He also provides an example of social fathering (see Chapter Four, p. 59). Ramollo (2022) found that individuals in society often practice the financial domain in the context of personal rather than communitarian survival. This might be motivated by the stressful socioeconomic climate that most African people experience. Nonetheless, Modiakgotla recalls his father's Ubuntu act, which entailed financial assistance to his community's people. From the above extract, elders in Modiakgotla's community were disciplinarians to ensure that children were disciplined. Chapter Three (p. 32) also highlighted that the financial domain often occurs in the individual domain. People are more likely to provide financial support to those with whom they have close relations. Ramollo (2022) describes financial support as a form of selfhood rather than communitarian support. However, Modiakgotla's father extended his financial support to community members and those in need by buying clothes and school uniforms for children in the community.

\*Sweetheart, a 40-year-old social worker, identified her maternal grandfather as one of the people who demonstrated Ubuntu attributes in their community. Sweetheart stated as follows:

*Yoooh... my grandfather was a mystical person. I am yet to meet a person who loved people unconditionally like my grandfather. He loved his family and people around him. He was so passionate about education that he invested money in building a community library back home in the Eastern Cape. He was independent, and yet at the same his generosity... he would make things happen in our community. So, it is like, the abundance, of generosity, of just giving, which made him... it made it feel like he had more than what he had. People have their selfishness, but he shared whatever he had with other people. Yes, resources are scarce, but the selflessness of, even in spirit of... just giving of yourself and time. That man... He was mythical. It almost feels like he did not exist; such generosity and kindness almost does not exist.*

Sweetheart highlighted her grandfather's aspiration to do good among his community members. She describes her grandfather as selfless and generous, highlighting his sense of humanity and Ubuntu. The spiritual domain of Ubuntu promotes solidarity among people, encompassed by virtues such as selflessness, humility, kindness, and compassion. The spiritual domain highlights the connection between the living and dead and the relationship between soul, spirit, and body. It also recognises the level to which an individual can hold the interest of others in his/her heart.

\*Lerato, a 37-year-old woman practising as a career coach, reflected on her headmaster's acts of humanity and care for the well-being of others. She responded by saying:

*When I think of kindness, I always think about my high school head-master. I witnessed kindness from him and his actions. I saw how kind he was to learners in the school; he was a father to every child in the school. He did not judge us according to our social or*

*economic statuses; he always seemed interested in knowing learners in his school, and that gave the impression that he cared about us. He bought school uniforms for children who were less privileged and would listen attentively whenever we would speak with him. His children also attended my school, and he treated them the same manner. In recent years, educators take their children to better schools like multiracial schools, but that was not the case with him; his children attended school in the township and knew that their father is also a father to all learners. He provided the emotional, social and financial support to learners in his school. I think that is what kindness is all about – he cared about people.*

\*Sello, a 48-year-old man employed as a teacher, highlighted the act of kindness he witnessed in his former line manager. In his response, Sello states:

*I started teaching at a tender age, and it was my first time working away from home. Now my former line manager and his family provided accommodation for me when I arrived in Bloemfontein. He cared about the well-being of people he worked with. He provided social and emotional support since he knew it was my first time living far away from home and I didn't know people. He wanted to know the people that he worked with, and that made me feel special. His wife was kind to me. She would cook and bring food to the school for all teachers. His children respected people and took me in like a brother. My colleagues and I found comfort in their home. It is very rare for a line manager to care about the well-being of others instead of getting good results. The workplace is very competitive. You hardly find kindness in the workplace.*

Nkosinathi, a 38-year-old medical doctor, remembers his paternal grandmother as one who instilled humility and humbleness in his life. In his response, Nkosinathi stated:

*My paternal grandmother is one of the most humbled people I know. Her highest qualification is Grade Two (2), but she is gifted with helping pregnant women during*

*pregnancy, like a midwife. I was told that she assisted a lot of women with childbirth before I was born; she is knowledgeable and wise. She encouraged us to remain humbled and respect people. She shared the little that she had with other women in the community – for example, money and food. She supported a lot of women who were new moms. I think that is a supernatural gift since she never completed basic education. She always had people at her house and would share her space with people who are in need. She knew what to say and when to say it. She mothered people who were not her biological children. We have so many uncles and aunts who are not biologically related to my dad since my grandmother would take them in and raise them as her children. She would tell us to respect people regardless of age or social status. I feel so fortunate that I managed to experience the person she is: Gentle, kind and humble.*

### **6.5 Concluding remarks**

This chapter explored the understanding of Ubuntu and the meaning that participants attached to the act of Ubuntu. Communal involvement and engagement are central to Ubuntu and African personhood. An individual is judged on his/her ability to adapt, conform, and adhere to community expectations set by fellow community members. Ubuntu is linked to attributes such as compassion, caring, and kindness, often perceived and associated with the female or feminine gender. As a result, demonstrating care, compassion, and kindness tends to become tricky for men, as it contradicts the notion of traditional masculinity and fatherhood. Participants highlighted the expectation of fathering, protecting, and providing financial support that surpasses family relations and expands into the community. In the context of men who participated in this study, manhood responsibilities are interchangeable with fatherhood roles; in some instances, some men find themselves fulfilling the role of being social fathers without intention.

Furthermore, participants outlined community members' unpleasant attitudes and reactions to an individual's failure to meet their expectations. Refraining from conforming or not fulfilling

these expectations results in an individual man being viewed as less manly. Men who do not conform to social norms are viewed as irresponsible individuals with no moral and ethical compass. This confirms the notion that a person can fail to attain the status of human personhood, as discussed in Chapter Three (p. 44).

Participants view the lack of social order changes as presenting challenges to communitarian solidarity and well-being. Changing times present difficulties for men in their communities, among others, including the absence of biological fathers and good male role models for young children, delinquent acts, and a lack of respect for authoritative figures in communities. Participants recognised the community's expectation of men taking up the responsibility of being protectors without realising the compromised position of this expectation on individual men. Men are also potential victims of crime, and taking up the responsibility of protecting others compromises their safety. Communities require men to take the lead in matters that concern their environment. Individual men who do not aspire to active leadership roles in the community feel compelled to take up the responsibility to act according to what is expected of them. Male participants are obligated to adhere to social expectations and take responsibility for others, even when they are not willing to fulfil some expectations.

Community expectations are often not communicated to each community member. However, they are perceived as being instilled at a tender age during socialisation. It is the family's responsibility to provide teachings on socially desirable and undesirable behaviour, often through demonstration, since children learn by observing the actions and behaviour of adults. The chapter highlighted the four domains of support (i.e., emotional, social, spiritual, and financial support) provided by family. In this regard, financial support is often offered within one's intimate cycle. In this chapter, the participants reflected on the kind of support their families provide. Participants highlighted the teachings of their families relating to the responsibilities that signified manhood and fatherhood.

Anthropological studies reflect on the process of initiation. However, less attention goes into the role played by the community as young boys undergo the ritual of initiation and transcend to manhood. Participants outlined the participation of community members in this crucial transition, not only in relation to the initiates but also to the families of initiates. Understanding the secrecy centred around the initiation ritual, participants described this as an ancient custom that provides informal education relating to the family lineage. The aim is to teach knowledge about family or clan living. Through this practice, families or clan members participate in identifying young boys to enter into the phase of being responsible men. This ritual symbolises the spiritual component of the makeup of African human personhood. An initiate is introduced and reconnected to the ways of his forefathers. Thus, the biological father's or his family's active participation is necessary. Initiates are expected to know their clan names, enabling them to recite them. The custom of initiation brings families and community members together.

Participants recalled witnessing acts of kindness, compassion, and humility. Participants reflected on the conduct of family members who demonstrated these attributes in their interaction with others. Also, participants remembered the financial, spiritual, and social support that family members provided to others in the community. This support was aimed at aiding those in need and promoting the well-being of others in the community. For the researcher, this support also promoted the well-being of the community itself. Through these acts, participants learned the importance of performing good deeds in their families and fostered attributes of Ubuntu in their interaction with others.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: BEING A MAN

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### 7.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Four (p. 66 ), Ann Oakley clearly distinguished between the concepts of sex and gender, with sex being defined as biological anatomy assigned at birth and gender being the characterisation of masculinities and femininity. Various scholars have argued that gender is a social construct and manifests according to socially assigned gender roles. Although nowadays, the gender categories of LGBTQIA+ are quite widely acknowledged, feminist scholars initially mainly investigated gender discourses in terms of the interaction and relations between men and women. By centring power relations and dynamics between masculinity and femininity within gender discourses, it became evident that social interactions are crucial when unpacking typified male or female behaviour or actions. Reflecting on the early contribution of feminist scholars, from the first to the third wave of feminism, shows how gender is practised in relational contexts: In the relationships between men, women and children, as well as relationships between people and social institutions (see Chapter Three, p. 79 ). Gender is, therefore, influenced by social, historical, and cultural factors (Moynihan, 1998).

Furthermore, in Chapter Two (p. 26 ), interpretive sociologists' (by Alfred Schütz, Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann) views regarding the social world and the social construction of reality were explored. They focus on the meaning people attach and derive from their world of life. These scholars highlight that humans are born into a world of socio-cultural activities. People have shared experiences of the lifeworld and often internalise (i.e., adopt, knowingly or unknowingly) the behaviour and experiences they perceive to be typical. Some actions or behaviours are learned from the early stages of human development. People pay less attention to *analysing* consciousness; in most cases, people view consciousness as common sense. In other words, people's knowledge and understanding of some aspects of social life are based on lived experiences, often passed down from generation to generation, resulting in them exerting deeply ingrained, typical behaviour or actions. Gender is no exception in this process;

men and women learn about gender and gender roles from a young age, internalising desirable and undesirable attributes from their observations of others.

This study is rooted in a qualitative research paradigm (see Chapter Five, p. 104 ). Through the narrative research approach, this study aims to unpack and show how participants experience, express, practice, and negotiate masculinities. Participants describe how their lived experiences shape their construction, understanding, and practice of masculinities.

### ***7.2 Participants remember influential men in their lives***

Chapter Two (p. 4) indicates that Alfred Schütz views a person's 'stock of knowledge' as all the former and current experiences stemming from an individual's life experience. This 'stock of knowledge' informs an individual's perceptions and understanding of situations presented in life and how he/she perceives and interprets the lifeworld. Social interactions are instrumental in instilling in people their knowledge and understanding of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and actions. Social interactions allow an individual to observe and imitate (or not) what is perceived as desirable social etiquette. Research participants recalled men who positively influenced their views and understandings of masculinity. They recalled the good and bad aspects that stood out in the men they identified.

When requested to identify the most influential man in his life, \*Nkosinathi, a 38-year-old medical doctor, identified his former high school Mathematics teacher. Nkosinathi comments:

*'Second to my biological father, I think my high school Mathematics teacher has been an influential man in my life. He was my high school teacher, but we are good friends now. He saw my academic potential and nurtured my academic talent. The attention that I got from him encouraged me to do better at school and improved my confidence.'*

Englar-Carlson and Kiselica (2013) (see Chapter Four p. 89) found that positive masculinity entails the attributes of men, such as recognising and nurturing the potential of other men. Positive masculine traits can improve the lives of other men and people around them. Nkosinathi acknowledges his high school Mathematics teacher as an influential man in his life since his teacher recognised Nkosinathi's academic talent, which encouraged him to perform better in school. Social institutions such as family and education significantly shape children's understanding of gender scripts and provide space for self-awareness. Children learn through observing and imitating those they admire in their social settings (see Chapter Four, p. 84). In this instance, the former teacher's recognition of his academic talent was a reinforcement for Nkosinathi's level of confidence.

When requested to remember things that he liked and disliked about his former Mathematics teacher, Nkosinathi stated as follows:

*I like that he is a hard worker. He provides financial and emotional support to his family. He got married when I was still in high school, and his wife was unemployed for some time. I saw how well he respected and treated his wife, and that encouraged me to respect my wife and treat her well. I also like the way he loves his children; he is a present father. He is interested in their activities, and most importantly for me, he provides financial support to his family. There is not much that I can say I dislike about him except his alcohol consumption. He drinks alcohol but not excessively. It bothers me, but at the same time, I do not think much about it since I see him as someone who drinks responsibly. My profession exposed me to what excessive alcohol consumption does to a person; hence, I am a little bit bothered when he consumes alcohol, but like I said, he does not consume alcohol excessively; he would take two or three beers whenever we have social gatherings.*

Nkosinathi reported that at some point, his former teacher was the main financial provider in his family. Financial provision is often perceived as one of the main characteristics of manhood. The traditional expectation for men is to lead their families and meet their financial needs; this

can have negative consequences on the mental health of men as individuals (see Chapter Four, p. 85), especially in terms of the pressure that the financial provision poses on impoverished men, and in terms of their status at community-level (see Chapter Two, p. 140). Nkosinathi also highlights the respect that his former teacher demonstrated to his wife; this resembles one of the key principles of Ubuntu (respect for others).

Furthermore, Nkosinathi describes his former teacher as a liberal father who chooses to be a present and involved father (see Chapter Four, p. 95). Liberal fathers do not subscribe to stereotypical gender stereotypes of a father being the main financial provider and a mother's main role as being present and involved in the lives of children. This resonates with Eric Anderson's description of the 'new image' of a man (refer to Chapter Four, p.80 ).

Alcohol consumption is often perceived as one of the typical traits of manhood, and excessive consumption as a trait of hypermasculinity (see Chapter Four, p. 86). In this case, Nkosinathi identifies alcohol consumption as one trait that he does not like about his former teacher, though he highlights that there is no excessive use of alcohol in this instance.

When requested to remember the most influential man in his life, Fake, a 44-year-old self-employed, identified his reverend. Fake stated as follows:

*My late reverend is one of the most influential men in my life. He entrusted me with huge church responsibilities from a young age. When I say huge responsibilities, I mean being responsible with the finances of the church, taking Sunday offerings to the bank, ensuring everything is paid on time to the service providers and visiting reverends. And I had church keys, of which it was my responsibility to open the church for congregants and lock the church once all is done. Looking back, I think he had so much faith in me; he trusted me with big things and probably saw me as a responsible person; hence I was his go-to-person. There were older people in the church, but he would always come to me for assistance.*

In relation to Fake's statement that he was given church responsibility at a young age, Menkiti (1984) maintained that in terms of traditional African custom, moral and ethical conduct can convert a non-person to a person in this normative sense (see Chapter Three, p. 49). This implies that an individual's psychological capabilities need to be developed in a way that will enable him/her to participate in accordance with what others expect. Therefore, maturity is not determined by age but by the level of one's moral and ethical reasoning. Fake was entrusted with the responsibilities of the church, indicating that how he conducted himself meant that his late reverend could trust him.

Remembering things that he liked and disliked about his late reverend, Fake comments:

*I cannot think about anything that I did not like about him. He was a spiritual person. He had integrity and he was respected by a lot of people in the community. He respected and cared for people; he was also committed to assisting people. I believe he was a spiritual person deeply rooted in the church.*

*At some point, he was employed by some company and resigned. To be a reverend in my church, one must go to college to learn about the principles of the church and theology. I like that he took that risk and adhered to his calling of being a reverend.*

*Also, I like that he did not compromise and focus on what people will say regarding his decision of leaving his job to becoming a reverend. People expect a man to be the financial provider. I am sure he had some worries concerning not being able to contribute financially for his family at the time he was in college, but I saw how his wife supported his decision as she became the main provider for their families. I was still young, but I witnessed how him and his wife supported each other.*

Ramollo, in Chapter Three (p. 55), indicated that emotional support emphasises Ubuntu values such as caring, respecting and having compassion for others. Fake describes his late reverend

as someone who respected and cared for people; in return, people respected him. This resonates with how Alfred Schütz describes the reciprocity perspective (see Chapter Two, p. 28): Individuals are more likely to partake in events and actions that are understandable to others in the same way that they are understandable to themselves. For Fake, his late reverend was a spiritual person. According to Ramollo (see Chapter Three, p. 55), the spiritual domain entails being ethical and compassionate to others. Contrary to the gendered stereotypical notion promoted by tradition and religion (see Chapter Four, p. 73), traditional and religious beliefs also contribute to the gendered stereotypical notions of men, women, family relations, roles, and responsibilities. Fake's late reverend decided to leave his job, and his wife took up the responsibility of providing for their family while he was a student at the church college. It is evident that at the time he enrolled at the church college, Fake's late reverend did not conform to the normative social expectation of men being the sole financial provider in his household. Gyekye (see Chapter Four, p. 51) Identified the three traits that comprise an African person: The soul, spirit, and body. In this context, Fake views his late reverend as a spiritual person who was able to connect his congregation to <sup>4</sup>uQamata and pray for the people in the church based on church practices and principles.

\*Tshepo, a 44-year-old schoolteacher, identified his former line manager as the most influential man in his life. Tshepo states:

*My former line manager is the most influential man in my life. I started teaching at a high school when I was very young (early 20s); it was the first time I started teaching. He understood I was inexperienced and guided me to the correct path, such as looking presentable when I go to work, preparing my lesson plans and assessments and not taking advantage of young girls in the school or even outside the school. He was my mentor and a father figure since I was far from home.*

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<sup>4</sup> God of our Forefathers

Talking about the things that he liked and disliked about his former line manager, Tshepo says:

*He is very strict, which is not a bad thing, but it puts one under pressure since he had high expectations in terms of work ethics and behavioural conduct; he was intolerant of misconduct not only at work; even outside the work environment.*

*I like that he allowed me to express my thoughts and feelings. He created a space for me to be emotionally vulnerable as a man, which I appreciated. He is a very principled and humbled man, and always emphasised that it not bad for a man to be emotionally vulnerable regardless of your social status.*

Tshepo indicates that he started working at a young age, and his former line manager was his mentor. Chapter Three (p. 38) states that traditional manhood is associated with being an authoritarian and disciplinarian figure. Tshepo describes his former line manager as a strict person with high expectations relating to how his staff conducted themselves, even beyond the work environment. Tshepo's former line manager clearly embraced ethical and moral reasoning and promoted the demonstration of desirable behaviour in public spaces. This resonates well with Menkiti's views on acquiring moral and ethical reasoning. It also echoes Schütz's views regarding the stock of knowledge being passed down by those who have travelled the road before us (see Chapter Two, p. 26).

When requested to remember the most influential man in his life, \*Letlhogonolo, a 38-year-old government employee, identified his late brother as an influential man in his life. Letlhogonolo recalled:

*My late brother was the most influential man in my life; he was four years older. We had a good relationship. He was notorious in the township since a lot of people saw him as a thug and were scared of him, but he was a good brother. He was a friend and brother.*

Remembering the things he liked and disliked about his late brother, Letlhogonolo stated:

*Eer (participant pause) just to give you context, we grew up in the township where there were few decent men that one would consider as role models. Men who stood out in the community were criminals because people were scared of them. Most boys in my community admired their lifestyle (i.e. having money, cars they drove, getting any woman they wanted, and how they dressed; they had expensive clothes). Most of them were unemployed. Unfortunately, my brother hanged around older guys who had bad influence on him; they were very toxic, and I did not like that about him. I also didn't like that he was a delinquent; he was into shoplifting, housebreaking and car theft, which lead to him being murdered at a young age.*

*Though he made bad decisions, he encouraged me to be a better person and go to school. I like that he was aware of his bad decisions and wanted me to make better decisions. He would find a way to financially provide for my sister and I (as much as we knew the money came from criminal activities), he would pay for our school fees and school uniforms; he took up a huge responsibility at a young age.*

*Also, I like that I could talk to him about anything and he would not judge me. He didn't like school, but he was street smart, and I liked that about him. He was a true friend... talking about him saddens my heart [the interview was suspended at this point].*

Letlhogonolo identified his late brother as an influential man in his life, referring to his brother as a friend and indicating their close relationship on both counts. Letlhogonolo did not use the word 'respect' when referring to his brother. However, many of his brother's actions were solid, caring, and worthy of respect despite transgressing social norms. It can be argued that Letlhogonolo's narrative challenges many of the stereotypes traditional views of manhood employ to shape men's behaviours and community norms. Ramollo (see Chapter Three, p. 33 and Chapter Seven, p. 183) emphasises that emotional support encompasses Ubuntu values such as caring, respecting and having compassion for others. The question arises about where to situate gangsters in this context, especially those who care for and encourage young siblings

to do and be their best, as in the case of Letlhogonolo. Although Letlhogonolo did not approve of his brother's behaviour and lifestyle, he still admired and cared for him, highlighting the complexity of human relationships. All the literature reviewed for this thesis did not prepare the researcher to analyse the complexities of emotions such as love, hope, and shame implied in Letlhogonolo's narrative.

Contrary to other participants who state that the influential men in their lives were well respected by community members, Letlhogonolo remarked that community members feared his late brother because of his delinquent acts. By contributing to social disorder, Letlhogonolo's late brother compromised his moral and ethical reasoning, which disqualified him from attaining the status of African personhood, as described by Menkiti in Chapter Three (p. 49). Gyekye (1992) (see Chapter Three, p. 52) maintains that people who do not adhere to social norms are not reduced to animals or objects; they continue to be part of society, though the status of personhood is not bestowed on them. This narrative presents a dilemma faced by some men in the township whereby their delinquent acts are sometimes influenced by their socioeconomic location. To some, the decision to be involved in gangs is intended to ensure the well-being of their loved ones. However, it is to the detriment of their relationship with other community members—Letlhogonolo's narrative presents a contrasting context of the African human personhood. On the one hand, Letlhogonolo admired his brother as he nurtured, cared for, and encouraged him to be a better person, which illustrates the attributes of Ubuntu and having to attain the status of personhood among his family. On the other hand, his gangster lifestyle caused his community to see him as less of a person since they did not recognise him as *'umtu'*.

hooks (1984, p68-69), as discussed in Chapter Four (p. 73), state that men and women are socialised to internalise and normalise patriarchal notions of gender. It is socially acceptable for individuals with more resources or financial power to control others. Social misconduct and unethical acts are perceived as typical male behaviour. Schütz, in Chapter Two (p. 31 ) argue that typification enables people to recognise phenomena, giving rise to a collective view of

these phenomena. Individuals use typification, which is passed on to them by their social groups through their interactions with others. In this context, it seems like Letlhogonolo's brother succumbed to peer pressure by interacting with older men who negatively influenced him. Letlhogonolo emphasises that the majority of young boys in his community admired the lifestyle of older men who portrayed toxic patriarchal traits of manhood. hooks in Chapter Four (p. 73 ), noted that in some Black communities, racism deprived Black men of economic opportunities to the extent that they are unable to provide for themselves and their loved ones. However, this should not excuse social ills by Black men, although the lure of gangsterism in this context can be understood by most South African citizens who live with the daily threats and realities of gang -related problems. It is also understandable that people do not feel sympathy for people who take the path of gangsterism, as they are responsible for increased violence in the communities (Langa, 2020: p. 34).

Mfecane (2018) (see Chapter Four, p. 76) found that human beings possess material and immaterial components that play a significant role in being a man and undertaking a set of practices in a particular social setting. Letlhogonolo contextualised where his brother's masculine traits were constructed and practised. The material component is enacted by the physical human body performing social acts, while the immaterial component entails unseen elements influencing people's characteristics and behaviour. In this context, the delinquent acts of Letlhogonolo's late brother demonstrated the material component. The immaterial component came through the behavioural influence of older men in the community who were contributing to social ills.

\*Lerato, a 37-year-old woman who is a career coach, identified her former high school principal as the most influential man in her life. Lerato stated:

*My former high school principal portrayed desirable attributes of being a man by being assertive, supporter and a protector. His daughter is my friend and I got to see him at school and his home when I visited his daughter. He is a genuine humble person and*

*loved people. People in the community are very fond of and respect him. He is wise and would often give sound advice.*

Motsamai (2017) (see Chapter Three, p. 49) indicates that individual members of the community are expected to respect each other and adhere to social norms. Lerato highlighted that her former high school principal showed humility and affection to community members and that community members were fond of and respected him. Lerato regards him as a wise person who would give sound advice to others; this demonstrates his ability to pass on a positive stock of knowledge to others (see Chapter Two<sup>29</sup>, p. ). As noted in Chapter Four (p. 73), men who are regarded positively in their communities are perceived as rational, practical, problem solvers and confident.

Remembering the things she liked and disliked about her former high school headmaster, Lerato stated:

*There are so many things I liked about him. He used to invite people who are successful in their field of work to the school to address and motivate us learners. He empowered girls in the school by inviting successful women to address girls in the school and I liked that about his leadership. I like that he would attend to the needs of learners or get professionals to assist learners, particularly those who had serious problems at home that affected their academic progress.*

*I believe he led by example. His children attended our school. In most cases, you find teachers taking their children to private or expensive schools in town, but with him, his children went to township schools, and they were learners in our school. He had integrity and dignity; he was always neat and you would see by his dress code that he liked taking care of himself. I would not say I didn't like this about him, but I must say he was very strict, and he was a disciplinarian. Because he was very strict, most learners were scared of him since he did not tolerate any bad behaviour.*

As she describes the things she liked and disliked about her former high school principal, Lerato reported that her former high school principal would invite people who had great achievements to motivate learners in his school. hooks (1990) (see Chapter Four, p. 74 ) found that Black men and women have been comrades in the struggle for socioeconomic opportunities; thus, the third-wave feminist movement acknowledges the importance of having their combined voices in response to their challenges. Inviting well-established individuals to motivate learners symbolises sensitising learners to challenges confronting Black men and women. It also showcases different approaches to overcoming those challenges, with the understanding that learners are comrades in the struggle for better opportunities. It also highlights the importance of passing on knowledge and understanding of how the lifeworld operates (refer to Chapter Two, p. 27 ). Lerato reports that her former high school principal was passionate about empowering young girls, which he demonstrated when he invited well-established women speakers in various fields. This resonates with the theory of inclusive masculinity, which is built on the premise of recognising gender inclusivity and providing women with opportunities similar to those that are available to men. Also, Lerato described her former high school principal as being immersed in communitarian living and solidarity; thus, his children attended township schools irrespective of his social status or socioeconomic position, and he was able to provide necessary support to those in need of his assistance. She describes him as a man of integrity, dignity and a good clothing sense. Chapter Four (p. 85) emphasises the significance of fashion in shaping a desirable image of manhood. Van Rees (2020) (see Chapter Four, p. 84 ) indicates that masculinity is similar to stage performance with the script that men are expected to memorise and perform.

The following sub-section reflects on the lessons participants learned from the men they identified.

### **7.2.1 The lessons learned from others about manhood**

Alfred Schütz (1974, p99), discussed in Chapter Two (p. 29), indicates that the stock of knowledge is passed on via a series of a person's predecessors. An individual's stock of knowledge is rooted in handed-down knowledge as well as an individual's interpretations and experiences. These all give rise to different ways in which individuals address specific situations and provide them with a framework to understand, explain and deal with the circumstances presented by life. Also, people mature and change, as does society; children learn about desirable and undesirable human attributes through observation and initiation. Chapter Four (p. 90) emphasises that positive masculinity promotes the positive contribution that men can bring, including their ability to maintain progressiveness in the presence of rigid or unhelpful traditional notions. Furthermore, positive masculine traits assist men in focusing and reflecting on positive attributes such as kindness, success, compassion, and creativity. Through memory, participants recalled the lessons they learned about manhood from the men who positively influenced their lives.

When requested to point out the lessons that Nkosinathi learned from his former Mathematics teacher, who was the man who positively impacted his life, he remarked:

*I have learned a lot of things from him. He taught me that a man is a protector and provide financial resources for his family. He also taught me that being a man is about responsibility; I am responsible for my life, and I should also take responsibility for my actions. I observed how he loves his family; he has three children (two boys and one girl) and treats them equally. There are no gender roles in his house. All of children did house chores; he also does house chores. I once asked him why he wants his boys to do house chores and he said that is his way of training them to be independent. I have learned to love, provide and protect my family. He also taught me the importance of accountability by taking responsibility for my actions. He also taught me to focus on my goals (he is very focused on ensuring the well-being of his family) and work hard to achieve what I desire in life.*

Chapter Four (p. 45) notes the idea that human beings are nurtured to become *umthombo* – *the sprout of seed*. This entails socialising a child into adulthood. Children learn acceptable and unacceptable behaviour through teaching as well as observation. Nkosinathi formed a solid relationship with his former high school from the time he was still a learner. Nkosinathi mentioned that he observed how his former Mathematics teacher nurtured his family. By not subscribing to rigid gender roles, Nkosinathi's teacher demonstrated positive masculine attributes that encourage men to contribute positively in their social settings and maintain progressive attributes in the midst of rigid and harmful conservative masculine notions.

The teacher's conduct resonates with the notion of *the new image* of masculinity stemming from the Theory of Inclusive Masculinity (see Chapter Four, p. 80 ), prompting men to reflect on their gender-based practices and foster positive traits that encompass kindness, compassion, and free emotional expression without compromising success and creativity in the more normative senses of the terms. Financial contribution is closely associated with the characterisation of masculinities, which can be a considerable burden for those who are unable to fulfil this role. Nkosinathi's former Mathematics teacher is one of the fortunate Black South African men who are able to provide financial resources for his family. Less fortunate are the 43.1% of Black South African men who were declared unemployed in the second quarter of 2023 (Statistics South Africa, 2024).

Remembering some of the crucial lessons Fake learned from his reverend, Fake states:

*One of the things I learned from him is the importance of managing finances. I would say he taught me financial literacy and accountability since he would send me to the bank to deposit money into the church account. He was not greedy or using money recklessly. All the money was used to improve the infrastructure of the church and feeding disadvantaged people in the community: members living around the church. He taught me to be a generous person and assist those who are in need. I have also learned the importance of being spiritually grounded since he was a spiritual person. Being spiritually grounded helps one to respect himself and others. He drew me closer to God,*

*and this helped me to make the right choices in life because you are connected to your God, whom I believe He always guide our steps. The other lesson for me was being a responsible person; responsibility is not determined by age since he trusted me with ensuring that all things in the church are done well from a young age, as I explained before.*

Contrary to the teachings other participants learned from the men they identified as having influenced their lives, Fake stated that his reverend taught him how to manage finances at a young age. Fake also describes his reverend as a spiritual person who taught him to draw closer to uQamata (see Chapter Three, p. 58). This challenges the idea of the biological father being the bridge between the God of his forefathers/his lineage and children. Gyekye (1992), in Chapter Three (p. 51), states that human beings comprise three distinct entities: Okra (the soul), sunsum (the spirit) and nipadua (the body). Human beings exist in the context of the soul, spirit, and body.

Furthermore, Fake reiterated that his reverend taught him generosity and to assist people who are in need. He also highlighted the church's role in feeding and assisting disadvantaged community members who live close to the church. Fake's lessons resonate well with Ramollo's (2022) description of communitarian support highlighted in Chapter Three (p. 55): Communitarian support unites community members and enables them to address challenges they face by investing in collaborative efforts.

When requested to highlight some of the lessons that Tshepo learned from his former line manager, Tshepo replied:

*He taught me it is acceptable for a man to be weak. By being weak, I mean expressing emotions of sadness and to be able to cry, particularly when I was going through divorce. He is one of the few people who lifted me up when I was going through my divorce. He advised me to allow myself to be weak and deal with my emotions so that I can gain my*

*strength. He would say 'ho tjhethja ha monna ha se ho baleha ke ho nka matla', that is Sesotho proverb which means stepping back or walking away is not a sign of weakness or cowardness, but it is way to regain strength. I always remind myself of his words whenever I experience challenges.*

Chapter Three (p. 84) highlighted how society, particularly more traditional, expects men to detach themselves from feminine traits, particularly displaying emotions. Emotional restrictedness has proven to be problematic for most men as it detracts from their mental health and well-being. Tshepo states that his former line manager encouraged him to express his vulnerability and emotions. This resonates well with the concept of the '*new image*' of a man, one who can understand and express his emotions (see Chapter Four, p. 58). Tshepo views his former line manager as one of the few people who provided emotional and communitarian support, which illustrates the ethics of care. Ubuntu encourages solidarity and interdependence among individuals. It bestows the community with the moral obligation to support fellow human beings (see Chapter Three, p. 55 ). Also, Ubuntu promotes individual values such as compassion, care and respect, which Tshepo's former line manager showed. Ramollo (2022), in Chapter Three (p. 55), noted that Ubuntu encourages individuals to provide emotional support *voluntarily*.

According to Berger and Luckmann (see Chapter Two, p. 36 ), language is one of the forms of objective and subjective reality. Interpretive researchers often focus on language in their analyses. Tshepo refers to the Sesotho proverb: ho tjhethja ha monna ha se ho baleha ke ho nka matla; advice he received from his former line manager. As discussed in Chapter Five (p. 106), ethno-philosophy focuses on people's experiences encoded in their language, stories, traditions and values. According to Chilisa (2009, p97), various forms of language, such as proverbs and metaphorical sayings, legitimatise the value systems, thought processes and lived experiences of indigenous people. These forms of knowledge should be incorporated in research processes so that researchers do not lose the meaning and context of participants' lived experiences and contributions. Like all languages, indigenous language highlights the

patterns and structures that influence how individuals think, behave and act (see Chapter Five, p. 106). The proverb that Tshepo shared clarifies the meaning and context of how he views his lifeworld and shapes his approach to dealing with challenging situations.

When requested to outline the lessons that Letlhogonolo learned from the man who positively impacted his life, Letlhogonolo replied:

*He taught me that family is more important over everything; some of the bad things he did was to financially provide for us [his family]. He also taught me that it is important for a man to provide finances and protect his family. He hustled to get money, and he worked hard outside his delinquent act. To be honest, I did not know that he was doing crime for a long time, but I have learned that being violent and committing crime cause misery because he died young. He taught me to fend for myself but discouraged me from getting involved in any delinquent activities.*

Letlhogonolo learned the importance of family unity from his brother. Furthermore, Letlhogonolo speaks about the importance and challenges of the financial provision required of men. His brother taught him the importance of being able to provide financial resources for a family. However, he notes the negative impact that the role of being a provider presents to individual men, particularly those similar to his brother, as they have to find unethical means to provide for their families. Jewkes and Morrell (2018), in Chapter Four (p. 85), maintains that impoverished men often find themselves in a stressful climate as they are unable to fulfil the role of being financial providers; thus, some men resort to violence to maintain power and dominance with the hope of being recognised as real men. Also, young boys are socialised to view violence as a typical trait of authentic manhood. Letlhogonolo shared that he learned from his late brother that the end result of violent behaviour can be fatal since his brother lost his life at a young age.

Remembering some of the crucial lessons \*Lerato learned from her former high school principal, Lerato commented:

*I have learned that a man's dress code says a lot about the type of man he is relating to [and] whether that particular man looks after himself or not. As I said, I liked his fashion style[dress code]. I have learned that a man's sense of fashion is important; it gives an impression of the type of man he is and level of his self-confidence and conduct. Men who dress well often walk tall with confidence. He had integrity and dignity, and people respected him. I think his fashion sense also influenced how people would relate to him. His interaction with people taught me to be humble and respect others regardless of socioeconomic status. I have also learned a man is a protector; I witnessed how he protected his family and other people in the community.*

Chapter Four (p. 85) outlined the role of appropriate dress codes in shaping how Black men are positioned and perceived. Lerato believes that her former high school principal's dress code contributed to how people perceived and related to him. Dress code is used to assert masculine identities and social class. People often view men with a sound sense of fashion as financially self-sustainable and able to take care of and meet the needs of others. According to Lerato, men with a good fashion sense display confidence and are often perceived as dignified by others. Also, fashion clothing significantly shapes masculine perceptions and confidence (see Chapter Four, p. 85).

### ***7.3 The journey of becoming a man***

Chapter Four (p. 82) highlights that masculinity is often described and understood in relation to a man's conduct and attitude. It is associated with a man's behaviour that stems from his social conduct and location, which often prescribe social attributes in the broader range of traditional masculine categories and ideologies. Masculine attributes are instilled at a young age through prescribed and (re)enacted gender roles and expectations. Various gender norms and roles are socialised messages directed to men and women about what is socially expected

of them. This social messaging is predominantly related to physiological anatomy. Lomas (2013), in Chapter Four (p. 82), describes gender as a verb since it is practised over time by individuals through social interaction. People often find themselves having to perform the social script handed down to them through normative gender roles. Scholars working in Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity describe masculinity as fluid and flexible, and they recognise masculinity as a plural social construct, subsequently acknowledging multiple masculinities with multiple realities. Gender is, therefore, a continuous construct and reconstruction of social interaction.

This sub-section focuses on participants' understandings and experience of transitioning from boyhood to manhood. Participants shared their views on what the transition entails and the role of family in preparing boys to become men. Participants also reflected on their journey of transitioning from boyhood to manhood based on their lived experiences.

### ***7.3.1 Family role in the transition from boyhood to manhood***

From a tender age, boys learn about socially desirable and undesirable behaviour through socialisation and social interactions. Through observations and social interaction, people gain knowledge and understanding of their lifeworld, an understanding that they subsequently view as their reality or the truth. Luckmann and Berger (see Chapter Two ) view human beings as products of their social world and their interaction with it. They use the concept of capitalisation as behaviour and actions that are frequently repeated to the extent that they become a habit. These habits are partly formulated within the family's setting. Gyekye, in Chapter Three (p. 51), maintains that people are born naturally and come from a human seed. It is worth highlighting that people are also born into an existing society and culture. It is through family that a child initially learns about social norms, values and customs; thus, the researcher recognised and probed the role of a family in the transition from boyhood to manhood. Participants were requested to talk about their relations with family members and point out their families' role in the transition from boyhood to manhood.

\*Bra Steve, a 25-year-old man who works in the education sector, stated as follows:

*I have a good relationship with my family and I believe they prepared me to be a man. At home, we do not have gendered chores. We do similar chores, and [I] take turn with my sisters. From an early age, my parents would say I should protect my sisters as their older brother. At that time, I felt it was a bit unfair as I felt it was a huge responsibility. Later as I grew older, I understood that it is a man's responsibility to protect those who are dear to him. My family expected me to be a role model to the younger siblings. Also, the family expected me to be responsible; I was not expected to misbehave like other children.... In retrospect, I believe it was their way of training me to become a better man. It came with a lot of pressure, but also helped me to become the man that I am today because I focused on what was important, like pursuing and furthering my studies in order for me to provide financial assistance to my siblings to also further their studies. I must say I am now overprotective of my sisters, I do not want them to be exposed to any form of danger; South Africa is not a safe country for women.*

Bra Steve emphasised that there were no gender roles in his family, and he and his sisters had an equal share of household chores. In some households, this might not be the case; more gender-normative roles are internalised from a young age. The participant states that being a protector of his siblings was a huge responsibility that his parents bestowed on him. He views this responsibility as training for becoming a man. Bra Steve states that South Africa is not a safe country for women. Chapter Four (p. 86) provides an overview of crime statistics relating to violence against women.

\*Sipho, a 39-year-old man who is a government employee, commented:

*I relate well with my family, though it was tough growing up. My family embraced gender roles; my father was responsible for financial provision, and my mother was a*

*housewife. I was responsible for cleaning the yard and fixing broken things around the house, while my sisters were responsible for cleaning the house and cooking. We never talked about how does one become a man or a woman. I have learned through observing the relationship between my parents, which was, at times, toxic.*

*My father was the breadwinner. He provided financial means to ensure that we have everything that we need. He was known and respected by most people in our township, and I must say that was a benefit. People knew we are his children, and we were protected because of the respect they had for him. By observing my father's actions, I learned that a boy becomes a man once he is able to provide financial resources and protect his family. Manhood is not determined by age. There are young boys who are already fulfilling these roles in their respective families. In my view, they are men, irrespective of their age; circumstances forced them to fulfil the role of being men.*

Chapter Four (p. 73) highlights the role of home as an environment where gender views and attitudes are performed and practised. In the above extract, Siphos remarks about gender roles that he instilled and practised in his home environment. He mentioned that he learned about manhood by observing the behaviour and performance of his father. This is how Siphos learned that a man is responsible for protecting and providing for his family. These roles are normative expectations that may be difficult to fulfil due to an individual's socioeconomic position. In Chapter Four (p. 85) it is emphasised that these normative expectations damage men who find themselves unable to provide finances for their families.

\*Athandwa, a 39-year-old self-employed man, stated as follows:

*My parents are still alive, but they left my siblings and I when we were young. As the eldest brother, circumstances force me to take responsibility of raising my siblings at a young age – in my early teen years. With that being said, my family played little role in my transition from boyhood to manhood. I had to find ways to ensure that my siblings'*

*basic needs are covered. I became the head of the house at a young age and take parental responsibility at a young age.*

*I think a boy becomes a man once he is able to hold a spear in his life – in Xhosa, we say 'funa a bambe umkhonto'. By the time I went to the initiation school, I was already a man of the house. The transition from boyhood to manhood differs from one person to the other but I believe it was unfortunate that I was forced by circumstances to become a man – I did not enjoy my childhood or being young and having someone else to take care of me. Taking responsibility is important in the transition from boyhood to manhood.*

Athandwa states that his parents (mother and father) left his siblings under his care at a tender age. This contradicts the well-accepted gender role of a mother being a nurturer and primary caregiver to her children. Athandwa's story shows that gender positions and roles are social constructs and not biologically determined. In his view, having no parental support meant that he had to transition from boyhood to manhood at a young age and take on the responsibility of parenting his younger siblings. He used a Xhosa proverb: *funa a bambe umkhonto*, as he had to carry the spear of providing and protecting his siblings. This strongly indicates the meaning he attached to parenting his siblings – it alludes to the burden that was put upon him at a young age. Athandwa also remarked about not having emotional and psychological support while taking care of his siblings. These are some of the challenges associated with parental absence (see Chapter Four, p. 97). In this context, Athandwa was his siblings' brother and social father. The concept of social fathering has been discussed in Chapter Four (p. 37); the participants' perceptions and experiences of social fathering are discussed in Chapter Eight (p. 264).

When asked about the role of family in the transition from boyhood to manhood, \*Themba, a 39-year-old unemployed man, responded:

*I have a good relationship with my family. Unfortunately, both my parents are deceased. My father passed on when I was young, so I never got a chance to learn a thing or two about being a man from him. I grew up seeing my mother struggling a lot as she worked as a domestic worker. Being a boy child, you cannot watch your mother struggle in that manner. I had to drop out of school and start working as a gardener to assist my mother.....[participant takes a deep breath]. I had to take up my father's role: I took the role of taking responsibility over my siblings.*

*I dropped out of school when I was 11 years old. I believe my father's passing played a huge role in my transition from boyhood to manhood. To answer your question: some people go through the practice of initiation, some transition when they reach a certain age. However, in my case, my father's passing was the transition period from boyhood to manhood.*

Similarly to Athandwa, Themba is a brother who also had to be a social father to his siblings. He acknowledged that the transition from boyhood to manhood varies from one person to another. However, in his case, the death of his father forced his early transition to manhood. He started working at a young age to help his mother with family responsibilities. As he reflected on his relationship with his family, it became clear in the interview that Themba was filled with sadness. Bericat (2015), in Chapter Nine (p. 296 ), refers to emotions as a pattern of relationships that connects the self with others. In both Athandwa and Themba's cases, the relationship patterns were far-reaching and not easy.

Participant #6 in FGD1 states:

*Family plays an important in this transition. Firstly, as you grow older, there are some changes in your body that you might not understand. This is where parents, particularly*

*a father, would explain to you what is happening and give you an assurance that these changes are normal and it is an indication that you are growing up. I regard this as the physiological transition of a boy to becoming a man.*

*I also believe gender roles also prepares a boy to transition to manhood. In some cases, boys are taught by their fathers to do the physical work of a man, like gardening and fixing broken things in the house. In my view, this prepares a boy to take responsibility over things that needs to be fixed in the house. It also teaches a boy the importance of knowing physical work as a man.*

Participant #6 in FGD1 refers to the physiological changes that occur over time in the human body. The changes in a boy's body are an indication of the transition from boyhood to manhood. He views gender roles as a form of helping a young boy to transition to manhood. In his view, it is the father's necessary responsibility to prepare a boy child to transition from boyhood to manhood. Contrary to his view, Black masculinity in South Africa is, instead, associated with the *absence* of biological fathers. Women raise many, if not most, South African Black men due to the absence of biological fathers, as indicated in Chapter Four (p. 98). Participant #6 shares an ideal image of what should be happening; however, the reality is that the complexities of fatherhood can also raise challenges relating to the role of a family in the transition from boyhood to manhood.

Clearly, different families play different roles in preparing a boy child to transition to manhood. Some participants were not helped to prepare since misfortune in life and their social contexts forced them to transition at a tender age, while others were prepared through observing and performing gender roles at home. Participants internalised the normative expectations of manhood and performed the manhood script according to what the families expected and the circumstances dictated.

### **7.3.2 Transitioning from boyhood to manhood**

Drawing on their perceptions and experiences, participants were asked to clarify when boys transition to manhood. A participant in LG2 replied:

*There are different views relating to this question; some people would say once a boy goes through the rite of passage of initiation, and others will say once he is matured enough to act responsibly. We come from different backgrounds; hence, I present different views to you. According to me, a boy becomes a man once he is able to respect himself and others and also be accountable for his actions. I am a Xhosa man and I must say the custom of initiation school is very important in my clan. It is a process whereby a boy child is trained to become a warrior and learn about his patrilineage, ancestry and uQamata. Also, learn Isintu (humanity), Ubundoda (manhood), and the traditional norms and values of his clan. Upon completion of this ritual, we recognise him as a man, not a boy, since he is aware of his responsibilities as man, but in these modern times, things are done incorrectly. We see boys not transitioning to manhood even though they underwent the process of initiation.*

Alfred Schütz (see Chapter Two, p. 27) maintains that people's understanding of the lifeworlds is handed down from generation to generation, which enables them to formulate a shared sense of reality, particularly the primary way they experience their world. Also, in the indigenous South African ethnic groups (i.e., Sesotho, Setswana and Xhosa) from which the study participants were drawn, teachings of the tradition of male circumcision are handed down from generation to generation (from forefathers to the next generations). The traditional context shapes how people make sense of and experience the world around them. Menketi, in Chapter Three (p. 49), indicated that there are different rites of passage that an African person has to go through to instil ethical and moral senses. From the above extract, this participant states that in his world, traditional customs like initiation school play a significant role in the transition from boyhood to manhood. This participant further explained another underlying function of initiation school (outside the surgical process), which is to teach initiates about the key elements of Ubuntu: Respect, humanity and knowledge related to family and clan

traditional values and norms. Although the literature reviewed reflected on the communitarian efforts and spiritual function of aligning initiates with the ways of their ancestry, participants remarked about the training of initiates not being implanted correctly. Furthermore, the participant in LG2 associated manhood with responsibility, and according to him, a boy becomes a man once he is able to fulfil the responsibilities of his family and community.

In the same Lekgotla group, another member commented:

*I just want to add on what the gentleman just said: I am Mosotho. I will not go into the details of the ritual of initiation process because ke koma (it is sacred). To begin with, a boys is separated from his family and community when he goes through the initiation school. It is called a bush school because he will spend time living in the wilderness or the bush/mountain. During this process, there should be initiators and traditional healers to take these boys through the process.*

*There are teachings that happen up the mountain focuses on what manhood entails. It is important to have a traditional healer who is involved in the process. The role of a traditional healer is important in terms of evoking ancestors to protect the initiate. Hence, it is important to know the clan totem or clan name – to connect an initiate with his ancestors and evoke the spirits of wisdom, protection and guidance. Anything can happen in the bush, but we believe that ancestors will protect their children till they return to their families. This process compels an initiate to be brave and defeat bad/dark spirits or anything harmful; hence, we say they are warriors. Once an initiate reunites with family, our understanding is he is now a man who understands his responsibility and should at all times respect himself and others and show humility – he has now transitioned from being a boy to becoming a man. Lately, we are terrorised in the community by boys who went through the process. I refer to them as boys because they behave like boys. We have initiators in this venue; they should tell us what went wrong with our custom.*

Rites of passage, such as initiation school, teach an individual about the ethics and morals of his roots, the ways promoted by his predecessors. Chapter Three (p. 49) highlights that Africans go through different rites of passage requiring the fulfilment of certain rituals and customs that impart moral and ethical teaching. Some rites of passage teachings are masked in myths and secrecy. In the excerpt above, the participant emphasises the sacredness of initiation school and the informal teaching at the bush. He speaks about the spiritual domain of the custom, stating that there are traditional healers who connect initiates with their ancestors and evoke divine or spiritual protection for initiates. The participant also mentions the core principles of respect and humility, which should be taught to initiates and which, in his view, are *not* taught, or at least not properly, because initiates return to their communities as delinquents.

Another member in LG2 added:

*I was an initiator, but I have retired. I hear what has been said and I agree the custom is no longer the same. An initiator should be an elder, a person who is matured and experienced to be able to initiate young men. Lately, we see young men with little knowledge of the custom and are inexperienced.*

*Secondly, initiation is now an individual's choice without the blessings of the family – some boys are kidnapped, and others go through the custom due to peer pressure without the knowledge of their families. Families are just informed that their children have entered the initiation process. You find they do not know their identity (ancestry practices and clan names). In this case, how can one initiate a person who does not know who he is and how will this person know what is expected from them?*

*In the olden days, initiation school played a significant role in the transition of boyhood to manhood. Young men were taught to respect themselves and others. Also, the teachings included the role of a man in the family and community, the responsibility and*

*conduct of a man. Discipline is important because if you are disciplined, you will be able to carry out your responsibilities. In my view, a boy becomes a man once he is able to show respect, take responsibility and when he is disciplined.*

Ncaca, in Chapter Three (p. 63), describes initiation school as a practice that aims to integrate young boys into their ancestral lineage; thus, the clan name is important in the process so that those who have departed from the physical world can be called upon to embrace the transition from boyhood to manhood. According to Twala and Ncaca (see Chapter Two, p. 62), initiation school is a significant ritual in transitioning from boyhood to manhood. However, from the above extract, the participant states that the ritual had lost significance in the modern day, arguing that the custom has now become individualistic instead of being a communitarian affair that includes the consent of families. He added that initiators used to be mature older men who knew the ritual, stemming from the experience they acquired over time. However, in modern society, initiators are young, inexperienced men, which, in his view, is the main cause of the disorganisation of the ritual. He also highlighted that boys being initiated do not know much about their families or clan's traditional customs and rituals. For this reason, the initiation process is disrupted due to a lack of knowledge and involvement of families.

Participant #2 in FGD2 stated:

*You see through his actions whether he is a boy or a man, regardless of his age and marital status. By actions, I mean taking responsibility over his actions and also being able to protect his family. Responsibility plays a significant role in one's journey to manhood. I believe a responsible man is not a threat to those who surround him, and a man should be able to respect himself and others. Some of the old men in our communities behave like boys; they are womanisers and predators since they take advantage of younger girls simply because they have money. To me, that is a reflection of boyish behaviour because they leave their wives at home and date young girls who are young enough to be their daughters.*

Chapter Two (p. 29 ) highlights the ability of individual actors to create their lifeworld according to their habits and preferences. One's social conduct is demonstrated through social interaction. In the above extract, the participant equates the status of manhood with an individual man's ability to take responsibility. He also speaks about the socio-sexual misconduct of some men in his community, which, in his view, resembles boyish behaviour. Chapter Four (p. 86 ) highlights attributes of hypermasculinity that may threaten men's health, such as having multiple sexual partners, which exposes them to contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Another participant in the same focus group discussion, *Participant #4*, commented:

*In the olden days, boys would wear tshea – animal skin – our job was to be herdsmen [taking livestock to graze and looking after livestock]. As elders realise that a boy is now growing to becoming young men, they would then get proper clothing for a young man. Now, as a young man, you are expected to find a job and start taking some of the financial responsibilities in the family. You provide for your family. As you grow older you would start having the desire to get married and start a family with the understanding that your family is your responsibility – you need to provide financially and protect your family.*

Participant #4 outlines the traditional manner in which boys were socialised in the villages. According to Participant #4, a boy transitions to manhood when he carries financial responsibility in his family. Ramollo, in Chapter Three (p. 55), indicates that financial support is often limited to one's intimate circle, such as family. Also, this participants mention the desire for a young man to start a family. Marriage is another rite of passage since it signifies starting a new chapter in a young man's life. It also implies that the young man is prepped to lead, financially provide for, and protect his family.

When asked in an interview about the transition from boyhood to manhood, Nkosinathi remarked:

*This is a complex question because people have different understanding relating to manhood. I am Xhosa, and it is expected for a boy to go through initiation school so that he transitions to manhood. I went through the custom as a rite of passage, but I have come to realise initiation school does not turn a boy to becoming a man. Things are no longer the same. The values and knowledge of the ritual has faded. Well, the good thing about initiation school, it will teach you ways of your ancestors, particularly the traditional customs and rituals per your clan name. Unlike my mates, I have learned lot when I was initiating, both the good and bad. I have also learned manhood is about responsibility.*

*Initiation school bestows the sense identity and belonging. The bad side for me – it embraces patriarchy and toxic traits of manhood. For example, your wife must not be in charge household finances as the head of the family. I do not agree with that because my wife work in the finance sector, and she is better positioned to deal with finances.*

*Now, coming back to your question, I think a boy becomes a man when he realises that it is his responsibility to multiply the family lineage, getting married and have having children. In some cases, boys became men at a tender age because of the responsibility of financially providing and protecting their loved ones. Hence, I say initiation school does not turn a boy to being a man. I have learned that initiation school is a traditional custom; however, manhood requires more than that.*

Nkosinathi acknowledges that he underwent the ritual of initiation school, which is a significant custom in his family. Contrary to the views of some men who went through the process, Nkosinathi views initiation school as a ritual that does not transition a young man to becoming a man. He recognises the lessons he learned as he went through the custom and reflects on the good and bad attributes of the ritual. For Nkosinathi, the custom bestows a sense of identity

and belonging, and he sees these as good attributes of the process. He added that the custom is a process that promotes patriarchal and toxic masculine traits. Nkosinathi provides an example of one of the lessons of the ritual, which encourages men to lead the family and take financial responsibility for the household's finances. In his view, this is a patriarchal way of thinking, which excludes women from contributing positively to this aspect of their households. He mentions that his wife works in the financial sector and is better positioned to take control of their household finances, even though his decision goes against what he was taught as an initiate. Similar to Participant #4 of LG2, Nkosinathi believes that a boy becomes a man once he realises he needs to start a family to multiply his lineage. For Nkosinathi, this is not a determining factor in this transition. According to Nkosinathi, young boys transition to manhood due to their context, and some start early, providing financial resources and protecting their families from a tender age. In his closing remarks, Nkosinathi confirms that initiation school is a traditional custom for him but does not confer the status of manhood.

Basetsana, a 32-year-old woman who is an entrepreneur, stated as follows:

*Well, I am Xhosa from the Easter Cape. I grew up there before coming to Bloemfontein. I am the only girl child among three boys. My brothers went through the rite of passage of initiation. However, I believe a boy becomes a man when he takes responsibility over his life. By responsibility, I mean being not depending on parents for everything. It is important for a man to be self-sufficient and able to sustain himself.*

*Initiation school does not turn a boy to a man. I saw that with some of my siblings. They went through the ritual, but nothing changed to show that they are now men – perhaps it is because we come from a self-sufficient family and our parents provided whatever they needed since a boy child is perceived to be more important than the girl child as he is the one to multiply our lineage. But all in all, some of them still acted the same way like boys and not like men who went through the initiation process.*

Basetsana shares Nkosinathi's views regarding the perception that a boy child transitions to manhood once he completes the initiation process. However, reflecting on her personal interaction and experience of her brothers' conduct after going through the initiation, it is clear that Basetsana also believes that going through the ritual does *not* confer the status of manhood. She believes a man should be self-sustainable and independent from parental care after completing the custom. Self-sufficiency and independence are some of the normative expectations of manhood (see Chapter Four, p. 84 ). Also, Basetsana is somewhat embittered by the traditional view of a boy child being more valuable than a girl child.

Participants reflected on the custom of initiation school, which is perceived to be an instrumental rite of passage in the transition from boyhood to manhood. In their reflections, participants described initiation school as a secret ritual. On completion of it, the status of manhood is bestowed upon an initiate. This resonates well with the notion of personhood, based on the premise that the status of African personhood is bestowed upon an individual by others (see Chapter Three, p. 44). The issues of personhood and manhood are complex. The fact that manhood is bestowed upon completion of the ritual does *not* resonate with personhood if being a person in the African spirit of the word excludes irresponsible behaviour, which some initiates are criticised for displaying, even by fellow initiates.

Chapter Four (p. 86) discusses how a man's identity and status of manhood are conferred and confirmed, or refuted, by others. Participants speak about the spiritual aspect of the custom of initiation school: Initiates are taught about the ways of their forefathers/predecessors and the connection between men in uQamata. This view resonates well with Alfred Schütz's notion of the stock of knowledge passed on by predecessors (see Chapter Two<sup>29</sup>, p. ). Young men are taught traditional norms and values related to their family clan through the initiation custom.

Furthermore, participants elaborate on and emphasise the role of traditional healers in the initiation process. The role of a traditional healer is to connect initiates with their ancestors

since they have a gift of communicating with the living and the dead. The traditional healer's role is to connect an initiate with their ancestry and evoke the spirit of those who have departed this world for guidance and protection of initiates. Traditional healers also play a significant role by providing indigenous medicines to assist with surgical healing and/or any form of illness experienced by initiates. The custom of initiation school is a holistic rite of passage that aligns the initiate's soul, spirit and body (see Chapter Three, p. 43 ).

Participants highlighted the misconduct and disorder that are currently occurring in the practice. According to participants, the ritual is no longer a secret practice since the values and knowledge relating to the custom are fading. In this context, participants believe that the practice has lost its secrecy meaning. They emphasised that initiators used to be older men who had lived long enough to gain knowledge and experience of this rite of passage. Also, participants stated that initiators and initiates have lost respect and humility since some initiates commit social ills upon their arrival from the bush.

Alfred Schütz (see Chapter, Two p. 29) maintains that a person's predecessors experienced, interpreted and constructed an intersubjective world, which they gradually accepted as their subjective world. Their thoughts and practices became their reality, which ultimately became their truth. Therefore, understanding and interpreting the world are grounded in previous experiences. Thus, participants' understanding of the practice of initiation school is based on the knowledge and experiences of their predecessors, viewing the current approach as disorderly and not in keeping with accepted practice.

#### ***7.4 Masculinity and intimate relations***

Masculinity is often described in terms of the interactions between men and other men, men and women and children. To a large extent, these relations provide space where sexist views and attitudes are practised. Masculine identities are constructed through social interaction and social experience; this sometimes involves putting on a mask that conforms to these

expectations, wearing the mask, and struggling to begin taking off the mask. This section focuses on participants' relationships with their significant others, such as spouses and romantic partners, including their relationships with their peers.

#### **7.4.1 Participants' relationships with women**

Men and women are socialised to internalise stereotypical gender roles, particularly in the context of heterosexual intimate relationships. Masculinity is often constructed and practised within the scope of traditional norms that embrace patriarchal notions of masculinity and the submissiveness of women. In Chapter Four (p. 51), hooks indicates that the women who began the feminist movement advocated for the recognition of women's rights. Ironically, some of these women had intimate relations with men who held conservative ideas relating to gender.

hooks added that when women are the main providers for their families, society still views child nurturing and domestic work as mandatory responsibilities. Also, society still expects men to provide for their families financially, irrespective of their ability to meet the expectations. Participants reflect on their relationships with significant partners and spouses. Participants also remarked on what they perceive to be expectations of their intimate partner about manhood.

Fake, a 44-year-old unmarried man, states:

*Currently, I am not seeing anyone, but I will talk about the three women whom I have children with. I was married and got divorced; my relationship with my ex-wife is bad. We are not able to co-parent. Our communication comes via the family advocate. It was though we were never married. The only thing she expect from me is money for our son, yet she does not allow me to see my son. After the divorce, I was in a relationship, and I have a child with the lady. We went our separate ways because we realised that we are not compatible. We have a good relationship; we are able to communicate, but our*

*communication is based on the well-being of our child, and she allows me to see my child – I have a good relationship with my child.*

*I have a good relationship with the mother of my third child. We are co-parenting, which thus far, there are no problems, and I can see my child. The two ladies allow me to be a present father even though I do not live with the children; for example, I attend school meetings and other important events of the lives of my children. I think all these ladies expect me to provide maintenance money since they are living with my children. I do not have a problem with that, but I am self-employed, and at times, I am unable to meet their needs and expectations. Sometimes, they get disappointed when I am unable to meet their expectations, but my ex-wife is not that understanding.*

Within the context of fatherhood, Fake reflects on his relationships with the mothers of his three children, including his ex-wife. Fake's relationship with these three women is based on his role as a father of their children. Chapter Eight (p. 284) focuses on the participants' perceptions, understanding and practice of fatherhood. Fake remarked about the dynamics of each relationship with the three mothers. He shared that the relationship he has with his ex-wife is a challenge since they are unable to co-parent and communicate matters pertaining to their child without law enforcement. Fake's description of the expectations of the mothers of his children aligns with the traditional normative gender expectations whereby a man is responsible for providing financial resources for his children (see Chapter Four, p. 85). He added that the two other mothers allow him to be a present and involved father. It is evident that Fake and the two mothers of his children are able to negotiate and re-negotiate his role as a father based on his right to see his children; some men are often denied access to their children due to a lack of financial provision, which can harm the relationship between children and their fathers. Fake also mentioned the challenges of his socioeconomic context as a self-employed man; he deems it important to negotiate and (re)negotiate the expectation of financial provision to alert his children and their mothers when he is unable to meet their expectations.

Jonase, a 55-year-old married man, comments:

*Talking about the relationship I have with my wife makes me sad. I have been unemployed for many years. My wife works as a domestic worker. She does not earn much, but she is the breadwinner of our family. I believe she expects me to be like other men who are employed or generating income to provide for our family. I know she thinks I am a failure or disgraceful husband since I could not afford to purchase a house like other men do for their wives. To some extent, I agree with her since I failed to even get an RDP house. We have been renting a place for years. I know she is fed up and she would often say painful things since I am not able to meet her expectations of buying a house and financially provide for our family. It is sad to know how she feels about me; it makes me feel like I am not man enough – almost like I am useless. Unfortunately, I do not have a voice in my house, and it is sad [participant cries and asks to take a break].*

hooks (1984, p. 46), in Chapter Four (p. 51), argues that recognising sexist oppression of women should not be at the cost of acknowledging male pain. For hooks, patriarchy is a system that can be oppressive and harmful to men, women, and children. Some men are hurt by the rigid gender roles and expectations that women and society at large prescribe. From the above extract, it is evident that this participant views himself as a failure since he cannot adhere to personal and societal expectations. It is also clear that he has assimilated the very normative gender roles that are harmful to his sense of self. hooks (1984, p. 14), in Chapter Four (p. 53), noted that not all men derive similar or equal benefits from the social system of patriarchy due to societal inequalities, which do not allow them into desirable socioeconomic and socio-political positions.

Jonase provides insight into the experiences of some Black South African men who find themselves in impoverished environments due to a lack of financial resources and power. Similarly to the main assumptions of African personhood (see Chapter Three, p. 44 ), a person can succeed or fail in being recognised as a person. Their inability to meet the expectations of his wife, Jonase, and to some extent, Fake, resulted in them not feeling like real men. According

to Coetzee and Rau (2009), in Chapter Five (p. 107), using memory enables the researcher to understand participants' positive and negative experiences that influence their formulation of reality. It is evident that Jonase's formulation of manhood is based on negative experiences that led him to see himself as not a real man. Also, memories evoke participants' emotions regarding a specific event in their lives; this allows the researcher a window into the feelings that stem from what participants recall. In this regard, the researcher accessed the participant's emotions of sadness and disappointment as he recalled his social setting.

Participant #4 in FGD1, who is married, stated:

*I believe I have a good relationship with my wife. We agree and disagree about certain things – that is what marriage is about. There are ups and downs. I know she expects me to be a protector, provider and be a present father, though our children are now adults. If I do not meet her expectations, she gets frustrated, but we always try to resolve our conflict.*

*I would like to state something: Being a man in this country is hard. The government embrace women's rights and disregard men's rights. Through my observation, some men in the community do not have a voice in their homes because if they do raise up some issues, they are labelled abusers. Being a husband is not easy because you carry a lot of responsibility on your shoulders. Some men are reduced to being children, whereby they have no say in what is happening in their homes. It sad to witness how harsher law enforcement officials are to men than women. A man can be arrested for assaulting a woman, but if a woman assaults a man, it is considered to be self-defence. Some families are dysfunctional because men are no longer leading their households. I am not promoting gender-based violence, but the truth be told, some men do not have authority in their marriages.*

The participant shares that he has a good relationship with his wife, acknowledging and accepting their different views relating to certain aspects of their marriage. Participant #4 in FGD1 voiced some of the challenges men face in their marriages. He views the interference of the state in marriages as oppressive towards men. In Chapter Four 68(p. 46), Ngozi acknowledged the discomfort in engaging in gender discourses because people would rather talk about human rights than share their understanding of what gender entails. According to Participant #4, the government recognises women's rights but disregards the rights and the pain of men in South Africa. In Chapter Four (p. 67), Tomassi reports that in social contexts, men often doubt their masculine security and feel targeted if they think differently. As a result, men experience insecurities relating to manhood. The insecurities result from the contradiction between social norms, values, and gender roles, which are automatically internalised during socialisation, particularly early socialisation, and their current life experiences.

\*Akhona, a 40-year-old married woman, stated as follows:

*I have been happily married for 10 years. My husband and I have a good relationship and mutual understanding on how to run our household and how to raise our children. Like any other relationship, we do not agree on certain things, but we try to resolve the issue as soon as possible. I expect him to lead our family because it his duty as the man of the house. I also expect him to protect, provide financially and be present and involved in the lives of our three children – spend time with our children. When he is not able to fulfil the expectations, I get disappointed, but I also know there must be a valid reason.*

Though Akhona highlights that she has a good relationship with her husband, her expectations reflect traditional gender notions associated with manhood (see Chapter Four, p. 85 ); she expects her husband to lead, protect and provide financially. She also expects her husband to be a present and involved father, promoting more progressive and liberal notions of manhood and fatherhood. It is evident that balancing the traditional and contemporary can lead to a good relationship. However, this study's data collection was not designed to situate the

researcher *between* a participant and his/her spouse/partner, although it would have been interesting to know Akhona's husband's views in this regard.

When asked to talk about the relationship he has with his wife, Modiakgotla, a 64-year-old widowed man, replies:

*My wife is late and I decided not to date or marry anyone else. We had a good and healthy marriage. She was my friend; I had the freedom to talk about anything, and she would not scream at me or judge me. The only thing that caused us not to agree was our parenting style. She was very strict, and I was much more lenient with the boys. Other than that, she was a homemaker and a good mother. Our children were quite young when she passed on; hence, I decided not to introduce any [other] woman to my children. When she was alive, she expected that I discipline our boys. She also expected me to be the man of the house – protect and provide financial resources. She understood when I could not meet some of her expectations, but I tried by all means not to disappoint her. Talking about her brings beautiful memories of my marriage and I am sure she is very proud of our boys; they are now adults.*

Modiakgotla shares that he and his wife had different views on how to parent their children, as she was stricter with them and felt that he was lenient in disciplining them. This contradicts the existing perceptions of traditional fatherhood, as traditional African fathers are perceived as the disciplinarians in their families. It also embraces liberal ideas of fatherhood. Modiakgotla has fond memories of his late wife. Coetzee and Rau (2009) found that social settings often influence people's memories so that these memories and their recall are co-constructed (see Chapter Five, p. 107 ). In this context, Modiakgotla recalled the fond memories he co-constructed with his late wife; he decided not to marry another woman after her passing. Furthermore, he refers to her as a homemaker and a good mother, attributes of femininity. He also remarked about his wife's level of understanding if he could not meet her expectations. Modiakgotla was no exception to normative expectations since his wife expected him to adhere

to the traditional social attributes, norms and values of manhood. In his case, his memories of their happy marriage showcase the positive functionality of traditional norms.

Participants reflect on their relationships with their significant partners within the context of parenthood. It is evident that parenthood takes precedence in their intimate relations. Participants outline normative expectations in their relationships; these stem from stereotypical notions of gender and gender roles, including the importance of a man being a leader, protector and provider. They also indicate the importance of being involved and 'present' parents. Unfortunately, some participants are unable to meet these expectations due to their socioeconomic position and social settings. Fortunately, there is understanding and acceptance of this in several of the relationships.

#### ***7.4.2 Participants' relationships with peers***

Similarly to the notion of personhood (see Chapter Three, p. 44), the status of being a real man is bestowed by other men, particularly their peers. Other men's perceptions and affirmation of manhood are important in how an individual perceives himself and interacts with others. The recognition of being a real man is disassociated from any feminine activities. Men are often expected to demonstrate their abilities to adhere to the social script of gender and gender roles. However, it is through interaction with other men that an individual man can attain this status. Men who do not conform to rigid gender roles and expectations are often deemed by their peers as being weak men. This can be a burden to some men, particularly those who do not subscribe to patriarchal ideas of manhood. This subsection focuses on the relationship between participants and their peers. Participants focus on the influence of their peers on their understanding and practices of manhood.

When requested to describe his relationship with his peers, \*Kgosi, a 28-year-old unemployed, replied:

*I used to have a lot of friends, but I realised that not every person you consider to be a friend is a true friend. I now have two friends I grew up with; those are the people who do not look down on me because I am unemployed and I am still living with my grandmother. Others made me feel like a burden as if I am calling to ask for money or they have to cover my bill. The two friends that I have are good to me, and they always encourage me to apply for jobs and to never lose faith.*

*We always try to uplift each other by talking about positive things we need to achieve since we all have children. Our aspiration is to see our children living a comfortable life where they do not have to suffer. We do talk about women, particularly those we have children with, but most of the time, we complain about their attitude and expectations. We grew up with the notion that women must submit, but our generation of women do not submit. The South African government is [more] protective over women than men. I am not justifying gender-based violence; however, in some cases, men end up being violent because of the actions and disrespect of women. Those are the kind of things we talk about, and it has helped me to stay away from toxic women.*

Kgosi confirms that other men bestow the status of manhood, highlighting that he feels judged by his friends since he is unemployed and still lives at his grandparents' house (see Chapter Four, p. 86 ). It is evident that men are judged based on being financially self-sufficient. This participant remarked that he and his friends often complain about the behaviour and attitudes of mothers of their children. Feminism, particularly in its earlier more radical forms, *coined* the term "toxic masculinity". In this regard, Kgosi drew attention to the fact that women are not automatically exempt from creating or maintaining toxic gender relations.

\*Percy, a 55-year-old unemployed man, comments:

*I had one friend who just passed on recently. He was my confidant and knew everything that I encountered in my life. He was a brother to me. I trusted him with all my heart because I know he had my best interests at heart. We would talk about life; he was very wise and always had sensible advices. We talked about women and children. Women want money and do not appreciate men's contribution in the house as long as it is not money. We shared ideas on parenting, how to discipline our children, especially teenagers. In my view, he was a good man because he did everything a man must do for his family: providing, protecting and ensuring there is a roof over their head. Those are the things a man should do for his family, and he motivated me to do the same for my family, which I did. We assisted each other a lot and tried to do good thing, but you know we are not perfect; we used to drink alcohol a lot – just enjoy ourselves.*

Percy describes the brotherhood between him and his late friend, highlighting that his late friend was his confidant, demonstrating the emotional and communitarian support that existed in their friendship (see Chapter Three, p. 33). Percy and his friend viewed women as appreciative of receiving financial resources from men but as disregarding non-monetary support. This view resonates with the social expectations of manhood so often spoken of by several participants (see Chapter Four, p. 85). Percy states that his friend motivated him to fulfil his role as a man for his family, which still resembles traditional societal expectations of the man being the provider and protector of his family. He notes that he and his friends would often consume alcohol in their social gatherings, which is a form of male bonding session away from their women and household cares and responsibilities. This highlights the traditional masculine bonding events that the participant shares with other men who are his friends. Alcohol consumption by men is often linked to the traditional act that is associated with the hypermasculinity traits that might compromise the health of some men, as indicated in Chapter Four (p. 86).

Reflecting on the relationship he has with his peers, \* Jabu, a 77-year-old man who is a pensioner, states:

*When I left my father's house, my father said I...should be careful of the company that I keep. I took his advice. For the longest time I did not have a person I would say it is a friend. Now I have one friend, he is younger than me but he is wise. He is a family man like me, though he is widowed. We often buy beer, sit under a tree and enjoy ourselves. We talk about matters related to our families and ways we can help each other since we are neighbours. I enjoy his company because he is not a problematic person in the community. He is the kind of man who would assist and expect nothing in return. I cannot say we talk about women because his wife is late, and he decided not to marry another woman for the sake of his children. At times, stepmothers are cruel towards their stepchildren, and he did not want to put his children through things of that nature. By prioritising the well-being of his children, he gained my respect. He was very supportive when my son was murdered and assisted with burial of my son.*

Jabu reflects on his father's advice: Be cautious when selecting friends. This is the stock of knowledge that was passed on to him by his father, which resonates well with the view of Alfred Schütz (see Chapter Two, p. 29). He also spoke of his current friendship, narrating the communitarian and emotional support that exists in his friendship. He added that the conversations between him and his friend are based on family and their communitarian support. Jabu views his friend as selfless and someone who prioritises assisting others without expectations. In this context, Jabu sees his friend as the embodiment of the core principles of Ubuntu, such as kindness, compassion and respect. Like Percy, Jabu's bond with his friend also includes using alcohol. Percy and Jabu are two unrelated people who highlighted that sharing alcohol with a friend(s) is an important bonding space in their different friendship gatherings.

\*Precious, a 36-year-old employed woman, remarked:

*I have a group of friends who are also single mothers like me. We often talk about the challenges we are faced with, such as our children's fathers not fulfilling their roles. The most unfortunate thing is not receiving any form of support from another parent. Women are the ones who are most of the time left with the responsibility of caring for their children, while men live their lives freely as though they do not have children. We complain a lot about men, but we also encourage and help each other where possible.*

Similarly to other participants, Precious talks about the communitarian and emotional support her friends provide. She mentions that her friends are single mothers who often discuss the challenges they face concerning their relationships with their children's fathers. Precious's conversations with her friends are about the problems that stem from the absence of biological fathers, placing a significant responsibility on them as single mothers. Chapter Four (p. 98 ) showed that the absence of biological fathers in South African Black communities is a growing concern, clouding the issue of Black masculinities. Precious also highlighted her reciprocal relations with her friends as they try to assist each other where possible. This resonates well with the notions of reciprocity outlined in Chapter Two (p. 28). Though participants refer to parental obligations, Chapter Eight offers a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions, understandings and experiences of fatherhood. The following section focuses on participants' construction and interpretation of manhood. The concept of manhood describes the core traditional traits of being a man since these attributes are often socially constructed and based on the social expectations of being a man.

### ***7.5 Participants' meaning of manhood***

Scholars working in Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities have unpacked and provided insight into the meanings and attributes of Black masculinities in different social settings. Describing what South African Black masculinities entails is complex and multifaced due to the various social locations of Black men. South African political history has added another layer of complexity in terms of attempting to describe Black masculinities (see Chapter Four, p. 55).

One of the objectives of this study is to investigate how Black South African men's daily lived experiences shape their construction and interpretation of manhood. In this section, participants share their perceptions of the meaning of manhood, shaped by their lived experiences. Male participants also provided insight into their practice of manhood.

When asked to provide his understanding and interpretation of manhood, \*Kenny, a 37-year-old man employed man, replied:

*It is difficult to explain to you what manhood is, but I will try. Growing up, I was taught that a man needs to be strong and courageous; for example, if I would come home crying because another boy bullied me, I was expected to go back and beat that child, too. So, I grew up knowing that I had to defend myself because, at home, they would say I was weak if I did not fight back. I would say I bottled a lot of anger inside because I would engage in unnecessary fights. I could not express what I am thinking or what I am feeling without fighting. As I got older, I realised that my reaction is not good because I would be offended by minor things.*

*With the passing of my father, I learned that manhood is about responsibility because I had to take up my father's role – for example, leading the family, protecting and providing for my family. I also had to perform some family rituals as the eldest son of the family; fortunately, my father had taught me. As I am talking to you now, I realise manhood is about being strong and courageous because one will have to face some challenges head-on.*

Kenny acknowledges his stock of knowledge (the teachings of his family regarding manhood); refer to Chapter Two (p. 29). He shares that he was taught to defend himself physically as a boy child, which became a typical way of resolving conflict with other children. Abrahams et al. (2013), in Chapter Four (p. 86), state that in most communities, older people associate aggressive behaviour with acceptable boyish behaviour. However, it is generally not acceptable

among adults; thus, contradictions exist in understanding and judging what constitutes socially desirable or undesirable behaviour. Physical force also promotes stereotypical attributes of manhood, such as emotional restrictedness and violence (see Chapter Four, p. 84 ).

Kenny reports that he had a moment of self-reflection, which changed his masculine practices. Furthermore, he describes manhood as a responsibility since he had to take over his father's responsibilities after his passing. Taking over his father's responsibilities, Kenny referred to him performing traditional family rituals as the family's eldest son. This resonates with the traditional belief that a father is the one closest to uQamata (the God of his forefathers); therefore, he is responsible for connecting his family and children to uQamata and ancestors (see Chapter Three, p. 58). Kenny views strength and courage as core virtues of manhood.

In his response to the question about his understanding of manhood, \*Blessing replies:

*Being a man is not about age but maturity, the amount of knowledge you have to become a man. A man could be 40 years and still not be matured enough to be a man or a husband. My pastor taught me to invest in knowledge because knowledge has a way of directing you to be the man God wants you to be. An unknowledgeable man is like a pillar without concrete foundation. It's easy for it to fall. It's easy for such a man to be deceived and have his home torn apart. It's easy for such a man to start failing because of lack of enough knowledge to help him stand with integrity, maturity and character.*

In Chapter Three (p. 49 ), Menkiti states that ethical and moral sensibility indicates that a person is mature, and worth being recognised as a person. According to Blessing, maturity and knowledge are the main traits of manhood. Blessing perceives age as not being a determining factor. Rather, he believes maturity to be more valuable in the status of manhood. Chapter Three (p. 46) shows that the concept of *umtu* is based on the principle of excellence and

plenitude of force at maturation. Therefore, *umtu* entails the notion of excellence and abundant force of maturation. This notion is similar to Blessing's understanding of manhood.

Blessing reflected on the stock of knowledge (see Chapter Two, p. 29) relating to manhood, which his pastor passed on to him. He added a metaphorical description of a less knowledgeable man: Blessing sees such a man as less grounded, like an unstable pillar. He draws on these similarities to explain the dangers of a man who does not possess enough wisdom to sustain his family. In Chapter Two (p. 36), Luckmann and Berger explain how people use language to indicate intersubjective understanding and meaning in a shared lifeworld. Blessing used the metaphor of a pillar to illustrate his intersubjective understanding of the concept of manhood.

\*Bra Steve, commented:

*I think being a manhood is not biological. It is about being leader, leading by example and fulfilling your responsibilities. Responsibility plays an important role; being responsible for your actions. Manhood stands by his word. A man's word must match his actions. It is also about how you behave yourself privately and publicly; have integrity and dignity. Respect for yourself and others is important.*

For Bra Steve, manhood is a social construct rather than a biological phenomenon. Scholars of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities agree that gender is a social construct; therefore, the participants' views resonate with their theories. Bra Steve describes manhood as a responsibility associated with the role of leadership, echoing traditional gender notions associated with masculinity. Furthermore, he referred to the importance of social conduct, as he speaks about the importance of how a man behaves in private and public spaces. Contrary to the initial call of the first two waves of feminism, Bra Steve uses the feminist argument of private being public to emphasise the significance of consistency in man's social conduct.

A participant in LG1, stated as follows:

*Being a man is all about responsibility and good character. A man is someone who is matured. How do we know that someone is matured? You listen to what they say and how they reason. You also see in their actions. Maturity is about how a person approaches matters related to family and others around him. Being a man is about building other people, keeping family matters under control by ensuring that family customs and traditions do not fade away but are preserved with respect and dignity. When I say traditional and customs, I refer to one's knowledge and ability to perform rites of passage from when there is a new baby in the family, or when there is death in the family, and other rites of passages in between. In my view, a man is someone who is responsible.*

Chapter Two (p. 24 ) presents the contribution of one of the founding fathers of the discipline of sociology, Max Weber, explains the concept of *Verstehen*, which concerns itself with the interpretive understanding of social actions. People's thoughts and actions are crucial in describing the foundational structure of reality, which often seems self-evident to people 'inside' that reality. According to Weber, reality is best understood in the context of the *everyday* world.

Contrary to the social norm that describes manhood in terms of a man's ability to provide financially, the participant in LG1 described maturity as an important virtue. To him, maturity is determined and demonstrated by the ethical reasoning and actions of an individual man. Ethical reasoning and moral senses are crucial in affirming the status of personhood (see Chapter Three, p. 44). This participant added that manhood is the ability to sustain family customs and traditions with respect and dignity. Chapter Three (p. 58 ) highlights the significant connection of man to uQamata and to his patrilineage. The participant also referred to different rites of passage that sometimes require the presence and involvement of a male figure in the family.

The second participant in the same Lekgotla gathering, LG1, commented:

*To be honest, I have been asking myself: What is manhood? In the Black community, some people believe manhood is define by going to the initiation school. As a young man who did not go through the ritual of initiation school, I ask myself if indeed manhood is about being initiated or the choices of an individual man. By choices, I refer to the way an individual man behaves or represent himself and maturity – his outlook of life.*

*However, this discussion has been fruitful because I now realise that manhood is about responsibility – taking up family responsibility is an important trait of manhood. I feel it is a good thing to listen to other people, like in this session, to hear different views, especially from our elders, since they have travelled the road ahead of us. Being a man is not only about being a protector and financial provider. Maturity also plays an important role as a man interacts with other people, I think, being a sensible person and a good representation of your family.*

To most young South African Black men living in townships, the concept of manhood is complex and multi-layered since it comprises the traditional customs that entail rites of passage and the social notions that no longer embrace traditional rituals attached to manhood. This participant's comments highlight that other young South African Black men are confronted with a similar predicament: Battling with the knowledge of what it means to be a man, and how they negotiate their positioning as men in society. This participant appreciated the stock of knowledge of other men, particularly those who are older, with the sentiment that their lived experiences shape their understanding of manhood. Furthermore, the participant displayed self-realisation as other participants describe manhood as having responsibilities, which are bestowed upon individual men in addition to financial provision and protection requirements.

Another participant in the same LG1, added:

*Going through initiation school is part of being a man, but it is not what manhood entails. In my view, maturity and responsibility are the two key characteristics of manhood. A person can go through initiation ritual and still behave in an immature manner. Maturity is seen in how a person acts and his reasoning when he speaks. Some men are old, but reasons like a young person. Manhood is about how you carry yourself, the things you decide to do or not to do. In short, I would describe manhood as maturity, which people will see in your actions.*

This participant echoed the views of several other participants, outlining maturity and responsibility as the two main attributes that make a man a real man. He added that undergoing the rites of passage does not necessarily determine the quality of manhood. If a man has not gone through the traditional rites of passage, that does not stop him from being a man. This view resonates with Gyekye's argument that a person who does not acquire the status of personhood does not become a non-human; that individual will always be a human being since he is of a human seed (see Chapter Three, p. 52). However, lacking moral and ethical senses will hinder a person from being recognised as *umtu*. Social interaction and conduct are essential in determining the quality of manhood; as most participants emphasise, social conduct is vital to verifying a person's level of maturity. Furthermore, it is in social interaction that the quality of manhood is signalled and where others can gauge a person's level of maturity.

### **7.6 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter provides insight into participants' perceptions, understanding, experience and practice of masculinities in their daily lives. In establishing their perceptions of manhood, participants recall the qualities and behaviours of men who significantly influence their lives. Participants highlight the negative and positive traits of manhood that stood out in the men they identified. They also reflect on the lessons related to manhood they were exposed to via these men. Though some of the lessons were not verbally communicated, participants learned

through observation and interaction. They also drew on the stock of knowledge of men with whom they identified, which connects to the meaning and understanding of their lifeworld.

Participants share their experiences relating to their transition from boyhood to manhood. They focus on the role played by the institution of family in the transition from boyhood to manhood. Understanding that people's perceptions are often influenced by their lived experiences, participants comments on how their families prepared them for manhood. Though some refer to traditional gender roles and expectations, such as the gendered division of house chores and the expectation of taking up the protector's role, some participants refer to family contexts which led them to transition from boyhood to manhood. Unanimously, participants view the transition from boyhood to manhood as bestowing responsibility. The various social locations and circumstances of each participant usually determine these responsibilities. To some, the transition from boyhood to manhood bestowed parental responsibilities and challenges at a young age, which left participants with the burden of trading off the experience of being young with the responsibility of meeting the needs of their dependent family members.

Furthermore, participants reflect on their experiences transitioning from boyhood to manhood. Participants talk about initiation school, which in most African traditional customs is a crucial ritual in the transition from boyhood to manhood. Without jeopardising the secrecy of the custom, participants reflect on the latent function of the ritual, which embraces the core values of Ubuntu and the cosmology of an African human person. Participants voice their concerns regarding the changes influencing the practice of this custom, which, in their view, contributes to the custom losing its significance in communities. To some participants, some teachings of the ritual promote toxic traits of masculinity, perpetuating the notion that women hold a parallel position to a child. This view hinders the recognition of women as decision-makers in their homes, disregarding women's empowerment in various economic spheres. Several participants do not believe that undergoing the custom is a confirmation of the status of manhood; instead, they think that it is still the responsibility of an individual man to act in a

socially desirable manner before he can attain the status of being a real man. To most participants, accountability and social conduct are core principles of manhood, demonstrating the ability of a man to uphold the many responsibilities that attend to the status of manhood.

Scholars in feminist and Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities have centred discourses about manhood on the relations between men and other men and between men, women and children. This chapter features participants' reflections on how they relate to their peers, as well as their romantic partners or spouses. Most participants allude to an unwavering expectation of their romantic partners or spouses that they must provide financially. This expectation is a challenge to participants who do not have the financial means to do so; they express the pain associated with not being perceived as a real man by a significant other, negatively affecting their relationships with their spouses or romantic partners. Participants also talk about their relationships with peers. Most indicated that they discussed the context of their romantic relationships with their friends, including some of their challenges. Participants regard their friendships as solid support structures, providing the support they needed in various contexts.

The last section of this chapter focuses on participants' understanding of manhood and its meaning. They found it difficult to share their understanding of manhood outside the context of gender roles and social expectations. Participants equate manhood with fulfilling responsibilities. Participants use the term responsibility ambiguously, as an all-encompassing term that defines social norms, roles and expectations. On the one hand, participants view responsibility as practical and as being able to fulfil social norms and expectations like leadership, financial provision, and protection. On the other hand, they talk about responsibility in terms of intrinsic, underlying attributes, such as maturity, which manifests (or does not) in social conduct. Participants indicated that maturity is an important aspect influencing a person's actions and, as a consequence, the perceptions of that person by others. This resonates with the main assumptions of African human personhood: Moral and ethical sensibility enables individuals to act in a socially desirable manner.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: BEING A FATHER

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### *8.1 Background information*

This chapter reflects on understandings and lived experiences of fatherhood. The chapter explores the participants' relationships with their biological fathers, including the role of social fathers in their lives, particularly those who grew up without the presence of their biological fathers. The concept of social fathers has gained popularity in discourses on fatherhood. As discussed in Chapter Four (p. 59), the notion of 'social fathers'<sup>59</sup> indicates that fatherhood can also be a communitarian effort. Therefore, the focus will be on (1) the nature of the relationships between participants and social fathers, (2) participants' perceptions of social fathers (e.g., the characteristics they liked and disliked about their social fathers), and (3) lessons relating to fatherhood that participants learned from their social fathers.

Chapter Four (p. 97) thoroughly discussed the phenomenon of the absence of biological Black fathers, highlighting the concept of masculinities and fatherhood and the roles thereof. The researcher explored the phenomenon of the absence of the biological father, noting the different contexts contributing to their absence. The researcher also focused on *uninvolved fathers* who reside with their children but have no meaningful relationship with them.

This chapter presents participants' narratives on how they practise fatherhood and negotiate the expectations of their children, specifically focusing on the nature of the relationships, expectations, and reactions when those expectations are not met. This chapter also highlights the interaction between parents. Lastly, the researcher discusses understandings and meanings of fatherhood emerging in the more communal contexts of focus groups and lekgotla meetings.

## **8.2 Participants' early exposure to and experiences of fatherhood**

The expectations of fatherhood have changed over the years: from the traditional position of men as distant fathers (mainly breadwinners) to fathers as nurturing and involved (physical and emotional presences). Literature on contemporary fatherhood emphasises fathers' emotional involvement in their children's lives, replacing the traditional ideas of fatherhood. An involved father establishes a sound and emotional relationship with their children and invests efforts to meet their needs.

### **8.2.1 Relationship with present biological fathers**

The following sub-section focuses on participants' relationship with their biological fathers. Participants described the nature of their relationship with their biological fathers and the characteristics they liked and disliked about them.

When requested to describe his relationship with his father, \*Sizwe, a 39-year-old man working as a director in the finance sector, stated:

*I have a good relationship; he has been a great influence in my life. Growing up, I did not agree with his ways of doing things, but now, as a father, I am appreciative of the manner in which he raised his children (my siblings and me). Now, we have a close relationship, and I regard him as my confidant because he has always been there to guide and groom me to becoming the man that I am today. My upbringing was quite nice, and I was very disciplined because my father instilled discipline. My father has always been my hero, and my greatest fear is disappointing him. However, I can see he is very proud of my achievements; he is very proud of me as his son.*

Sizwe indicated that he had a good relationship with his father and expressed his appreciation of his father's parenting style. Chapter Four (p. 97 ) presents literature on the importance of a boy child having a present father and how the presence of a biological father impacts a child's

physical and mental health. For Sizwe, his father is his confidant, indicating that he feels free and safe to speak openly to him about confidential or sensitive issues. It also shows that his father's parenting approach has some aspects of progressive fathering. However, he stood by the traditional role of being an authoritative disciplinarian figure, often linked to the traditional fathering style.

When requested to talk about things that he likes and dislikes about his father, Sizwe stated:

*My father has a good sense of humour and would always say something funny to make people laugh. He likes to have people around him all the time. He is known by a lot of people in the community; his status in the community protected me from being a victim of crime because of the respect and fear that community members have of him. I am fortunate to have such a loving father; he loves his family and people in the community. I like that he would always share his wisdom with the young and old. He is a father to many people in the community; hence, he is always surrounded by people ... we always have people coming to visit him at home.*

Sizwe is proud that his father is respected and visited by other community members. This reflects Sizwe's appreciation of his father's good communitarian rapport and support from his community, demonstrating social connectedness and unity among community members. He also mentioned the latent benefits of his father's community network, which provided security. This aligns with Chapter Three (p. 55), which discussed the protective role brought about by the presence of the biological father.

Talking of the things that he disliked about his father, Sizwe mentions:

*He is very strict... whenever he had to discipline me, unlike my sister. This had a negative impact on our relationship, I did not understand why he was more harsh to me, unlike my siblings. In retrospect, I think he was harsh because I was the only boy child. My late mother had to intervene and asked him to change his way on disciplining me, because, at times, he used corporal punishment, and I would be injured. At some point, I was*

*scared of him and would often avoid doing things that would upset him. I felt it was unfair because I am a human being, and human beings are not perfect ... at times, greatest lessons come from making mistakes. I am glad he listened to my mother. He would listen to my mother all the time and changed his ways. Currently, we have a good relationship, and I am thankful that we get along well.*

Sizwe describes his father as a disciplinarian, and his disciplinarian approach entailed violence. The use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure almost compromised their relationship since he was scared of his father even though they had a good relationship. Sizwe highlighted that his mother intervened and requested his father to change his disciplinarian approach, emphasising the stereotypical gender notion of the role of a mother (*i.e.*, being a nurturer and a homemaker).

Describing the nature of his relationship with his father, \*Paballo, a 50-year-old unemployed man, reported:

*I have a good relationship with my father. He likes listening to radio and watching current political affairs on television. This was his daily routine, and would often invite me to join him as he listened and watched current affair on radio and televisions. He taught me so much about current affairs, particularly political affairs. I enjoyed his company.*

It is evident that Paballo's father enjoyed passing on his interest and knowledge of current and political affairs to Paballo. The time that Paballo spent with his father listening to radio and watching the news seems to have been a valuable and fond memory of his time with his father while growing up. They shared a common interest. This brings a different aspect of the concept of 'provision' as Paballo's father provided his time, knowledge, and understanding by sharing his knowledge of current and political affairs with his son. Paballo reported that he enjoyed his father's company, and his narrative suggests this was a reciprocal bond. Chapter Two (p. 28)

indicated that a reciprocity perspective occurs when people partake in events and activities that are understandable to others in the same way they are understandable to themselves.

Reflecting on the things that he likes about his father, Paballo comments:

*I like that he cares about his family and people in the community. He was active in community forums and encouraged me to be active in these forums. It gives me so much joy to serve people in community forums. Community forums are aimed at improving the lives of others; we focus on issues around service delivery and safety of community members by patrolling in the community to look out for any criminal activities. Besides that, my father reprimanded and guided me. He would encourage me to attend church and be accountable for my actions.*

Similarly to Sizwe, Paballo enjoyed that his father showed an ethic of care towards people in his community. The ethic of care is one of the core principles of Ubuntu since the focus is on interconnection among community members. Paballo's father's involvement in community forums also demonstrates his level of communitarian solidarity and interest in resolving social challenges with others.

Talking about things he dislikes about his father, Paballo mentions:

*He used to consume alcohol a lot; he would drink early in the morning. I am a teenage father. Because of that, my father instructed me to drop out of school and find a job to be able to take care of my child and then-girlfriend. He refused to pay for my school fees since he believed that I am a father and I must take responsibility as a father. He also refused to help financially with provision for my child. I really got hurt by this because I struggled to find a job since I did not have a matric certificate. I dropped out of school when I was in Grade 10. Regardless of his harsh reaction towards me being a teenage father, I feel it is my responsibility to look after him as he is now old and no longer independent. Talking about this saddens my heart because I believe my life would have turned out differently if I was granted permission and support to complete my basic*

*education. I look at my peers and see their achievements, which saddens my heart [withholding tear in his eyes, participant paused and requested to take a break].*

*I never spoke about this issue because it still breaks my heart as I am still unemployed. Unfortunately, I am unable to find a good job; hence, I am still unemployed. But I forgave him for his harsh punishment. I see this as a punishment because he was upset, understandably. However, some parents show support to their children who were in the same predicament as mine. Maybe I could have been successful like my peers whom I went to school with, but I guess families are different.*

South African Black masculinities are often associated with the excessive use of alcohol, as indicated in Chapter Four (p. 86 ), exposing children to the use of alcohol at a young age. Paballo disliked his father's habit of the excessive use of alcohol.

Becoming a teenage father meant that Paballo had to drop out of school to enable him to find work to financially provide for his child. Swartz and Bhana (2009, p. 3) noted that the current studies on fatherhood highlight the negative consequences of teenage fatherhood, such as an impoverished, poverty-stricken outcome, dependency on welfare grants and attaining a lower level of education, subsequently reducing employment opportunities and performance in the workplace. In this context, obtaining a lower level of education became an obstacle in Paballo's pursuit of a good job and financial provision. This narrative reflects the traditional notion of manhood, one that promotes the idea that when a child is brought into the world, the male parent must undertake immediate financial provision and investment. This disregards an individual's need to invest in his future, which might provide sustainable financial security for that person and his family. Paballo felt a sense of hopelessness and helplessness as he witnessed the achievements of his peers. Mills (1958) (in Chapter Nine p. , 304) maintains that an individual can understand his own experiences and gauge his own fate by locating himself in his period, and he can gauge his own chances in life by being aware of other individuals in his circumstances. In this instance, Paballo is aware of the family support some of his peers

receives in a similar situation. Also, he locates himself in his period, recognising what his chances and fate could have been if he was not forced to abandon his basic education.

Paballo mentioned that he never expressed his feelings about his father's decision to take him out of school. Chapter Nine (p. 302) argues that participants who are located in disadvantaged socio-economic locations are marginalised and vulnerable. Due to their circumstances, research becomes a platform where they feel that their voices will matter since they view themselves as failing in their social position (see Chapter Nine, p. 292). Applying Mills's (1959) concept of 'The Sociological Imagination' (see Chapter Nine, p. 304), Rau (2018) explained that in the same way as participants regard their experiences as being real, qualitative researchers view participants' experiences to be real, and as bearing real consequences for participants and others and their lifeworlds. Qualitative researchers pursue the understanding of human perceptions and experiences. Therefore, a qualitative researcher must adopt a humanistic approach to research, allowing participants to freely express their emotions and thoughts relating to a phenomenon they have encountered. As Paballo narrated his experience, the research assistant showed compassion and understanding, supporting Paballo when he requested a break to express his emotions.

Paballo's context is a significant example of the dynamics and struggle of power between a son and a father. Paballo's father demonstrated that as a parent, he has the power to correct misconduct in a way that suits him, not considering the unintended consequences of his decision on the well-being and future of his son and grandchild. Paballo expressed a sense of hopelessness as he witnessed his peers' achievements. As articulated in Mills' notion of the 'sociological imagination', discussed in Chapter Nine (p. 304), the achievements of Paballo's peers and former classmates mirror what his fate could have been if he had the opportunity to pursue and complete his studies.

Explaining his relationship with his late father, \*Motse, a 66-year-old pensioner, stated:

*I had a good relationship with my father, though he worked in the mines far away from home. But when he was home, we could feel his presence. He was a loving father and treated my mother with so much respect. My father was a father to most children in the community. He inspired me to be the father that I am to my children.*

Though Motse's father was a migrant labourer, he viewed his father as a 'present' father. This highlights the understanding of 'present' and 'absent' fathers. As noted in Chapter Four (p. 98), migration is one of the causes of the residential separation of partners and parents from children. However, in this regard, Motse perceived his father as present due to his connection with his father, particularly whenever he went to see and spend time with his family. Motse did not indicate how often his father came to visit. However, his father's presence appeared positive in Motse's memory. This positivity was confirmed whenever his father returned from work, not only by him and his siblings but also by other children in the community. This provides different understandings of the meaning of 'the *presence*' of a biological father. He could be present simply by being in the same location or space, or he can be present in ways that go beyond physical proximity – by being emotionally available to a child, by being interested, involved and willing to share in the child's world.

Talking about the things that he liked about his late father, Motse commented:

*I liked that he was kind to and loved people. I am from a small town where most people are impoverished. My family was one of the few families who were self-sustainable, and my father would invite community members who were suffering to come and have a decent meal with us. During December, when he would come home, we had fun because our neighbours would be at home; adults will be chatting while children were playing. To me, that was kindness and humanity. I also liked that he was the breadwinner of the family – my mother was a housewife, and my father provided for his family. My siblings and I did not lack anything.*

Motse liked his father's communitarian support in their community and took pride in witnessing his father's generosity, representing social connection (see Chapter Three, p. 33). With the understanding of the socio-economic position of his community, Motse's father invited people over, indicating the ethic of care, which is one of the core values of Ubuntu (see Chapter Three, p. 44). He also provided financial resources for his family, a normative expectation of fatherhood. This gesture contradicts Ramollo's view of financial support, which he described as limited to one's intimate social cycle; however, Motse's father extended social and financial support to his community.

Motse's father had a reciprocal relationship with his community members since he would invite them to his home, with some taking advantage of his father's kindness. Alfred Schütz, as discussed in Chapter Two (p. 28), explained that the reciprocity perspective entails individuals partaking in events and actions that are understandable to others in the same way that they are understandable to themselves. Also, Alfred Schütz, as discussed in Chapter Two (p. 6), viewed the lifeworld as an arena that provides space for people's reciprocal actions.

When asked to talk about things that he disliked about his father, Motse answered:

*As much as he was loving and kind, he was also very strict. He was quick to correct ill behaviour. We were raised at the time when corporal punishment was used to correct ill behaviour. He would give us, his children, a good hiding. We were scared of him because he did not tolerate any misconduct. He embraced gender roles: girls must do the housework, and boys should do gardening or fixing broken things in the house. I did not like that because I liked cooking, and he would often criticise me; he viewed this as a woman's role.*

Corporal punishment is an illegal activity in South Africa. However, it remains commonly accepted among Black parents as a method of disciplining their children. Chapter Four (p. 60) outlined that African-Black fathers use violence to discipline their children as a dominant parenting style. Contrary to this notion, Motse had a good relationship with his father.

However, the relationship was clouded by fear since he was aware of his father's lack of tolerance for misconduct and that the inevitable hiding that would result. Based on Motse's narrative, his father's parenting style entailed traditional as well as liberal characteristics of fatherhood.

Also, Motse viewed his father as a parent who embraced gender roles, often criticising Motse for taking part in what was traditionally perceived to be women's activity. According to hegemonic masculinity, men who engage in 'feminine' activities are at the lowest point of the masculine hierarchy (see detailed discussion in Chapter Four, p. 75 ). Men who do not subscribe to traditional gender notions find themselves in a compromised situation since their manhood status is often being questioned. Chapter Four<sup>75</sup> (p. 75) highlights the importance of considering the historical context where fatherhood notions are constructed. Motse grew up in an era where the concept of progressive masculinity was not popular; therefore, his father's parenting choices were likely to have been informed by the historical context that embraced gender roles and patriarchal notions of fatherhood. In terms of the era in which Motse is now an adult, his parenting style has evolved, taking the best from his father and the best from more liberal ideas relevant to his times.

Describing his relationship with his father, \*Mabona, a 44-year-old who is an educator, stated:

*My father is late; he passed on when I was in my late 20s. I grew up in a nuclear family. My father played a huge role in my life. When I was little, I had this perception that he loved my brothers more than me. But as I grew older, I realised he loved his children equally. We go along very well. We had a good relationship. He is my role model.*

Similarly to other participants, Mabona states that he had a good relationship with his father. Mabona described his father as his hero, showing that he held his father in high regard and admired him. Mabona also explained how his perceptions of his father's parenting approach changed as he grew older.

Remembering the things that he liked about his late father, Mabona commented:

*I like that he was not only a father; he was also a friend. My father was a friendly person and well-respected by people in the community. He was a dignified man and commanded respect wherever he went. I like that aspect about him. He was a wise man and would often guide and advise us as his children. He was my confidant, and he would not judge me. He was a true definition of a compassionate person and approachable.*

*People in our community would often seek his advice; he would put himself in their shoes and would give good advice. He was a father figure to most people in our community. I have siblings that are not his, [he was not their] biological father. My father was a teacher, and he was my mentor when I started working as a teacher. He would guide me on how to prepare for the lessons. He encouraged me to be a role model to my learners because some of them come from households where their fathers are not present because of different circumstances.*

Mabona describes his father as his friend, demonstrating his close connection with his father. He views his father as wise and as someone who would share his wisdom with others. This implies that he shared his stock of knowledge with others. Chapter Two (p. 29 ) describes how people's predecessors experienced, interpreted and constructed their intersubjective world and how those phenomena gradually shifted to become their objective world, their 'truth'. The wisdom that Mabona's father shared with others stemmed from his lived experiences and interpretation of his lifeworld – his truth.

Mabona regards his father as a compassionate person. Compassion is one of the main characteristics of Ubuntu, so it is evident that Mabona's father practised some elements of Ubuntu. Similar to other participants, Mabona reflects on his father's communitarian support as a social father in his community. He viewed his father as his role model and a career mentor when he started working as a teacher.

Talking about the things he disliked about his father, Mabona states:

*I did not like his habit of smoking; he was a heavy smoker. Due to his smoking habit, he developed lung cancer, which led to his death; that is the main thing that I disliked. As friendly as he was, he was also very strict. My father was a straight talker. He would often say things that are hurtful without thinking. I believe he was wise but, at times, lacked wisdom of what, how and when to say things when it comes to his children.*

*I also did not like that he expected me to be my brothers' keepers even though they are older than me. By this, I mean looking after my brothers. I think he saw me as being more responsible than my brothers and keeping the family united. I feel it is unfair because they are older than me. I do understand that my brothers do not care much about keeping the family together as he raised us, but it is a huge responsibility.*

Mabona indicates that he disliked his father's smoking habit, which ultimately affected his health. Chapter Two (p. 29) reveals that individual actors create the lifeworld according to their habits and preferences. Also, individuals have a habitual understanding of what the world entails; therefore, several characteristics of the social world are familiar to them because they are rooted in a shared human condition. The tragedy of losing his father taught him a valuable life lesson about paying attention to his health. Research showed (see Chapter Four, p. 86) that men tend to neglect their health and engage in hazardous health behaviours. Chapter Two (p. 29) discusses that men learn about and internalise socially desirable and undesirable behaviour through social interaction; on the one hand, men are expected to possess physical strength. On the other hand, they are socialised into habits that can lead to the demise of their physical strength and health.

Participants reports having had good relations with their biological fathers. Overall, participants highlighted the communitarian solidarity and social connectedness their fathers established in

their communities. Furthermore, participants view their fathers as authoritative figures and disciplinarians who often used corporal punishment as a method of discipline. Also, participants reveal that their fathers were strict, causing them to fear their fathers. At times, instilling socially desirable attributes can be detrimental to a child. Children whose parents used corporal punishment to instil discipline and respect are confronted with the risk of losing their unique personal traits as they try to fit into a narrowed and unified box of socially admirable behaviour and expectations. Breen et al. (2015) argued that children who are exposed to corporal punishment are at risk of experiencing poor developmental outcomes, and they are often confronted with physical and mental health problems.

Reflecting on the traditional ways a child should interact with elders and other individuals in the community, Ubuntu aims to instil discipline, respect and humility. However, from the socialisation stage, these core ethics of Ubuntu are not always earned through nurturing methods; sometimes, they are forced onto a child. Using corporal punishment and fear to instil respect and humility can be counterproductive, as it can be damaging to a child.

It is worth noting that participants' fathers used various parenting styles. Most of the participants' fathers leaned into traditional as well as liberal practices of fathering based on the different contexts of their interactions with their children.

### **8.2.2 Lessons from my father relating to fatherhood**

Reflecting on the lessons he learned from his father, Sizwe stated:

*There are many lessons that I learned from my father, and most of them are based on my observation of how he handled certain situations. My father was a provider; he provided financial resources for the family since my mom was unemployed. He showed consistency in his habits and behaviour. I struggled a little bit with being the main financial provider in the early years of my marriage, and I had to work hard to reach a point of being a financial provider. Fortunately, my hard work was acknowledged in my*

*work environment, and I was promoted to my current job of being a director. I learned as a father I should provide for my family and ensure that the needs of my children are met.*

*Growing up, my parents consumed alcohol, and my mother's behaviour was problematic after she had few drinks. She would behave badly by being loud and swearing a lot. We knew that immediately when she starts taking alcohol; there will be no peace, and everyone in the house would get upset. Looking at my father, I would wish for my father to physically assault my mother. I would often ask myself: this man is feared by most people and why he does not beat my mother since she was disrespectful towards him and his children. My father would talk to her to stop behaving in that manner, but if she does not stop, he would ignore her and move on as though nothing happened. He would often use a Tswana proverb "molaya kgosi wa itaya" meaning a king discipline himself. The following day, he would go on as though nothing happened. From this observation, I learned that a man should never raise his hands to a woman no matter how bad the situation is; as a man, you should pick your battles wisely and know who is your enemy.*

*My father was very much a present father, and I am also a present father. At times, I miss some of the activities, but in most instances, I attend important events. I am firm when it comes. My father does not have pride to admit his mistakes and would apologise whenever he is wrong. My father respected and listened to my mother. I have learned to respect and listen to my wife. I have learned to be accountable and own up to my mistakes by apologising. Based on my observations and interaction with my father, I have learned that fatherhood is a huge responsibility.*

Sizwe highlighted that he learned the following from his father: financial support of the family and self-discipline. Financial provision is a normative expectation of masculinity and fatherhood. Sizwe shared his struggle with assuming the role of being the main provider. The

literature indicated that the role of being a main provider is quite stressful for men who are unable to meet this expectation (see detailed discussion in Chapter Four, p. 85).

Sizwe alluded to his parents' consumption of alcohol and his mother's disruptive behaviour after alcohol consumption. He mentioned that he would often wonder why his father would not physically assault his mother for her ill behaviour. This stems from Sizwe's image of his father being a disciplinarian. Contrary to the assumption that men behave in a disruptive manner after consuming alcohol, in this case, it was Sizwe's mother who demonstrated undesirable behaviour after consuming alcohol. Also, Sizwe's views were deeply rooted in the patriarchal notions of gender relations whereby a man is the head of the house, and women are equated to children. Sizwe's own experience of corporal punishment influenced his view of instilling discipline. He referred to the Setswana proverb his father used, "*molaya kgosi wa itaya*", meaning one should have self-discipline irrespective of the context. Sizwe drew to his father's stock of knowledge and also reflected on how his father viewed and understood his social environment (see Schütz notion of 'lifeworld', Chapter Two, p. 27), adjusting his interactions in keeping with his truth (see Schütz, Chapter Two, p. 27 and p. 6).

Furthermore, Sizwe views his father as someone who took responsibility for his actions and admitted his mistakes. The authoritative image of African fathers often becomes a barrier to self-correction and admitting wrongdoing. Taking accountability highlights one of the liberal attributes of the new image of masculinity and fatherhood, promoting equality in the relations between men and other men, women and children, as outlined in Chapter Three (p. 80). In Chapter Seven on '*Being a Man*' (p.178) accountability and responsibility are described as being core attributes of manhood. Sizwe sees his father's openness to equality and self-regulation as a valuable lesson for his own growth since he learned to be accountable and responsible in his actions. He also learned to be a present father from his father. Though at times he is unable to attend his children's activities, Sizwe ensures that he attends the significant ones, showing he understands his children's appreciation of his presence. This indicates not conforming to the traditional notion of an African father as a distant figure (see Chapter Four, p. 60). Clearly,

Sizwe's fathering style was built around progressive notions of fatherhood, as outlined in Chapter Four (p. 90).

When requested to reflect on the lessons he learned from his father, Paballo stated:

*He taught me to take responsibility and accountability for my actions. I also learned that being a father comes with its own responsibilities, such as financial provision for your children and protecting them. He also taught me to be less harsh in terms of disciplining my children because I have learned as a father, you think what you are doing is correct, only to discover it might destroy your children and their future. Also, he taught me to stand strong as a man and a father; keep believing that all shall be well when the time is right.*

Paballo stated that his father taught him to take responsibility and accountability – masculine attributes that overlap with those associated with fatherhood. Financial provision and being the protector seem to be at the centre of masculinity and fatherhood, demonstrating the role of socialisation in the understanding of gender roles.<sup>29</sup> Based on his experience of his father's discipline method, Paballo adopted a less punitive approach to correct undesirable behaviour and acts of his children. This shows that Paballo reflected on his childhood experiences and decided not to conform to traditional discipline. It also demonstrates the attributes of a progressive father and a new image of fatherhood who parts from the ways of his predecessors, as highlighted in Chapter Three (p. 80) and Chapter Four (p. 90).

Remembering the lessons he learned from his father about fatherhood, Motse reported:

*I have learned to be kind to people and to treat people with respect. I have learned the importance of unity and love in the family. I have learned the importance of making sure that I spend time with my children and I provide for my family. He taught me ... to work hard; he would often use a Tswana proverb that says: "matsogo ha se dikoto" [hands*

*are not sticks]. He would say this whenever we were doing our home chores. Later in life, I understood what he was trying to teach us. It is the father's responsibility to ensure that his children and generations to come are well taken care of and their needs are well taken care of, therefore, the father's role of financial provision and protection are very crucial.*

Through observation of his father's social interaction with other people in the community, Motse learned kindness and respect, which are virtues of Ubuntu. Also, these attributes are at the centre of communitarian living and the status of African human personhood, as indicated in Chapter Two (p. 44 ).

Talking about the lessons he learned about fatherhood, Mabona continued:

*I have learned about the importance of keeping the family united and ensuring that family conflicts should be addressed with kindness. He used to remind us that when we go out to meet with other people, we should remember that we are representing our family.*

*Since my father was a heavy smoker, I chose not to smoke. I have never smoked in my life because I did not like his excessive smoking habit.*

*He taught me the importance of developing a good relationship with my children. I have a son and I always assure him that I am there for him. I am his safe space. I am involved in his life. I have learned that fatherhood is a huge responsibility since I am raising a human being. I always remind myself that my son is growing up and he might be a father one day; therefore, I should be a good role model to him so that he can raise his children well.*

Mabona learned the importance of family unity and resolving family with kindness. This echoes Ramollo's domains of family support (Ramollo, 2020). He observed his father's habit of excessive smoking and resulting health complications. As Alfred Schütz (1970, p. 71) emphasised: men internalise socially desirable and undesirable behaviour through social interaction and engagement. Mabona recognised smoking as undesirable and never took it up. He also learned to establish a good relationship with his son as a father. Chapter Four (p. 94) discusses the significance of a father in the life of a boy child. Mabona is raising his son with the intention of preparing him to become a father and a good role model to his children (should he choose to become a father). Mabona's fathering practice shows progressive and liberal attributes of fatherhood.

In summary, participants have learned that fatherhood entails accountability and responsibility. Financial provision seems to surpass other roles and responsibilities. Participants highlighted the importance of maintaining good relations with people in their community like their fathers did, indicating they have learned the significance of communitarian living. In terms of Interpretive sociology, Berger and Luckmann (see Chapter Two, p. 36 ) found that language represents the lifeworld of the people who produce and use it; the Setswana proverbs participants used to describe what they learnt from their fathers helped them to make sense of their lifeworld. Through observation, participants learned about the negative aspects of alcohol consumption and smoking. Some participants shared their early exposure to substance usage by their parents. Contrary to the perception that children who get exposed to substance usage are more likely to use substances, participants chose not to follow the path of their fathers relating to substance usage.

### ***8.3 Absent and uninvolved biological fathers***

Studies on fatherhood often refer to the absence of the biological fathers when investigating issues regarding the well-being of a child. Nathane and Khunou (2021) argued that the

absence of biological Black fathers reflects negatively on Black masculinities. This sub-section highlights the complexities around the absence of biological fathers. It draws on information in Chapter Four (p.97 ), which outlined various factors that may contribute to the absence of the biological father (i.e. lower socio-economic position, unwillingness to father a child, migration, and unpreparedness of the role of fathering, particularly in the context of teenage fathers). This sub-section also features participants' narratives about experiencing their fathers as physically present and yet uninvolved in their lives.

### **8.3.1 Absent biological fathers**

\*Letlhogonolo commented:

*I don't really know my biological father. I know he is still alive, but I cannot tell you where he is or about his personality traits or interests because I did not get the chance to know him. He stayed with us for three months and left us – he never returned – it is a distant memory because I was young then. Talking about him makes me wonder why he decided to leave his children and not be present in our lives. If things did not work out between him and my mom, it is fine, but what makes a person to abandon his children? Now that I am a father, I wonder what caused him to leave his children and decide to be absent – what kind of a father does that? Thinking about him irritates me because I see him as a coward that run away from his responsibilities. I sometimes believe my brother would be alive if my dad decided to be present and take the responsibility of financial provision.*

It is evident that the participant did not have a relationship with his biological father. He only has a distant memory of his father since he lived with them for three months. However, he questioned his father's absence. In most cases, fathers leave their children without explaining their reasons for leaving. Cabrera et al. (in Chapter Four, p. 97 ) found that the absence of a biological father (in a patriarchal society) presents challenges that can generate socially ill behaviour. Letlhogonolo's reflection shows that children whose fathers are absent often

imagine how life would have been if their fathers were present in their lives. Letlhogonolo displayed feelings of resentment towards his father, attributing his father's absence to his brother's delinquent activities and subsequent death (see his narrative on p. 232).

\*Bongani, a 30-year-old man who is employed in a government department, stated:

*My parents got divorced when I was young; I think I was two years old. Later, when I started school, I had to stay with my biological father for two years, but he decided to send me to a boarding school. Thereafter, he disappeared and never came to visit me, but my mother was there for me. I felt unwelcomed and unwanted; it was hurtful to experience that as a child. We never had a relationship, only now he wants us to meet. Reflecting on it, I think he knows I completed my tertiary education, and I am working. Therefore, I can look after him. I am older now, and I do not need him in my life; he failed to play his role of being a father in my life.*

Bongani revealed that his parents divorced when he was two years old. Unfortunately, Bongani's father was not only separated from Bongani's mother but also from his son. He mentioned feeling unwelcomed and unwanted. As discussed in Chapter Four (p. 97), the absence of a biological father might cause psychological and emotional distress that stems from feelings of rejection and abandonment. Children often perceive the absence of their biological fathers as a form of rejection. Bongani interprets his father's gesture of wanting to establish a relationship as a hidden expectation: to ensure his father's well-being now that he is in his elderly years and might not have enough resources to look after himself. Bongani does not see the importance of having a relationship with his father as he feels his father failed to fulfil the role of being a father when he needed him.

In his reflection, \*Morena, a 45-year-old self-employed man, commented:

*I was born out of wedlock, and I grew up without knowing my father. I did not get to know my father when I was young because he did not pay inhlawulo, after impregnating my mother. Therefore, elders from my mother denied him and his family access to see me or have a relationship with me. I met my father for the first time when I was 22 years old; I am the one who searched and found him. We did not have a good relationship as a father and son because he failed to state his reasons of why he has been absent, apart from saying he was not allowed to see me. I could see he was not happy to see me. After our meeting, I decided to cut our communication since I am the one who went to him; he was not interested in getting to know me.*

*Talking about this makes me emotional because growing up without a father is difficult [participant withholding tears].... I witnessed how my mother struggled to provide and protect me. My maternal family accepted me and tried to assist my mother, but I used to wonder how life would have been with my father being present in my life. I wanted to know my father because there are things I believe he or paternal uncles should have taught me about our traditional customs and rituals, but they were all a huge disappointment. I did not want his money. I just needed to have a relationship with my father [participant paused]. Being a child out of wedlock is not a good experience. At times, I felt lost, without any sense of belonging and identity. But, when I got older, I learned to accept that my father never accepted me as his child and I should move on with life. At the moment, I do not know if he is alive or dead, and I do not have a relationship with his other children.*

Morena reported being a child born out of wedlock. Morena states that his maternal family denied his father access to see him and establish a father-and-son bond since his father did not adhere to the traditional custom of inhlawulo. This often happens in communities that hold traditional views and practices where a young man is expected to redeem the dignity of the family of the young woman who is impregnated outside marriage. This becomes a huge burden

for men who do not have the socio-economic means to meet this expectation, as discussed in Chapter Three (p. 60). On the one side, one might view Morena's maternal family as contributing to the absence of his biological father. On the other side is whether Morena's father ever had any interest in being in his son's life. Morena reveals that he was the one who located his father's whereabouts. Morena's action of locating his father represents a current trend in South African television programmes, such as <sup>5</sup>UTATAKHO, <sup>6</sup>ABANDONED and <sup>7</sup>EKsoekMyPa, in which adult children are taking the initiative to find their fathers through media. Chapter Four (p. 84) explains the role of media, among other institutions, in instilling knowledge and understanding of social roles and scripts.

Mcintosh (2018: p. 184-185), cited in Chapter Four (p. 99), mentions questions that he needed to ask his father about his absence and what occurred before he and his sister were relocated to their maternal grandmother's village. McIntosh reflected on the expectations of children whose fathers were/are absent, especially those whose fathers left them with unanswered questions. Though Morena was comforted by the acceptance of his maternal family, he still felt rejected by his father. When he eventually found his father, he felt rejected again because he felt his father was not happy to see him. Because of his father's lack of interest in getting to know him, Morena stopped all communication with his father.

Morena also speaks about the painful experience of witnessing his mother's struggle to protect and provide for him. As outlined in Chapter Four (p. 97), single motherhood is often associated with insufficient economic resources, leading to emotional and mental distress. Apart from the desire to establish a meaningful relationship with his father, Morena hoped to learn his paternal traditional customs and rituals. To his disappointment, his father had no interest in passing on such knowledge to his son.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dstv.com/mzansimagic/en-za/show/utatakho>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dstv.com/mzansimagic/en-za/show/abandoned/season/2/videos>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dstv.com/en-za/news/85376/dstv-family-highlights-this-july>

Talking about the absence of his father, \*Bereng, a 48-year-old unemployed man, says:

*Well, my father left me with my mother when I was two years old;– that is what my mother said to me. She never told me why he left, but I guess as an adult, he was able to make suitable decisions for himself. I later met him when I was 28 years old. I am the one who looked for him because, at that time, things were not going well in my life. I went to see a traditional healer, and I was told that my father’s ancestors are not happy that I did not follow the traditional rites of passages; that is when I took it upon myself to look for him. I had a lot of questions relating to why he became absent since he is still alive, but I chose to not ask him since I needed his assistance. I just wanted to get my life in order and form a good relationship with him. I told him what the traditional healer said – to my surprise, he did not take me seriously. It was shocking to me that he ignored what I told him since people who know him described him as a person who believes in traditional ways. I was hurt by that and [that] he did not take the effort to find me.*

*We do not have a good relationship, but I think he was trying to get to know me. I went to his place few times, but every time, I would take alcohol for us to drink together since he liked alcohol. I also took the alcohol to avoid asking him a lot of questions about him being absent. He is very strict, and I have never seen him smile when he was sober. Hence, I decided to not ask him because I could sense that he would get upset. We would talk about other thing except my personal life. He would complain about not having money, though I have never asked him for money. I think he thought I came to him because I needed money from him. I do not know what happened between him and my mother, but I believe he knows what he did was wrong, and if he does not want to man up and take responsibility, it is fine with me. Since I did not get the help I needed from him as a father, I decided to cut ties with him (he was a stranger anyway).*

Similarly to Bereng, Bafana took the initiative to find his father. He indicates that his initiative was propelled by the challenges he was facing, and he wanted to form a relationship with his

father. Before embarking on his journey to look for his father, Bafana consulted with a traditional healer who said that his misfortunes were caused by the fact that he did not have a relationship with his patrilineage, resulting in him being unable to undergo traditional rites of passage. As discussed in Chapter Three (p. 51 ), the cosmology of an African person entails the soul, spirit and body. Bafana mentions the disconnection between soul, spirit and body; the living and spirit manifested in his misfortunes. Chapter Three (p. 58) highlights that, in the African tradition, a father is the connection between uQamata (God of his forefather) and his children; thus, the bridge between his ancestry and his children. Therefore, African fathers are custodians of traditional customs and rituals.

Sharing his narrative relating to the absence of his father, \*Bafana, a 58-year-old employed man in the private sector, states:

*My father passed on when I was few months old; I never got the opportunity to know him because of his death. I was raised by my mother, but as I grew up, I noticed that other children in the community are living with their biological fathers. I started questioning as to where is my father. That is when my mother told me that my father passed on. She showed me photos of my late father, their wedding and other family photos [where] I was included. My siblings, who were older, also confirmed that my father passed on in a taxi accident.*

*Being raised by a single mother comes with challenge. At times, as a child, there is a feeling of guilt as you watch your mother working hard for you. Though I do not remember my father, I wish I had the chance of meeting him, as my siblings told me how good he was to them and my mother. I visit his grave, but I feel it is beneficial for a child to have a present father. In my case, God decided otherwise.*

Unlike other participants, tragedy became the reason for the absolute absence of Bafana's biological father. Growing up, Bafana realised that his household structure was different from

that of other children who had both parents in the household. Bafana's narrative provides a different understanding of the absence of a biological father since the absence of a biological father is more often associated with men who abandon the roles and responsibilities of fathering. A single mother raised Bafana and his siblings, and seeing his mother struggle sparked a feeling of guilt in him as a boy child. Social expectations and gender scripts are inculcated from an early phase of human development. Over time, these scripts became understood and accepted as being correct and typical – behaviours for heterosexual men and women. In this context, Bafana's feeling of guilt was informed by normative expectations, prescribing that a father's responsibility is to financially provide for and protect his children.

Participants' narratives highlight the different circumstances that contribute to the absence of biological fathers. Most participants reported knowing their fathers, even though they do not have a good relationship with their fathers. Contrary to the expectation of a father being the one to form a good relationship with his children, some of the participants stated that they took the initiative to find their fathers. Participants speak about the hardships of growing up without the presence of their biological fathers and being raised by single mothers, which is closely associated with a lack of economic resources, a yearning to know about their paternal traditional customs and rituals, as well as having missed the opportunity to develop intimate relations with their fathers. Some participants emphasised having unanswered questions relating to their biological fathers' absence, which they interpreted as rejection, a lack of accountability, and a failure to take responsibility. In keeping with the literature and ideas presented in Chapter Seven (p.178), participants indicated that responsibility is a main aspect of fatherhood. The normative expectations in terms of the roles of masculinity and fatherhood are often intertwined.

Most participants reported that the absence of their biological fathers left them with feelings of being unwanted and unwelcome. Some stated that the journey of finding their biological fathers was interpreted as wanting to gain financial resources from their fathers, whereas their

intentions were mainly to locate and get to know their fathers. Bafana raises a different issue in terms of the absence of biological fathers: in his case, his father did not abandon him; a tragic car accident claimed his life. Most studies associate the absence of fatherhood with abandonment without considering life tragedies similar to Bongani's lived experience.

### **8.3.2 Uninvolved fathers**

According to Ratele et al. (2012), in Chapter Four (p. 100), the notion of 'my father is/was there for me' is a common phrase that is often used to describe the presence of a biological father and his involvement in the life of a child. The absence of the biological father is associated with the physical absence of a father or being unknown to a child. However, a father's physical presence, combined with his lack of involvement in his children's lives, is also experienced as a form of absence. This sub-section presents the participants' views and experiences of their uninvolved fathers.

When asked to narrate his view and experience of his relationship with his biological father, \*Moraka, a 52-year-old self-employed man, responds:

*I stayed with my parents and siblings. I saw my father being present at home but not showed interest in our lives. He was a womaniser, and that is all he was interested in. He failed to fulfil his role as a father, for example, financially providing for his children. I started working at the age of 15 as I had to assist my mother to provide for my siblings. We did not have a close relationship with him; he would be home and mind his own business without talking to us. I didn't like that he wanted my mother and me to work for him while he would spend his money on alcohol and women. My mother did all the work; she fulfilled his responsibility since he was not even interested in our school events like other fathers. He was just there at home as a man. I learned nothing from him about fatherhood. However, I promised myself that my children will not experience what I experienced as a child. My father never took time to bond with his children. He did not*

*show us that he cares about or love us as his children. But I decided to show my children fatherly love and care. I availed myself to my children.*

In Chapter Four (p. 86), it is noted that having multiple partners is characteristic of hypermasculinity and excessive alcohol usage, both of which are health hazards. Moraka stated that his father was a womaniser and would consume alcohol, implying that he had behaviours consistent with hypermasculinity. Moraka added that his father did not show interest in their lives as he did not show intent to spend time and get to know his children. He viewed his father as a man who failed to fulfil the traditional role of fatherhood, which entails financial provision for the family. Moraka took it upon himself to help his mother in terms of finances and taking care of his siblings when he was 15 years old. Regardless of his father's lack of involvement, Moraka's mother was present and fulfilled his father's role. Moraka's narrative concerned the lived experiences of many South African Black children whose fathers neglected their families and fatherhood responsibilities as their focus shifted to entertaining other women. It also reflected some men's focus on making money to use alcohol without the intention of caring for their children.

Talking about his perception and experience of his relationship with his father, \*Mohale, a 37-year-old man employed in the private sector, states:

*I consider my father as an uninvolved father rather than an absent father because I met him when I was in middle school and we started to form a father-and-son relationship. I need to say I was born out of wedlock; my father never told my mother that he had a wife and older children back in his village since they met in Johannesburg – just for context so that you can understand my story. We met and exchanged contacts; he would invite me to his village, and I felt unwelcomed by his wife. I met my siblings, and we have a good relationship despite not being welcomed by their mother. I enjoyed visiting the village but I hardly saw or talked to my father. The first time we spoke face to face is when I asked him about the process of my rites of passage since I am the only son that*

*never went through various family customs and ritual. He said we'll talk about it, and he will make arrangements. He never kept to his word. Every time when I wanted to talk to him, he would shut me down. I hardly saw him when I was visiting for longer school holidays. My siblings also indicated that they saw him seldom, and even [when] he was around, he was not interested in spending time with them.*

*To be fair, he attended my mother's funeral, though never asked me how I am feeling. He was present during my lobola (bride price) negotiations, but never gave me any advice relating to being a married man or a father. We do not have a relationship. Whenever I see his call, I know he is going to ask for money. This hurts a lot because I feel he is using me for financial benefits. The recent thing that happened really broke my heart: he drove from Eastern Cape to see my other sibling in Johannesburg. I asked him to stop in Bloemfontein so that we can have coffee and talk; he agreed but never kept to his promise, and that broke my heart [participant cries].....I feel used and betrayed since he is interested in my money, not my well-being. It would have been better if he just left me to grow up without a biological father; he is present but uninvolved. My son will never feel the pain that I am experiencing. He never taught me anything about fatherhood. He denied me the opportunity to know our traditional customs.*

Though Mohale did not grow up in the same household as his father, he viewed his father as an uninvolved, rather than an absent, father. This provides a different dynamic to unpack the concepts of 'absent' and 'uninvolved' fathers as they are understood differently by different individuals based on the lenses they use to view and interpret their lifeworld and experiences. Mohale met his father when he was in middle school, and he would often visit his father's village, regardless of his stepmother's unwelcoming attitude. During his visits, he realised that he hardly saw nor conversed with his biological father. Though his siblings comforted him by indicating that this was the nature of their father, Mohale felt that this was inadequate for him. Children often accept and normalise the attitudes and behaviours of their parents even if it puts them in a disadvantaged position. The conduct of Mohale's father is associated with the

traditional notion of Black African fathers, who often have a distant relationship with their children. As explained in Chapter Three (p. 60), a father is a bridge between his ancestry, uQamata (the God of his forefathers) and his children. Mohale, therefore, viewed his father's reluctance as denying him the opportunity to connect with his ancestors and learn about his traditional customs and rituals.

Traditional customs and rituals are co-constructed by people's predecessors and handed down through generations, ultimately shaping their knowledge and understanding of their lifeworlds. Also, in some instances, traditional rites of passage often apply to a child who is acknowledged by the paternal family and already integrated into the patrilineage through marriage or negotiations of inhlawulo. In this context, Mohale's father had already created his nuclear family before Mohale was born. He did not adhere to the expectations of Mohale's maternal family, either by marrying their pregnant daughter or paying inhlawulo. One may argue that Mohale's father was aware of the traditional dynamics but took a different path and was unable to rectify it at this stage, subsequently unable to grant Mohale's wish.

Furthermore, Mohale mentions that his only communication with his father occurs when he requested financial support. This is in line with the traditional expectation that children are the ones to financially support their parents and families upon earning money, particularly among most South African Black communities. This places a huge burden on working individuals who need to support their immediate and extended families financially. There are advantages and disadvantages of having to financially support the immediate and extended family. On the one hand, South African Black youth are confronted with the challenge of sending money to their parents/families and sacrificing what they aspire to achieve. On the other hand, it shows sensitivity to communitarian support. Ramollo (2020) describes these as the domains of Ubuntu.

Reflecting on the relationship he has with his father, \*Blessing, a 22-year-old self-employed man, narrates:

*I know my father, and we do not have any relationship. I never discussed my relationship with my father with anyone but I'll share my experience [with the researcher]. I cannot stay in the same house as my father; he was very abusive towards us, especially my mother and me. My father was in and out of prison [for different things like robbery, hijacking, and murder], so it was pleasant when he was not a home because we had peace. This one time, he came back with a prison tattoo, and I realised he was a member of one of the prison gangs. He was a monster. He would leave us at home to go commit his crimes and come back home with blood stains. He was never interested in spending time with his children. I do not want to associate with him at all. He did not treat me like his son, and he did not do right by me. He made me feel like an outcast – as though I am not his son. He refused to provide for me, for example, paying school fees and buying school uniforms and clothes. One day, he came home. I was busy with my homework, and he started beating me up for no reason. I believe if he wanted to take responsibility as a father, he could have, but he didn't. I do not think he cares.*

*Despite of all his actions, I liked him when he was sober, [rather] than drunk, because he was a hard worker but failed to financially provide for his family. We did not do any activities together, but I remember this one time he took me to a local shopping complex; he was drunk and insisted on driving, and we had a bad accident. I was injured. That is the only thing I remember that we did together. I distanced myself from him because I wanted to be safe and have peace. Even now, we do not interact.*

Blessing indicates that the in-depth interview was his first encounter talking about his relationship with his father. As Chapter Nine on the Qualitative Research Encounter (p. 248) indicates, some participants feel comfortable disclosing information they never disclosed to their inner circles as they view researchers as neutral and present listeners.

Blessing mentions that his father was abusive to him and his mother, indicates that Blessing witnessed domestic violence while living with his parents. The literature (see p. 29 ) reveals that an individual's knowledge and understanding of socially approved and disapproved behaviour is learned through observing and imitating others, which ultimately informs their perception and interpretation of the lifeworld. Blessing speaks about his father's delinquent activities, which caused a rift between him and his family as he spent time in prison. Blessing emphasises that his father could not fulfil his fatherhood responsibilities as he refused to pay for his school tuition and buy him a school uniform. Blessing recognised his mother's efforts to ensure that their needs were met. Reflecting on his relationship with his father, Blessing reveals that he sees his father as a monster and is ashamed to be associated with him.

Remembering her relationship with her late biological father,\*Sweetheart, a 40-year-old woman, a Social Worker, states:

*Well, I lived in a boarding school and would often go home during school holidays. My brothers did not go to boarding school, as they lived with our parents. My father and I had a thorny relationship. He showed no affection towards me in comparison to my brothers. Where I come from in the Eastern Cape, some people believe that a boy child is more valuable than a girl child because a boy child is the one to grow family lineage. He would compare my school performance to my brothers' performances; he would often say I am not a university material. I wanted to please him so bad but it did not work.*

*After completing my matric, my father and I moved from home, coming to Bloemfontein. We lived in the same apartment, but that worsened our relationship. He would always leave in the morning and come home later in the evening or the following day. He would not buy food and leave me for days. I had to learn to fend for myself because, at that time, I was enrolled in one of the colleges in Bloemfontein, so I was able to do student promotions.*

*Regardless of our relationship, I liked that he was fearless as he married my mom who was above his social status; my father comes from a poor background, and my mother's family had wealth. I also liked that he was adventurous and took risks – he explore ways of generating money, for example, buying and leasing properties in other provinces. I think he was building a generational wealth instead of spending time with his family. I did not like that he was authoritative and wanted things to be done his way. He had unrealistic expectations and rules. We did not have a father-and-daughter relationship because I was defiant.*

According to Sweetheart, her father believed a boy child is more valuable than a girl child. Some South African Black communities believe a boy child is the one to expand the family name through procreation. Also, a boy child is the one to lead the family in the absence of a father, particularly when the biological father is deceased, and be a custodian of family traditional customs and rituals. Sentiments similar to Sweetheart's father are held by communities that are still holding on to the traditional views of their predecessors; thus, he regarded her as incapable of succeeding in her academics and showed a lack of interest in investing in her future. This view is rooted within stereotypical traditional and damaging notions relating to gender. This narrative resonates with the researcher's experience as a girl child who grew up in an environment that devalued educating a girl child, as describes when she shares her experience of qualitative research in Chapter Nine (p. 306).

Similarly to other participants, Sweetheart states that her father did not provide financial support when they moved to Bloemfontein. However, this propelled her to be resilient and find ways to sustain herself. Though her father did not provide financial means to cover her basic needs, she views her father's business investment as his attempt to create generational wealth, a much more generous interpretation of his neglect.

\*Basetsana, a 32-year-old woman who is an entrepreneur, mentions:

*My father and I lived in the same house, but we did not have a relationship at all. I am the only girl with four brothers. I believe my father saw them as more valuable than me because of the way he treated me and the things he would say whenever I did something wrong. He used to say I am useless for the family and wished I was a boy child who will be able to grow his lineage and family name. He had this thinking that a girl child is useful for her husband's family, not her biological family... [participant trying to hold back her tears]. My dad treated me like a trash, I was nothing to him – he never spoke a word with me except whenever I did something wrong in his eyes.*

*I remember this one time he made me wash his cars outside in the cold because he said I am lazy and he is preparing me for marriage. At that time, my brothers were seated in the house around the heater. My mother did not have a voice because her husband was the head of the family... [participant crying]. He refused to take me to school, but my mother paid for my school fees. It was a huge fight between my parents, but my mother stood firm in her decision. Thinking about is like opening old wounds that I never discussed with anyone, but it also shows me how strong I am. I look at my brothers, and I must say I am the one who went through more pain and who became more successful. Some of his precious boys do not have children to expand his family name. It can only be the grace of my ancestors that I did not think of killing myself or running away from home and went through the pain [participant requests a break to process emotions].*

Like other participants, Basetsana speaks about the non-existing relationship between her and her father, stating that her father had nothing to say to her except when he was frustrated by what he perceived as behavioural misconduct. In her narrative, Basetsana highlights her father's lack of interest in her well-being since he believed a girl child is not as valuable as a boy child. This reflects traditional views of gender that are damaging to a girl child and the relationship between a daughter and father. Basetsana states that her father treated her like "trash", expressing her understanding of how her father viewed her. Basetsana's expression

articulates how she viewed her reality. Also, this illustrates the emotion of pain that she endured as a child, which might have shaped her self-concept and confidence. As emphasised in Chapter Four (p. 97), there are emotional and psychological impacts on the well-being of a child arising from the absence and/or lack of involvement of their biological fathers.

Basetsana highlights her spiritual belief by stating that it was only by the grace of her Creator and ancestors that she was able to endure the pain. This resonates with Gyekye's argument that the cosmology of African persons consists of the soul, spirit and body. Therefore, an individual is guided by their ancestral lineage, and in this context, Basetsana also believes that her resilience is embedded in the connection between her Creator, ancestors and her endurance.

As noted before, in some traditional South African Black communities, a girl child is perceived to possess a supernatural power that connects communities with the Creator and ancestors; this is seen among Batswana, whereby a young woman is called '*Kgosigadi ya Pula*' (Rain Queen). *Kgosigadi ya Pula* is often a young woman who is deemed to have the mystical power to request rain from God and ancestors to ensure harvest and abundance, avoiding poverty in her community.

In the above extracts, some participants indicate that they lived with their fathers in their household. However, their fathers lacked interest in being active fathers in their lives. The process of socialising a child is rooted in the principles of Ubuntu, which entails the traditional notions of parenting. Thus, a father is often seen as an authoritative and distant figure. The distance between a father and a child is interpreted as a gesture of respect shown by children to their father, without considering that this may create a rift in relationships between African fathers and their children. In this context, respect is commanded, not earned, contradicting the main assumptions of African personhood (outlined in Chapter Three, p.44 ), stating that an individual is expected to earn respect from others through social interaction and conduct.

Participants highlight the adversities that they experienced as well as those they witnessed: financial struggles, domestic violence, untrustworthy fathers, and neglectful ones not showing interest in being involved in their lives. Participants emphasised their fathers' inability to meet the expectations of financial provision. It is evident that the social expectations of manhood overlap with the expectations of fatherhood. However, these are not only social expectations but also normative gender roles of a man and a father. 85As noted by several participants, the expectation of financial provision is a burden for men who do not have the capacity to fulfil this expectation, as they are often viewed as not being man enough and as falling short of meeting a father's responsibility. Irrespective of the biological fathers' lack of involvement in their children's lives, the participants acknowledged their mothers' involvement in their lives, recognising their mothers' ability to fulfil what is normally perceived as a fathering role.

#### ***8.4 Social fathering***

Fatherhood in the African context is a shared responsibility of men within the extended family and the community (see Chapter Four, p. 60). In the absence of a biological father, other men in the family and community take the responsibility of socialising and meeting the needs of a child. Campos (2008) explains that African fatherhood is a multidimensional phenomenon that should not be confined to the presence or absence of a biological father. This section explores the role of social fathers in the lives of participants. Participants used memory to reflect on the influence of their social fathers, on things they liked and disliked about the social fathers, and on lessons they learned from their social fathers.

Talking about a man who was his late maternal grandfather, Mr X states:

*My late maternal grandfather was my father; he was the only father figure at home. He took me as his son. We had a good relationship. I respected how he took us in and treated us like his children. I liked that my grandfather was a provider and he was a family man – he would spend time with his family. He was also a provider; he provided*

*for his family, including the relatives. He assisted my mother a lot with financial support of us. I did not like that he was very strict, and he did not take any nonsense. He would see right through you when you are lying and give beat you for not taking accountability for your actions. One important lesson I learned from my grandfather is family is important, and a father must ensure that his children are well taken care of because that is what he did with my mother – even when she was an adult and had children, he made sure that his daughter and grandchildren are well taken care of with the little money he had.*

As noted earlier, in the African context, parenthood is a communitarian responsibility involving parents, paternal and maternal extended families and community members in the process of socialising a child<sup>58</sup>. In the above quote, the participant stated that his (grand)father accepted and treated him like a son, demonstrating a connection beyond a child's biological creation. It also demonstrates that the absence of a biological father does not deny a child the opportunity to be socialised by men in the family, in this case, the maternal side of the participant's family.

African fathers are described as disciplinarians. Also, there was an era in South Africa where corporal punishment was perceived as the appropriate corrective measure for disciplining social misconduct. Even more ominously, corporal punishment is linked to the political and economic history of Apartheid South Africa, whereby marginalised adult groups were equated to being children, and corporal punishment was used as a tool to correct “unacceptable” behaviour. For Mills (see Chapter Nine, p. 304), understanding the historical context helps one contextualise current experiences and happenings.

Remembering the man he considered as his father figure, Bafana, a 58-year-old, comments:

*My first former employer is the man who played a huge role in my life. He was a man from the community who raised a lot of children in the community. I had uncles, but they were not interested in our lives. I started doing odd jobs when I was in Grade 7 due*

*to struggles at home; my former employer guided me. The old man would encourage me to pursue my studies and not pay too much attention to my current situation. He said to me education will free me from poverty. He allowed me to work during weekends so that I can focus on my schoolwork during the week.*

*I liked that he was serious about life and provided for his workers. I also liked that he would guide us and encouraged us to work hard, get married when we get older and be responsible. I did not like that he was very strict, and he wanted to have the last word in everything. He would often beat us (his workers) when we made mistakes. I did not like that about him because I felt we are human beings and not perfect.*

*I learned that a father can father other children who are not biologically his. I have also learned that a father must lead and guide his children to the correct path like he did with me. It is not good for a father to be too strict because your children will fear you. Allow them to make mistakes so that they can learn life lessons.*

Bereng states that his former employer played a significant role in his life, a role that is in line with being a father. Bereng appreciates the guidance and advice passed on to him by his former employer; he also admired how he was a father to other children in the community, demonstrating the communitarian and emotional support spoken of by Ramollo (2020). Existing side by side with these merits, Bereng also highlighted his employer/mentor/father's lack of tolerance for mistakes and misconduct, which often evoked feelings of fear.

Bereng spoke about how his former employer encouraged him to invest in his future by pursuing education rather than focusing on the difficulties of his current circumstances. Bereng's former employer viewed education as the solution to ending poverty, which is the preconceived notion held by most African parents, irrespective of the changes and challenges surrounding current employment sectors in South Africa. The challenge of the large numbers

of unemployed graduates in South Africa raises concerns about whether education guarantees freedom from poverty and bolsters financial security. Statista (2023) reported that 9.6% of unemployed graduated in the last quarter of 2023. Despite this hard reality, Bereng's employer aimed to encourage him to be educated. Bereng's narratives emphasise the different experiences of fatherhood for different people. Unlike Paballo, whose biological father forced him to drop out of school when he impregnated a girl, Bereng's former employer encouraged him to pursue his studies and invest in his future. The consequences of leaving school due to becoming a teenage father resulted in a much more impoverished life, leading to Paballo wondering and longing for what his life could have been if he had been granted the opportunity to complete his studies.

Recalling the man who was a father figure in his life, Moraka states:

*My mother's late brother, who was my uncle, was a father to me. He was born in the 1930s, and he believed in working for himself, not working for another person. We often talk about him with my other family members – his passing was a great loss to the family. I would say he taught himself on how to be a farmer since my grandparents had a piece of land that allowed him to start farming.*

*He encouraged me to face challenges as they come and go to school. I liked that he was passionate about life and assisted people who were struggling, like my mother. He was a hard worker and taught me how to farm. He would teach other children in the community when to plant and harvest vegetables and fruits and how to sell their products. He also taught me how to farm as he wanted to leave a legacy in his community. I did not like that he liked pleasing people, and some took advantage of him because he was a giver and wanted to bring joy to people.*

*He taught me to take care of my family and be a role model to my children. He also taught me the importance of having good behaviour and values. As I think about him, I*

*wish he was still alive because I know he could have given me good business advice as I am now struggling with my business.*

I explained in Chapter Four (Gender perspectives, p. 59) that some men in extended family structures take up the role of fathering children that are not their own without realising that they are fathering children. Nathane and Khunou (2021), cited in Chapter Three (the Africentric View, p. 97), refers to the role of *bomalome* (uncles) as social fathers in the absence of biological fathers. Morake maintains that his uncle taught him to farm, indicating his uncle's commitment to building sustainable generational wealth for his family instead of relying on financial support. He is proud that his uncle taught other children in the community to farm, which increased Morake's sense of pride in his uncle's initiative. Morake deemed his uncle knowledgeable about entrepreneurship, believing that if he were still alive, he, Morake, would not be struggling with his business. This shows the strength and closeness of his bond with his uncle. He mentioned that as a family, they often talk and share fond memories of his uncle, illustrating his impact on his family. He saw his uncle as a selfless and giving person whom people would often take advantage of. This insight shows how the Ubuntu domains of communitarian and financial support bring advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, they promote social cohesion, while on the other hand, they can have negative consequences for an individual who shows compassion and kindness, like Moraka's uncle.

When asked about a man who she considered a father figure, \*Lerato, a 37-year-old woman who is a career coach, replies:

*I grew up in a female-headed household with only women in the house. My primary school principal was a father figure to me. We did not have a close relationship, but at the school assembly, he would give us a fatherly advices, such as the importance of good behaviour, focusing on our schoolwork, being on time and doing school tasks on time, and respect for yourself and other people. I liked how he carried himself. He was disciplined and protected his learners. I also liked how he dressed you could tell he is a*

*dignified person as he wore suits and smelled good. I did not like that he was too strict and would use corporal punishment to discipline learners. I have learned that the way you dress says a lot about you as a person; you need to be neat - look and smell good – even if you do not have much. I have also learned that a father is a protector.*

Lerato mentions she grew up in a female-headed household with only women in the house; thus, she did not have the privilege of having a male figure around when she was growing up. Sonke Gender Justice et al. (2021, p. 53) found that only 61% of South African children are living with male figures in the same household. Lerato identifies her former primary schoolmaster as her father figure, even though it was a distant and impersonal relationship since the schoolmaster had responsibilities and obligations towards all learners in the school. However, the schoolmaster modelled the attributes of fatherhood that she never had at home.

In summary, the role of a social father is deeply rooted in multiple realities of African children, who are often products of collective efforts in their upbringing. The above narratives demonstrated how the concept of social fatherhood is based on the premise of communitarian interaction and existence. Participants' narratives also provided different understandings of social fathering. Some recognised the involvement of the men in their extended families, especially maternal extended families, in their lives. Others identified men in the communities who modelled the attributes of being a father. This illustrates that social fatherhood is a communitarian responsibility that men often fulfil without recognising the impact of what they are doing by virtue of modelling desired fatherhood traits.

The following section focuses on participants' interactions and relationships with their biological children and those of other parents.

## **8.5 Participants' fatherhood experiences and journey**

The subject of fatherhood adds a crucial layer to the discourses within critical studies on men and masculinities. Like masculinity, fatherhood varies across different social settings and is often negotiated and renegotiated. While much attention has been paid to the topic of men and masculinity, little attention has gone into unpacking the experiences and practicalities of how men learn to be fathers. Though there are social expectations regarding fatherhood, there is insufficient information on how the role of fathering is integrated and enacted over the course of life. This section starts by exploring whether participants are biological or social fathers, followed by how they relate with the children they are fathering. Furthermore, the researcher explores what participants perceive as expectations of their children and how participants negotiate and renegotiate these expectations.

### **8.5.1 Relationship between fathers and children**

When requested to talk about his relationship with his children, Athandwa responded:

*Let me start by saying I have two sons, of which one is my biological son and the other one is my stepson. I am in the process of divorce, but I will try to explain it this way... my wife already had her first child, which is our first son. He was two years old when I met his mother, and his biological father was not around. I have a good relationship with my boys. They have different personalities, but I try to be flexible and accommodate their personalities. The age difference between them is three years.*

*The eldest one has learning barriers; he goes to the school of children with special needs, so he requires a lot more than the other younger one. Having a child with special needs changes the dynamics of being a parent because you do not want the other one to feel left out or maybe not getting attention. It is difficult because you never know if you are doing enough to be there for the two of them; you just need to trust that whatever you are doing is enough. Besides the demands of new clothes and toys, I have realised that*

*they do understand when I am not able to give them what they want as long as I explain to them my reasons. They get disappointed when I do not give them what they have asked, but after some time, they understand.*

*My children are used to live in the same house with their parents, but now I am separated from their mother, and I can see they are confused at times when they come to visit me – they are not used to that lifestyle. I think that is the biggest disappointment that they are facing. I try to explain to them that I am their father and I love them. And I make time to be present in important activities like speech therapy appointments, school functions and their other activities. I worry that they no longer live with their parents.*

Though Athandwa views his two sons as his own children, he mentions that his first son is not his biological son, indicating that he is fulfilling the roles of a social and biological father<sup>98</sup>. Richter et al. (2013) also found that some men perform the duties of fathering children irrespective of their biological relations. Athandwa describes the challenges of having a child with special needs since attention and time often go towards ensuring the well-being of this child, which he fears might create a feeling for the other sibling of being less significant. This highlights parenting challenges that exist for parents who have children who are differently abled or have special needs. Furthermore, Athandwa speaks about the sense of confusion he sees in his children due to his separation from his wife. He indicates that he no longer resides with his children; however, he tries to maintain the relationship with his sons by spending time with them when they visit him. This often happens in cases of separation or divorce: children have to adjust to the new living arrangements of their parents, with the separation often affecting the children's emotional and psychological well-being.

Talking about the relationship he has with his children, Sizwe comments:

*Being a father is a privilege, you are raising human beings. I have three beautiful daughters, and I have a good relationship with them. The older one is almost a teenager, and the other two are toddlers. I was 23 years when I had my first child. I see how modern women are independent, and I am teaching my daughters to be independent as well. They have different personalities, and I do not want them to ever feel like they were not fully supported by their father in their aspirations. I do not promise to give them what I cannot deliver. They know I am available to listen and meet their needs, and they understand when I cannot meet what they asked. I see my wife at times is very envious of my relationship with the girls; I mean, the relationship between a father and his daughters is a special bond. I want to set the standard of the qualities they should look for in a man. I give them an allowance and teach them how to manage and be responsible with the money. If I disappoint them, I apologise and admit my mistakes. They do understand, especially the older one, since she is much older than the other two. I believe honesty and communication are the best ways of resolving problems and misunderstandings.*

Sizwe describes fatherhood as a privilege since he is raising human beings. As noted earlier (p. 45), the human species are nurtured to be *'umthombo – a spout of a seed'* and socialised as such from childhood to adulthood. He expresses his wish to raise his daughters to be independent modern women<sup>73</sup>. His liberal approach to fathering daughters is in line with a 'new' image of a father who does not subscribe to the traditional notions of gender. He wishes to model the ideal type of man his daughters should choose when the time comes. Role modelling is an effective way to instil desirable attributes and behaviour; however, the social environment plays a considerable role in influencing one's understanding of the lifeworld. In South Africa, most empowerment programmes and initiatives (*i.e.*, <sup>8</sup>Take a Girl Child to Work,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nefcorp.co.za/newsletters/take-girl-child-work-day-success-nef/>

<sup>9</sup>Teach a Girl Child and <sup>10</sup>Susters4life) are directed towards a girl rather than a boy child. It might present challenges if the programmes are effective because then a girl child is more likely to benefit from such programmes and thus advance and receive better socioeconomic opportunities, whereas boys would not have had this extra boost.

When asked about the nature of his journey as a father, Modiakgotla responds:

*I had my first-born son when I was 28 years old, and I married my wife when she was pregnant. I am a single father. My wife passed on. It has been more than 20 years - our children were still young. Being a single father is not easy; my wife was a full-time mom, and I was working full-time. I had to take the responsibility of being a mother and father to my two sons after her death. I decided not to get married again because I did not want to expose my children to any form of abuse from another woman.*

*Children adapt to different situations, and I saw that with my children after the death of their mother. We all contributed to cleaning the house, doing the laundry, cooking together and all other house chores. I could see that my sons could see I was tired and wanted to lift up the weight off my shoulders. There are things that they expected me to do for them, like buying new toys and clothes or taking them to go visit a friend, which I would do; but if I was not able to do what they had asked, I could see they would get disappointed but they never acted funny. I think they moved on without being disrespectful towards me. I look at them now, and I honestly do not know how I raised them without their mother. They are now adults, and I have grandchildren; I am proud of them. They are doing well as husbands and fathers to my grandchildren.*

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.education.gov.za/ArchivedDocuments/ArchivedArticles/Education-Plus-Initiative.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://susters4life.co.za>

Modiakgotla mentions the challenges of being a single father since his wife passed on when their children were young. Literature often reflects on the lived experiences and struggles of single mothers, which are often linked to the absence of biological fathers and socio-economic challenges. Modiakgotla reported having to cope with the loss of his wife and adjust to the role of motherhood and fatherhood because he decided not to remarry. Contrary to the social perception that a man is more likely to remarry after the passing of his wife to gain a partner that will assist with raising his children, Modiakgotla maintained that the reason for not remarrying stemmed from a fear of subjecting his children to the possibility of ill-treatment from a stepmother. This illustrates that Modiakgotla prioritised the safety and well-being of his children, which is associated with the protection role of fatherhood as reflected in the literature (see Chapter Four, p. 85) and confirmed several times in data from this study. It also shows the attributes of a new image of fatherhood – a father who does not conform to the stereotypical notions of gender and parental roles. Modiakgotla is sensitive to the emotional distress of a child losing a parent. He mentions that his children assisted with house chores after the passing of his wife, indicating an understanding that their household is no longer the same and that there is a family position that needs to be fulfilled and, importantly, shared by existing family members. This differs from the ideas of ‘women’s work’ and of such tasks falling to women irrespective of their time or physical capacity to fulfil these duties, as often seen in gender literature. Though his children were not disrespectful to him, Modiakgotla indicates they would be disappointed in cases where he did not meet their expectations.

Reflecting on the nature of his relationship with his child, Mabona states:

*I had my son when I was 32 years; he does not stay with me since he lives with his mother. I was married to his mother, but we got divorced. It does not feel right with me that I do not live with my child because I grew up with my father in the same house. My father raised us and taught us to raise our children.*

*I think as adults we often misunderstand the needs of children; I believe children need time, love, affirmation and time. You need to assure your child that you believe in his or*

*her capabilities. I have learned this through observation. I know financial provision and protection are important when raising a child, but I think it is more important to give yourself time as a father to get to know your child. Sometimes my son would ask for things like any other child, for example, clothing, PlayStation and other things. He gets disappointed when I am not able to give him what he wants, and I understand because I was also young and did not understand when my parents said they cannot give me what I asked. I also know that he is still young, and he will understand and appreciate my decisions when he matures.*

Mabona reflects on the socialisation of his father, which entailed living with his children under the same roof and being involved in their lives. Mabona realised that children need a parent to give them time, affection, and affirmation to develop their self-confidence. Mabona is aware of the emotional and psychosocial needs a father must provide for his children. Though he indicated that his son gets disappointed when he is unable to meet some of his expectations, he also understands that his son is still young and hopes that as he matures, his son will appreciate Mabona's motives.

#### **8.5.2 Relationship between parents**

Talking about the nature of his relationship with the mother of his children and her expectations, Athandwa reports:

*I do not know if I am doing right or wrong. We do not have a good relationship. We do not talk, and to be honest, she does not want to talk to me. I think it is because of the divorce process, but I find her to be unreasonable because she expects me to give her my whole salary to support her and our children. I do give her money, but she took me to the maintenance court three times already; the court instructed me to give her more than I was initially giving. She did not want me to spend time with our boys; the court*

*gave us a parental plan. It is just a lot and sad, but I think it is her reaction to the divorce because I initiated the process.*

Athandwa reflects on the unpleasant context of parenting while experiencing divorce. He discusses his confusion regarding what his wife perceives as right and wrong. Athandwa speaks about the conflict between him and his wife, which also affects their co-parenting relationship. He also mentions that his wife wanted to prohibit him from seeing his children; however, they received a parental plan contract provided by family advocates to set legally enforceable boundaries. This added a different understanding of the possible reasons for the absence of biological fathers, whereby a man is prohibited from having interaction with his children by the mother due to conflict that exists between them. Though Athandwa shares his lived experience with his wife, it would have been interesting to hear what his wife had to say if she was selected as a participant in the study. However, the data collection was not designed to locate the researcher *in between* participants and their spouses, mothers of their children, or children. According to Athandwa's narrative, the court upheld the mother's complaint that he was not contributing enough money to the maintenance of his children, and the court ruled that he should contribute more. This raises the question of whether the courts would make such a ruling if their assessment showed that his income was not enough to give more.

When asked about the nature of his relationship with his late wife and her expectations of fatherhood, Modiakgotla responds:

*I believe my wife and I had a good relationship. Marriage has its own challenges, but we had mutual understanding of how we wanted to raise our children. She was a stay-at-home mom and took care of the house and our children. I was the one who was working. My wife was a simple and classy lady; she did not expect a lot of things from me as a father since I was the provider. It was important for her that we had breakfast and dinner together as a family. Those were the two things that she did not compromise on. She felt it was important for us to have time together as a family. I guess it was because*

*she spent more time with the boys than I did, and it was important to her that I know what is happening in their lives and form a good relationship with them. I knew she would get upset if I did not make time, so I made time. Now that I am talking about this, I think my wife was preparing me for her passing – it is as though she knew about her passing.*

Modiakgotla reports having a good relationship with his wife since they had a mutual understanding regarding parenting their children. He mentions his wife's expectations, which focused on spending time together as a family and knowing what was happening in his children's lives. Modiakgotla highlights that his wife did not expect him to deviate from her expectations regarding their family tradition.

When asked to talk about his relationship with the mother of his child and her expectations, Mabona replies:

*My ex-wife and I have a complicated relationship, and we have different approaches when it comes to parenting our son. We discussed how we wanted to raise him when we were still married, but it all changed after our separation. She wants our son to have everything he wants, and I am much more stricter with him. I monitor his movements; for example, I want to know his friends and their parents and forbade him from using social media, but his mother wants him to have and do everything he wants.*

*I am interested to know his movements to prevent him from getting into bad habits or hang around bad friends; I was a boy and I know boys can be naughty. She expects me to provide financially, buy everything he wants and pay maintenance. It becomes a financial burden at times because I have other financial responsibilities. Failure to meet her expectations is a tough one, because she sees me as a failure and bad father. We get into arguments. We tried to co-parent and be civil to each other, but it did not work.*

*It is sad but I no longer bother myself about her opinion, I just try to do what I think is best for my son.*

Mabona highlights the challenges of parenting children differently. He views his parenting as stricter because he knows boys can be naughty. Mabona justified his strictness by stating he wants to prevent his son from getting into bad habits and forming relationships with “bad friends”. Furthermore, he spoke about the burden that is placed upon him by his ex-wife of providing financial means for “everything” his son wants and the conflict that arises when he is unable or unwilling to meet these expectations. He lamented the fact that this often leads to him being labelled by her as a “failure” and a “bad father”.

Talking about her relationship with the father of her child, Basetsana states:

*He denied paternity, claiming he cannot be a father at his age; I was 19, turning 20 years, and he was 21 years old. He said he is not ready to be a father and wanted me to have an abortion. I chose to keep the pregnancy and became a single mother. He has never been in the life of our daughter. I raised my daughter alone with the support of my mother; by then my father had passed on.*

*He has never been a present father and never contributed anything. We do not have any contact; he has never seen his daughter. I know where his parents lives but I cannot force him to be a father. I would rather have a happy child without a father rather than forcing him to be in his daughter’s life. I do not expect to anything from him. Looking back, I wonder what caused me to be in a relationship with such a person. However, I wanted a place where I can feel loved and appreciated. He gave me what I thought I needed at that time. Until I told him I am pregnant.*

In her narrative, Basetsana spoke about the denial of her pregnancy by the father of her child because he felt he was too young to take on the responsibility of being a father. Her story

highlights the challenges that confront young women who become mothers at a young age. Swartz and Bhana (2009, p. 28) found that young fathers often experience fear of taking the financial responsibility of taking care of their children; thus, some deny paternity. Also, to some, being a father might deprive them of experiencing the joys of being young and free, unlike how they often view fatherhood as an adult responsibility. According to Lamb (2000), fatherhood is not necessarily associated with being of childbearing age; it also depends on a person's psychological development.

### ***8.5.3 Participants' views on the traditional custom of inhlawulo***

The traditional practice of inhlawulo (paying damages) is often practiced among Black South African communities as a customary negotiation process aimed at mediating the father's involvement in the child's life, especially when a child is born out of wedlock. The custom of inhlawulo, similar to Alfred Schütz's concept of 'stock of knowledge', is an understanding and practice exercised by people's predecessors and passed on from generation to generation. However, the custom of inhlawulo has changed over time. Originally the custom was applicable to men who impregnated young maidens who were virgins. The aim was to restore the dignity of the family in the community for taking away the girl's virginity (her purity prior to marriage) and acknowledging the paternity of the child. The practice highlights the core ethics of Ubuntu, which are respect and humility, as Nelson Mandela (2010, p. 151) explained. However, in modern-day society, the practice has evolved by acknowledging paternity outside wedlock and deciding on the father's involvement in his child's life, irrespective of whether a young woman was a virgin prior to pregnancy. The process of inhlawulo is initiated by the young woman's elders, informing the young man's family about the pregnancy. In most instances, it is an elderly man's responsibility to negotiate the way forward regarding the father's role and involvement in the child's life.

The following narratives focuses on participants' view of the traditional custom of inhlawulo and its influence on the fathering roles and involvement in the lives of their children.

\*Guluka, a 58-year-old self-employed man who has been married for the second time, states:

*I had my first child when I was in my 30s, and I did not pay inhlawulo. My family received a letter from her family stating I have impregnated their child. Our families arranged a meeting to talk about the pregnancy at her parents' house, to show respect, because I impregnated her out of wedlock. The agreement of the elders was [that] my family should take the baby after three months, because her family was struggling and could not afford to take care of the baby. She came to my place to assist my mother during the day, since she was unemployed, but my mother is the one who took care of my child. My uncles and men from her family were the ones who negotiated. Our families just told us what they have decided. It was difficult to disagree with their decision, but I believe a newborn baby needs a mother. Things went on like that until we got married and divorced. The child is still under my care. With my second wife, we got married and had a child after we got married. It gives me pride that I followed my traditional customs; I feel like a real man because I took responsibility for my children.*

Guluka states that he had his first child out of wedlock; however, their families agreed to deviate from the traditional customs of paying inhlawulo. Their families decided that the child would live with the paternal family because of the socio-economic struggles of the maternal family. Though it seemed like a beneficial decision for the two families, the decision presented unforeseen challenges as the child was taken away from the mother when he was three months old. The biological mother is often the primary caregiver. Taking a child away from the biological mother could also present developmental and malnutrition challenges for a newborn baby. As Guluka stated, a child needs a mother. Guluka explains that the negotiation process was headed by the elderly men from the two families. The decision of elders highlights the authoritative and traditional thoughts of fathers.

Talking about his perception and experience of the traditional custom of inhlawulo, Paballo states:

*As I said earlier, that I was a teenage father, and my father refused to take me back to school. I did not have money to pay inhlawulo. My wife and I just went to the department of home affairs to get married. I did not have money to pay inhlawulo and lobola. I am not proud of not being able to pay inhlawulo and lobola.*

*I never had a stable job. My wife's family was expecting me to fulfil the responsibility of our traditional customs. They do not recognise me as a son-in-law, but I try to assist them where I can if they need my assistance. But I think they influenced my wife to see me as a failure – that is why I say my wife sees me as a disappointment.*

Paballo's lack of socio-economic resources deprived him of the means to fulfil the traditional customs of paying inhlawulo and lobola. He indicates that his marriage was a civil marriage instead of going through the traditional practice of customary marriage, which entails lobola negotiations. Lobola is commonly known in the Sub-Saharan African context as bride price, which a man is expected to give to a woman's family when marrying her. Due to not following traditional customs, Paballo feels that his wife's family does not view him as a son-in-law. He believes his in-laws influenced how his wife sees him: a failure and disappointment. According to Jewkes and Morell (2012), men from impoverished socioeconomic backgrounds find themselves in stressful situations if they are unable to meet personal as well as social expectations of financial stability for themselves and their children. Therefore, they are not perceived as real men and good fathers.

Remembering his experience relating to his perception and experience of the traditional custom of inhlawulo, Sizwe comments:

*I impregnated my wife before we got married. My father wanted me to pay lobola but my wife's family wanted inhlawulo. Because I wanted to marry her, I paid inhlawulo and*

*lobola. It was too much for me since this all happened when I started working, but I worked hard because I really wanted to marry her. I would have liked to have my first child in marriage but I do not regret anything. I am proud of myself for being able to do what is right regarding the traditional customs. I feel like a real man to my wife and good father to my daughters.*

Sizwe had his first child before he married his wife. According to Sizwe, his father wanted him to pay lobola instead of inhlawulo, which is a common practice among South African Black communities, especially when a man decides to marry the woman he impregnated. However, his wife's family requested inhlawulo and lobola. Sizwe speaks about the financial strain this placed on him because he did not have the financial means since he had only started working at the time. However, he mentioned working hard to ensure that he married his wife and paid inhlawulo, too, because he had impregnated his wife before marriage. Sizwe reported feeling a sense of pride as he could adhere to the traditional custom of paying inhlawulo and lobola and feels like a real man and a good father to his children.

Providing her perception and experience of the traditional custom of inhlawulo, Palesa, a 37-year-old woman employed in an NGO, stated:

*I have three children, two boys and one girl, out of wedlock with the same guy. He paid inhlawulo for our three children. But I asked myself, why does he not pay lobola because we have three children. We ended our relationship because I could see that he does not have intentions to marry me; I was not part of his future plans.*

*It feels good that he accepted paternity and paid inhlawulo for his children, because people could have said I am a loose woman who goes around sleeping with different men and I do not know who is the father of my children. I know some women see lobola as being bought, or a price of your worth, but for me, I felt good because he did what is right concerning traditional custom.*

Palesa has three children out of wedlock with the same man. The father of her children paid inhlawulo for all his children. However, Palesa feels he could have paid lobolo instead of inhlawulo for three children. This caused Palesa to question his future intentions regarding their relationship, and subsequently it led to the end of their relationship. Palesa's narrative demonstrates the protective power of traditional practice that is held by individuals and their communities. Traditional practices such as inhlawulo have become the common knowledge passed down from one generation to another and set by one's predecessors. Though the practice has changed over time, it is still viewed as the common practice to be followed when a man impregnates a woman out of wedlock in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This section presented a collection of participants' thoughts, contexts, and experiences related to the traditional custom of inhlawulo. Some were unable to follow the practice of inhlawulo, while others were able to adhere to the custom. The data shows that the traditional custom of inhlawulo holds unmarried men accountable as biological fathers. Adhering to the custom of inhlawulo proves that a man accepts that he is the father of the child. Also, the recognition of the biological father for his children represents the embodiment of lineage, which is often crucial for a child's identity and patrilineage knowledge. As noted, before, this is important because it connects children with their ancestors. All participants agree that inhlawulo is important, because it signifies the acceptance or rejection of the pregnancy by the father of the unborn baby. However, some participants speak of circumstances that forced them to deviate from the traditional custom, such as the paternal family raising a child, being forced to marry in the midst of socio-economic challenges, and /or having to work hard to be able to follow the practice. From the participants' narratives, it was clear that the custom of inhlawulo is significant, particularly as failure to adhere to the custom can be interpreted as a father's rejection of the paternity of his children. However, rejection may not be the case; this interpretation should not be made without considering the socio-economic difficulties that some men experience.

## ***8.6 Participants' understanding of fatherhood***

This sub-section focuses on participants' meaning and understanding of fatherhood influenced by their lived experiences and outlook of their lifeworld. The findings discussed stem from participants' interaction in the focus group discussions and lekgotla gatherings. These are important research contexts since the study focuses on the social (co)construction of fatherhood.

Sharing his understanding, a participant in LG1 states:

*There is a difference between Monna (a man) and Ntate (a father) in my view. The difference is determined by how a person behaves himself. A young boy who is unmarried and does not have children can be a father because of the way he conducts himself. His level of maturity and respect, humility and behaviour towards his family and community can make people to have so much respect for him that they will call him Ntate instead of Monna. My understanding is being a father is not about having children, but how a person treat others. An old man who is married and has children can be seen as Monna because of his behaviour; for example, someone who has no respect for himself and others, running up and down chasing different women, including young girls, behaving in a bad way, and being rude to his family and community. His children can call him Ntate but to the community he is a Monna. That is my understanding of being a father.*

Similarly, to the meaning of manhood discussed in Chapter Seven, this participant mentions maturity and respect for self and others as being the core attributes associated with the meaning of fatherhood. The participant outlines the crucial distinction between Monna and Ntate: being Ntate is not determined by the biological process of procreation or having children. Ntate is associated with social conduct and adhering to social norms and expectations. Like the status of personhood, which is bestowed to individuals by others (see Chapter Three,

p. 44), an individual man's social recognition of being Ntate depends on social perceptions of his character and conduct.

A participant in LG2 states:

*I was taught at home that a father is not only a father to his children but to other children in the community as well. But unfortunately there are men who behave like animals because of their abuse to women and children. It is important for a father to show good behaviour to his children, to be role model to your children and children in the community. It is important for father to show your children good behaviour and respect for others, including the mother of your children and your children. Being a father is also being a person that children in their communities and parents can come to you and ask for advice.*

This participant understands fatherhood in the context of social fathering (see p. 59), which explains that a father is not only a father to his biological children but also to children in the community. He compares the misconduct of some men to the behaviour of animals; this metaphor is not uncommon since it is often used to speak of others. However, Gyekye (1992) argues that people who do not adhere to social norms cannot be reduced to being the status of animals; rather, they do not gain the status of personhood. The participant highlights the importance of being a good role model as a father and showing good behaviour and respect for others. The participant also emphasises the importance of respecting women in the process of fathering, indicating that he is aware of the importance of fathering by example.

Talking about his interpretation of fatherhood, Participant#2, in the same FG1, mentions:

*Being a father has its own challenges. One thing I have learned as a father: you can try to raise your children well, but if a child decides not to listen, there is nothing that you can do for your child. It is sad that our children get introduced to bad things in the*

*community and people will blame the father for not disciplining his children. Being a father is teaching your children the difference between what is right and what is wrong, so that they are able to make the right decisions. Being a protector and provider, and raising your children in a good environment.*

This participant mentioned some challenges of being a father and socialising a child. He explained that a father can try to raise his children in ways aligned with social norms and expectations; however, the ultimate decision to conform to socially desirable behaviour lies with the child. He describes fathering responsibilities as teaching children to make morally sound and ethical decisions, as well as protecting them and providing financial support to meet their needs.

Reflecting on his understanding of fatherhood, Participant#7 in FG2 comments:

*I know to some people think that being a father is about being able to provide financial means and protect your children. As a father, you have the responsibility of providing a stable shelter for your children and investing in their future. I am not only a father to my children, I am a father to every child in my extended family and community. When I was growing up, our elders said every adult is your parent. Now, times have changed; some men cannot be trusted with the responsibility of being fathers to their own biological children! So, what about other children? This is because of their bad and evil behaviour towards children and women. A father is someone who is dignified and has morals. You do not become a father just because you have children and old. There is a difference between being a man (Monna) and a father (Ntate). The difference is on how I behave privately in my home and in the public. Unfortunately, some fathers are behaving like Banna (men) even if their children are adults. They do not show that they have experienced life and gained wisdom and maturity of what is right and wrong. Now, fathers are violating their own biological children.*

This participant describes the concept of provision in terms of providing shelter and investing in his children's future. This resonates with the view of Menketi<sup>49</sup> (1984), highlighting the importance of learning about the patrilineal ways of being and establishing a solid connection with one's paternal ancestry. He reflects on the teachings of his elders, which promote the concept of social fathering; this identifies every elder as a parent to all the children in the community. Participant#7 understands fatherhood as a shared communitarian responsibility rather than a biological or kinship responsibility. His view of fatherhood is thus rooted in the concept of Ubuntu and African human personhood (see Chapter Two, p. 42 and p. 44). Another aspect of Ubuntu he mentioned is that a father should be dignified and have good morals. He also clearly distinguished between the titles 'Monna' and 'Ntate' as signalling an individual man's conduct within his family and community. According to Participant#7, some men are trapped in a lesser status and are referred to as 'Banna' instead of 'BoNtate'; these titles signal their lack of wisdom and maturity and their harmful acts, all of which do not represent the image of a father.

### ***8.7 Conclusion***

This chapter highlighted the complex nature of fatherhood, comprising of personal as well as social factors such as communitarian roles and institutions in the form of traditional customs. This chapter provided a narrative account of participants' experiences of fatherhood through various life stages. Reference is made to communitarian relations that existed within the family, highlighting the parental approach of participants' biological fathers within the family structure. Attention was paid to support provided by social fathers in participants' communities. The concept of a social father is prevalent in Black South African communities since it emphasises the communitarian effort of socialising a child. Participants spoke about the strict nature of their biological and social fathers and their lack of tolerance towards ill-disciplined behaviour and attitudes. This attribute is often linked to African fatherhood. Interestingly, participants' narratives that their experience and practices of fatherhood tended to combine traditional with liberal and 'new image' approaches of fathering.

## CHAPTER NINE: THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ENCOUNTER

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### 9.1 Introduction

According to Dickson-Swift James, Kippen and Liamputtong (2007), in qualitative social research, the researcher and participants invest time and efforts in building a good rapport to bring the study to life. Thus, participants agree to give the researcher access to their private lives, experiences, and ways of being based on their perceptions and feelings about the researcher and the topic under study, illustrating the power dynamics between the participants and the researcher. It is often perceived that the researcher is more knowledgeable and enters the field with privilege and autonomy. However, in this study, the researcher viewed the participants as the ones with more power since it was their choice to share openly or withhold certain information. Although the design, scientific rigour, and scientific quality of implementation lies with the researcher, the implementation of the depth, quality, and value of the study is determined by the participants, not the researcher (*the researcher dances to the rhythm of the participants*).

Qualitative research can be face-to-face and/or voice-to-voice. Therefore, when participants share their lived experiences and show emotions, it could trigger and evoke the researcher's own positive and negative feelings, not only in relation to what the participants share and show but also concerning the researcher's own memories and emotional 'hooks'. The interpretivist approach emphasises the importance of viewing the world through the participants' lenses, feelings, and experiences. The Africentric paradigm acknowledges the role of the human soul, spirit, and body (as indicated in Chapter Three, p. 109) in the research process. All this entails being inclusive in acknowledging the role of human intuitions and feelings in the process of research.

During the inception phase of the study, researchers (or student researchers, such as in this study's case) invest much effort into proposal writing, ethics protocols, and funding applications without contemplating the realities of the participants they are yet to meet. Despite rote-statements to the contrary in ethics applications and proposals, the well-being of the researcher is often addressed superficially, without an in-depth reflection of the possible threats, and the dynamics thereof on the researcher.

Furthermore, qualitative researchers focus on telling people's stories; therefore, considering participants' human encounters in the research process is imperative. In this chapter, the researcher positions herself as a research subject, referring to herself in the first person, as she provides her personal reflections and qualitative encounters with the study. To some extent, this has also been done in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I thoroughly explore my experience in the research process, viewing my research participants as co-constructors of knowledge and myself as a subject matter in the process of the study. This chapter starts by unfolding my study process, attempting to understand the makeup of human emotions.

### ***9.2 Unfolding the qualitative process of the study***

As discussed in Chapter Five, qualitative research methodology aims to describe and explore people's perceptions, experiences, behaviour, and interactions within the social context and environment. According to Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002), qualitative research seeks to understand the participants' subjective meanings, actions, and social context as they experience and understand them. The primary aim is to formulate questions that focus on developing an understanding of the meaning and various forms of people's lived experiences in relation to their inner and social worlds.

This study focused on narrating the lived experiences of South African Black men and women relating to masculinity and fatherhood. Various studies have their own dynamics; therefore, the manner in which the study starts remains unknown to the researcher. Thus, what the researcher perceives to be a less sensitive subject might raise sensitive emotions that may have certain effects on the researcher and participants. From the several phases of conducting research, I provide an outline of those I found more intriguing as a young aspiring scholar.

The following are the stages that changed my understanding and approach to qualitative research, stemming from my personal reflections:

- *Conceptualisation phase of the research topic and question:* Social scientists are interested in unpacking social happenings within different social institutions. For this reason, a student researcher, as myself, is often confronted with the desire to take on controversial social issues as an investigation project. Stemming from the interaction with literature, there is often a romanticised outlook of how the study will unfold with little or no knowledge of what awaits in the field.
- *Ethics protocol:* To ensure the researcher abides by the ethics protocol, they must seek ethical clearance. The ethics application is more concerned with protecting the well-being of the participants, focusing very little on the psycho-social impact of the study on the researcher or the potential mental and emotional impacts of the study on the researcher. At this stage, the researcher is expected to design data collection instruments based on the literature review, not knowing the relevance or power of the instrument in the field. My supervisors encouraged me to request ethical clearance to pilot my study's instrument, which assisted with my understanding of the participants' interpretation of the questions. This process better sensitised me to understand what to expect.

- *Self-disclosure*: It is the responsibility of the researcher to introduce him/herself to the gatekeepers and/or participants and introduce and explain the nature of the study and the participants' involvement. Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007) describe self-disclosure as a good research practice that may facilitate good relations between all parties involved. The researcher's self-disclosure promotes a relationship between researchers and participants that is non-hierarchical. Since research is a reciprocal process, researchers often engage in sharing their personal stories. However, researchers need to consider the kind of personal stories or personal details they are willing to share within the scope of ethical practice.
- *Building good rapport with gatekeepers and participants*: According to Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007), it is the researcher's responsibility to initiate a rapport-building process from their first encounter with participants in order to build a research relationship that allows the researcher to enter their inner and social environments. The involvement of the gatekeepers and participants is voluntary. Therefore, they have the right to grant a researcher access to them or to refuse to participate in the study. The power dynamics and relations between the researchers in this stage are quite unique. Since the research is often based on the participants' experiences, views, or beliefs, the power lies with the participants to either buy into or reject the proposed study. I view myself, as a researcher, as a vessel used to articulate or express the views and experiences of the participants. However, the knowledge, experiences, and perceptions belong to the participants. Therefore, the knowledge is produced by participants, while the researcher analyses and presents that knowledge in the form of a research report.

Karneil-Miller, Strier & Pessach (2009) state that qualitative research draws on a critical view of the hierarchical power relations between researcher and participants. The roles of the researcher and participants are mutually exclusive. The researcher's contribution is directed toward the thinking that goes into the study, and the participants'

involvement aligns with the action or context of the study. In this manner, qualitative research tends towards divided, clear-cut, uniform, and predetermined roles and tasks for the researcher and for participants. This view stems from the positivist worldview that perceives the researcher as a neutral observer who objectively examines different social happenings.

Critical and constructivist qualitative paradigms provide a different conception of the power relationships between the researcher and participants. These paradigms promote a rebalancing and redistribution of power between the participants and researcher. There is no correct or best way to describe the relationship since it evolves according to the researcher's personality, worldview, socio-economic position, ethical conduct, and expectations of the discipline (Karneil-Miller et al., 2009). There are many other contributing factors to the power relations and dynamics between the researcher and participants: the theoretical lenses of the study; the nature, overarching aim and objectives of the study; the research methodology; the researcher's biases, and the degree to which they view the participants as co-constructors of knowledge and collaborators in the research process.

- *Data collection process*: Qualitative research must be conducted according to the principles of reciprocity, which entails engaging in a sharing process. This involves sharing personal stories relating to the researcher and participants. It also contributes to the depth and quality of data and research. Reciprocity reduces the hierarchical nature of the research process; it may emerge from the researcher feeling that they need to give something back to participants.

Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007) maintain that qualitative researchers seek to access and report on human stories and experiences; therefore, it is important to remember the

humanistic side of research. Furthermore, at times, the researcher and participants meet at different points of their lives, with similar or different lived experiences and interpretations thereof. On some occasions, I encountered participants who seemed to mistrust me and the research assistant. Some participants felt comfortable to disclose information that they never disclosed to people in their intimate circles. Our role was to become neutral and present listeners. This created some level of trust and friendship between the researcher and participants. It also created challenges for us when we had to exit the community or cease contact with the community and participants once the research was done. Similar to the narrative approach, this resonates with the epistemological and methodological arguments of the Africentric paradigm (outlined in Chapter Five, p. 109); participants are fully engaged in the study since their lived experience takes centre stage and the researcher's responsibility is to accurately articulate and describe the information provided by their participants.

Researchers are members of society, and therefore, they are not immune to social happenings and the impact thereof. Thus, I advocate for qualitative researchers to be encouraged to seek debriefing sessions, similar to what the ethics protocol recommends for participants. I had bi-weekly debriefing and reflection sessions with my counselling psychologist regarding the effects and triggers on my mental and emotional health of the information participants shared. Debriefing sessions became a constant reminder of the aim of conducting the study and my role and responsibility as the researcher in the study.

- *Data immersion*: The data collection process often made me desensitised or emotionless. I was desensitised to the information provided by the participants as I got climatized to the living conditions and information shared by participants. Qualitative research requires the researcher to immerse him/herself in collected data by listening

to the audio recordings and transcribing them. The process of immersing oneself in collected data may evoke or trigger pleasant and unpleasant emotions and memories of the researcher (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2007). As I immersed myself in collected data, I became aware of my biases, pleasant and unpleasant buried emotions, and how personal experiences relating to masculinity and fatherhood shaped my interpretations of masculinity and fatherhood in the research. Therefore, I specifically focused on trying to understand human emotions.

### ***9.3 Understanding human emotions***

Rager (2016) maintains that there is no clear definition or meaning of the concept of emotions. Though the concept is a universal term understood differently by different people, some people define emotions from the physiological lens and view emotion as a biological concept. Scholars such as Lawler, Brody, Gordon, and Kemper invested in unpacking the term's meaning and the different types of emotions. Lawler (1997) describes emotion as a positive or negative state that comprises physiological, neurological, and cognitive attributes. For Brody (1995), emotion is 'a motivational system consisting of physiological, behavioural, experimental, and cognitive elements that produce negative and positive elements that differ in intensity and are influenced by interpersonal events that impact our well-being'.

According to Lawler and Brody's explanation, there are physiological, neurological, and cognitive components of emotions. Thus, an event will occur, the brain will store information related to the event, and human beings will attempt to make sense of the event by describing or explaining the contents and context and the emotional effect thereof.

Rager (2016) explains that emotions in the context of qualitative research are described as feelings, sensations, sentiments, and a deeper level of being. Therefore, emotions play a vital

role in the context of people trying to make sense of their social world. Bericat (2015) argues that human beings experience life emotionally since they describe their lived experiences in relation to *how and what* they feel. Human emotions play a vital role in social interactions and phenomena. People often explain and interpret their experiences and views within the context of how they feel or how they felt after a particular event. Emotions are lived and contribute to the creation of lived experiences. Denzin (2017) describes emotions as embodied experiences transferred through an individual's stream of consciousness, subsequently leading to what is perceived as reality. Gordon (1990) differentiated between emotions and sentiments, viewing it as social constructs influenced by sensation, expressive gestures, and the meaning thereof constructed through social interactions (see social construction of reality discussed in Chapter Two, p. 35). Furthermore, Rau (2020) argues that people's emotions are guided by the meaning attached to the event itself or the symbolic context related to the emotions.

Like the notion of African human personhood (discussed in Chapter Three, p. 41), human emotions are associated with social norms and the extent to which individuals' actions are in accordance with or deviate from the social norms. Emotions are also the expression of the collective as much as it is of individuals. They are often described and expressed in the context of communitarianism where multiple realities are constructed and co-constructed and understood. People's emotions cannot be exempted from their social interactions; social science research comprises human interaction. Therefore, the researcher's emotional encounters should not be ignored or silenced.

#### ***9.4 Social science research and emotions***

Qualitative researchers often establish emotional and cognitive bonds with the research participants. The expectation is for researchers to be aware of their emotional responses and reactions while engaging with participants and the process of research. The careful consideration of the emotions of participants and researchers is essential in qualitative

research, particularly as participants share aspects of their lives that might trigger memories and emotions in the researcher. Rau (2020) added that social science researchers recognise emotions outside biological confinements. This enables researchers to understand emotions and their effects beyond human biology since emotions are physically *felt* and relationally *experienced*. Bericat (2015) describes emotions as a pattern of relationships that connects the *self* with other people and the social world. Also, emotions relate to the dynamics of social relations and circumstances that produce emotions.

Emotions emerge and are experienced within the social context; their meaning is therefore embedded in the context. The understanding and meaning of people's feelings contribute to an emotional universe that is intimately connected. Therefore, individuals' feelings about their social location are influenced by the context and outcomes of the social engagements and relations with people who share similar social norms, values, and a wide range of social factors. In some instances, people's evaluation of societal institutions and structures is conditioned by their emotional and behavioural encounters. Understanding the social life of emotions provides insight into the lens people use to process what happens around them and their classification of social interactions.

Bericat (2015) highlights the two primary features of sociability: intercommunication and interaction. Emotions are determinants of interactive features of socialisation that influence and encourage individuals to exercise their will, power, authority, and natural energy. Multiple realities are influenced by people's culture, communication, and consciousness. Emotions are crucial in understanding people's feelings about societal happenings. Therefore, emotions are essential to any social interaction, playing a crucial role in providing detailed descriptions and explanations of human interaction.

According to Rau (2020), emotions are relational and intertwined with the use of language within a particular social context. Luckmann and Berger (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012: 95), whose work serves as a theoretical lens in this study, explores language as an objective and intersubjective reality (see Chapter Two, p. 35 ). Affect (*i.e.*, feelings, attitudes and moods) plays a significant role in formulating meaning and making sense of social actions. Like the use of language, emotions and affective practice are complex in nature since individuals' relations with self, others, circumstances, feelings, experience, and understanding of natural settings are involved and sometimes impacted.

People's emotions have been instrumental in understanding gender, gender roles, expectations, power dynamics, and systematic oppression. Emotions are also used to express and promote societal gender stereotypical notions. People often associate the expression of emotions as a feminine attribute rather than a human attribute; women are perceived as emotional beings. Similarly, women are not expected to show emotions or act emotionally in their work environment; deviating from this expectation equates to a lack of professionalism. It is, instead, a behaviour associated with their natural environment.

In her book titled *The Management of Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feelings*, Hochschild (1983) maintains:

'People are often confronted with the cultural expectation of knowing *what, when, and how* to feel and *manage* their emotions in certain social spaces; failure to do so demonstrates a character failure. There are often spaces where people are not expected to show and express emotions'.

Lee (1993, p. 4) suggest that the level of sensitivity around research must be considered. Sensitive research poses a threat to those involved, including the researcher; the sensitivity can

lie in the topic, the consequences of research, and the information provided by the participants (ibid). Social science researchers are encouraged to remain objective when interacting with research subjects. Researchers are also professionally socialised to place the value of research above everything else, thus focusing less on exploring the emotional encounter of the researcher (James, 2009). Researchers may be perceived by participants, particularly less sophisticated participants, to be knowledgeable, deeply understand social ills, and possess possible solutions to addressing social problems. These participants tend to view researchers as the people they can trust with confidential information in pursuit of possible solutions to problems without recognising that this rapport might evoke feelings of sympathy, sadness, remembrance, and concern from the researcher. The assumption is also that the researcher has power or access to resources or solutions. To some researchers, showing their emotions while interacting with participants may be seen as potentially compromising their professional standing.

Qualitative researchers are interested in seeing the world through the lenses of others. Interpretive sociology, the theoretical lens applied in this study, focuses on understanding the lenses people use to create meaning and understand their world. It also unpacks how this meaning translates to influencing their lived experiences.

This study used the Africentric paradigm to understand the construction and lived experiences of masculinity and fatherhood, subsequently applying the principles of Ubuntu: care, respect, acknowledgement, and recognition of people's realities. The Africentric paradigm requires the researcher to place African people at the centre, which includes their stories, ways of being, and mindfulness of the power dynamics of research. The researcher must ensure all parties involved see their interaction and role in the research project as co-constructors of knowledge production. It also allows all parties involved in the research project opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings.

### 9.5 Emotional encounters of the researcher

Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007) promote the recognition of the emotional impact and possibly emotional distress evoked by research on researchers, stating as follows:

‘Researchers undertaking qualitative research, particularly investigating sensitive topics, need to assess the impact of research on the participants and *themselves*... and be alerted to the possible triggers that might emerge.’

Researchers are generally seen as one of the instruments used to collect and access data. Furthermore, qualitative researchers are expected to assume a posture of indwelling (being one with the participants, placing themselves in the participants’ shoes and borrowing participants’ lenses to look into and make sense of their lifeworld) (Rager, 2016). This confirms that qualitative research is not only an intellectual exercise but also includes an emotional component shaped by the quality of emotional rapport between the researcher and the participants, even when the researcher has limited time to enter the participants’ space and see life through their eyes.

According to James (2009), emotions connect and create a bond between the researcher and participants. Participants are more likely to disclose certain information to an outside researcher than to people closer to them because they may feel less fear of being judged, labelled, or stigmatised. By doing so, the researcher assures participants that their contribution to the study is not minimised to research analysis but rather to be mindful of participants’ lived experiences and that they are not just subjects of the study but co-creators of knowledge since they share their life stories. Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007) state: ‘Researchers are often perceived as people who grant permission to participants to disclose some confidential information to someone who is interested in knowing and listening, with the hope of less biasedness or judgment; also, being aware that the researcher is not positioned to resolve participants’ challenges but rather is willing to just listen.’

Since this study adopted matched gender interviewing, the male research assistant interacted directly with the male participants. For the comfort of the male participants, I sat behind them as they interacted with the research assistant during data collection. As I observed the interaction, I felt invisible since I had to sit at the back of the participants. This unexpectedly affected me — I felt left out of the interaction and conversation. Also, being a female and unable to engage in the conversation, some of the male participants' experiences made it more challenging for me to borrow their lenses to see and understand the world through their eyes.

James (2009) emphasises the importance of recognising the embodied nature of qualitative research. Listening to sensitive topics can present challenges to the researcher (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2007). The researchers' emotional involvement in their research is often shown through the expression of feelings and the use of the body (Rager, 2016). In illustration, I offer some personal experiences.

At some point, I experienced the feeling of being desensitised since I could not relate to some of the participants' experiences and struggles; in some cases, I did not share their sentiments. However, I observed the manner in which the research assistant contained his emotions in his engagement with the participants while demonstrating compassion and empathy for what the participants shared. For instance, during a sensitive discussion, he offered participants water, requested a five-minute break to recuperate and thanked participants for sharing and trusting us with such sensitive information or experiences. Then, he would continue with the engagement. This also allowed the research assistant space to recuperate his emotions and continue conversing with the participants. His interviewing style was in line with what Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2009), who maintains that, at times, it might be challenging for participants to disclose particular personal experiences; researchers need to demonstrate some degree of discretion, respect, and empathy.

Being a woman in the research field, I knew and understood that male participants would not openly share information in my presence. Therefore, I veiled my presence in the room by seating myself behind them where they could not constantly see me. Male participants were conversing and comfortable enough to show their vulnerabilities and emotions to another man as they spoke about their experiences as men and fathers, even those who were not adhering to the social norms and expectations of masculinity and fatherhood. My being '*invisible*' enabled participants to talk to another man with the assumption that he might relate to their experiences or might have had similar experiences.

According to Rau (2018), qualitative researchers view participants' perceptions and emotional experiences as real, bearing real consequences for the participants, others, and their lifeworld. Interpretive sociology focuses on individual and collective interpretations and understandings of our everyday lives. The everyday life constitutes feelings, sentiments, thoughts, and expressions.

An individual's experiences are formed in the context of various roles and responsibilities. Since individual experiences are often created in relational or interactional spaces, they also comprise feelings and sentiments. Emotions are, therefore, embodied in the construction of meanings and should be understood in that context. Critical analysis of the researcher becomes valuable when analysing the participants' personal values and emotional encounters. Though three counselling sessions were made available with the counselling psychologist for participants' voluntary attendance for debriefing sessions, there were moments when I felt the need to assist beyond providing debriefing sessions by finding solutions to and saving them from their problems. My encounter is similar to Rau's (2020) experience researching a sensitive topic with vulnerable participants.

Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2009) found that some researchers express feelings of guilt in the qualitative research process since they are concerned about the unintended consequences of research on the participants. The participants and researcher do not think thoroughly about the research process; thus, the feeling of guilt arises. Furthermore, not all consequences stemming from research encounters can be anticipated. In some cases, participants are located in challenging socio-economic circumstances, making them marginalised and vulnerable. Research may be the only platform where their voices matter since they have failed in their social positions. In the case of my research, it helped to have a preview of information about some of the challenges of the participants shared by the gatekeepers. Also, being mindful of participants living in stressful situations, I sat myself behind them to save them from any feelings of shame and disgrace. I was overwhelmed with the feeling of guilt since some were unemployed and had to wake up early every morning to find some form of marginal work to come back home with something for their families to eat. I gave them an R200 grocery store voucher as a token of appreciation for their time, hoping they would buy something to eat for themselves and their loved ones. Another reason was to uplift the sense of financial provision some male participants wish to possess since financial provision is seen as the determining attribute of *'successful'* and socially acceptable masculine and fatherhood traits.

According to James (2009), active management of feelings often influences how the researcher would normally act or formulate their views while engaging with participants. My initial view of some of the participants was biased due to the information shared by the gatekeepers; I saw some of them as helpless men who were not respected or perceived as real men or fathers by their community members and loved ones. I acknowledged their participation and contribution to the study by treating them in an ordinary way with an ordinary and necessary 'Thank you', which disrupted notions of them not being respected or acknowledged in 'the community' as real men or fathers.

Listening to audio recordings and reading data transcripts assists with familiarising oneself with collected data. The purpose of transcription of oral speech is to convert the oral speech into a printed copy. Transcription as a process is not about capturing a worldview. Though some researchers prefer to use transcribers to transcribe their data, similar to what I opted for, listening to audio recording and/or transcribing data brings back memories of the interviews and may evoke emotional triggers and sentiments. The emotional reaction to listening to audio recordings and reading data transcripts has received little *formal* empirical consideration (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2015). As researchers plan and execute data collection, the emotions present at the time are mainly pragmatic: to go through the consent form with the participant and go through the data instrument while engaging with the participant by additional probing.

The researcher gains a deeper understanding of the information shared by the participants when listening to the recorded and reading transcribed expressions and narratives of the participants. As I immersed myself in the data, I was reminded of the good and bad things I have experienced in life. I was reminded of the privilege of growing up in a nuclear family with the active involvement of my biological father in my life. I was also reminded of the pain of losing my maternal uncle, whom I loved dearly and perceived as my second father. I was reminded of my vulnerabilities and resilience in life. I also borrowed the participants' lens to understand, re-look and reflect on my lifeworld in relation to myself, my interaction with others, and my social expectations as an unmarried woman without birthing a child. I also realised that the dynamics of my family influenced my life choices and views, particularly the value and devaluation of marriage, parenting (being a social mom), a woman's position in romantic relations, interactions with authoritative figures around me, and the life I chose to lead.

### **9.5.1 Participants' experiences as the researcher's inward mirror**

According to Egnew (2005), life narratives are socially constructed and based on the individual interpretation of the direct personal stories and experiences associated with people's relationships. This also includes creating a safe space where people can share their vulnerabilities and nurture the personal connection between the soul, spirit, and body. Often, social science studies stem from an individual researcher's curiosity triggered by personal encounters and perceptions of social incidents. Apart from its scientific contribution, social research also aims to explore the social realities of individual members of society and how broader historical and social contexts impact their personal experiences. In his writing '*The Sociological Imagination*', Mills (1959) explained:

'The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. The idea is that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways, it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.'

Mills (1959) argues that historical events contribute to formulating people's perceptions and understanding of life; therefore, one can gain insight into one's destiny by looking at the lives of those with similar social backgrounds and living close to similar historical backgrounds. Often, those who are around us become mirrors of what our lives would be. People around us also assist us in finding our personal selves, inner peace, and core purpose of living. They also assist us with understanding the world around us and make informed versus uninformed life decisions based on our perceptions and interpretations of people's personal life experiences. This provides the opportunity to learn lessons relating to our lifeworld through observation and interaction.

As I listened to the audio recordings (the input of the participants), I felt compelled to have a personal reflection relating to masculinity and fatherhood. I retrieved memories relating to my lived experiences from childhood to the present. Listening to participants' narratives, I realised the similarities and differences in our lifeworld and the role of communitarianism in shaping our interpretation of what happens in our lifeworld, actions, and social expectations. I gained a better understanding of who I am as a person (my identity) and the historical context of my family, which provided a sense of belonging. This process triggered negative and positive memories associated with affection, grief, pain, joy, pride, confusion, and a sense of gratitude.

- The Africentric perspective acknowledges the *holistic* approach to the spiritual and physical aspects of human life. In the physical lifeworld, I remembered the most influential men (my late maternal uncle and male teachers), the feeling of affection and protection I received as a child, and the conscious and subconscious lessons I learned as we interacted. These evoked fond memories of the masculine figures I had/have; it also evoked the feeling of sadness caused by grief as I reflected on the role played by my late uncle in my life and the feeling of belonging and affection that I felt around him and the life lessons I learned from him. I was also reminded of my fond memories of the male teachers who encouraged me as a girl child to pursue education and provided guidance beyond the classroom. As Kwame Gyekye describes human personhood in relation to *soul*, *spirit*, and *body* (discussed in Chapter Three p. 51), I acknowledged the presence and guidance of the masculine energy of my ancestors through the different stages of my life. Egnew (2005) elaborated further by explaining that wholeness in the context of personhood consists of physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual human experiences. The recognition of human spiritual experience may resurface the aspect of spiritual healing.
- I have had the privilege of having the physical and emotional involvement, financial provision, and protection of my biological father. I also have the privilege of having a good relationship with my father. Since childhood, my biological father has encouraged me to

pursue education and better my life. I view my biological father as a true feminist and liberal man since he provided equal and similar opportunities for his children irrespective of the traditional notions that denounced the empowerment of a girl child with the assumption that it is wiser to educate a boy child than a girl child; a girl child should be prepared for marriage and child-rearing. Therefore, a girl child is seen as a temporary member of the immediate family since she will be married off to another family. I appreciate my father's liberal thinking and not conforming to the traditional notions of gender. According to Richter *et al.* (2013), paternal ancestry is considered important in paternal societies in countries such as Africa. An individual's knowledge of the paternal lineage provides a sense of belonging; therefore, the surname and clan name are crucial for personal identity and belongingness. Not knowing paternal ancestry and identity is often associated with misfortune. It can, therefore, become stressful for an individual, particularly young people who try to gain a sense of self-understanding (Richter *et al.*, 2013). Though my father has been actively present in my life, he had little knowledge of his paternal identity and important traditional norms and rituals associated with our clan. This caused frustrations as far as spiritual identity is concerned, particularly during my childhood phase, since I am a spiritually inclined person.

- The gift of *ukuphilisa*, healing in English, required knowledge, understanding, and connection with my paternal and maternal ancestry. With the traditional assumption of spiritual inclination that implies healing oneself, ancestry, and family, it was crucial to gain a deeper understanding of my family history to enable me to explore different modalities of healing my lineage. The gift of *ukuphilisa*'s holiness is rooted in the understanding that my ancestors have entrusted me with their spiritual healing and the hope that they will rest in peace and guide me in the process of healing my lineage and others outside my lineage. Not knowing my paternal identity, important traditional norms and rituals associated with our clan prohibited me from adhering to the gift of being a healer. Therefore, there was a subtle level of disappointment stemming from my father's lack of knowledge regarding his ancestral origin.

- I grew up surrounded by resilient female figures from my early childhood phases, including my biological mother, aunts, and elderly women in the community. However, the most influential woman in my life was the spiritual matriarch of my lineage (my great-grandmother). Though I have encountered her *only* within the subconscious level (through dreams and visions), I always felt loved, cared for, and nurtured by her. She gifted me with her wisdom and gentleness and has been a guide throughout my life.

### ***9.5.2 Qualitative PhD research and self-awareness***

Healing is used to bring together aspects of oneself, spirit, and body; also, in the context of the deepest inner knowledge that will lead to integration with oneself (Egnew, 2005). This includes relationships with traditional customs and norms and significant others. Therefore, healing is related to wholeness, and wholeness is often experienced when connecting with others. In this section, I also reflect on healing beyond the orthodox approach of medicinal or physiological sense.

In some instances, being a healer implies that your lineage has entrusted you with uncovering and reconciling family difficulties, receiving guidance regarding possible solutions, and understanding the reasons behind family difficulties. For the longest time, I denounced my gift as a healer since it was not accepted by my family's religion and the community's perceptions of healers. Elders in the family encouraged my parents to seek religious interventions against the visions, dreams and sounds in my ears. I was too young to comprehend what was happening to me, especially my body.

I felt disappointed and failed by my biological father, especially not knowing my place of belonging since he did not know the origin of his forefathers, as I believed I could not heal what

I did not know as a child. Family disputes caused more agony since there was no elder to guide us (my parents and I) in this process since my grandparents passed on. Therefore, I grew up knowing that I must adhere to my ancestral gift of becoming a healer, not knowing how to accept or use the gift. My parents (particularly my father) requested, through traditional rituals, permission from my ancestors to grant me the opportunity to receive and complete a formal education. Indeed, my parent's request was granted, even though I encountered challenges in my academic journey (particularly in tertiary education). However, I had to trust my ancestors to guide me through the process of healing my family.

Healing connects the living and the dead and everything around you and provides a sense of life. This study prompted the need and thrust to know more about my identity and the origin of my paternal forefathers. I discovered that my ancestors are known to have been wanderers who never had a place of dwelling since they ran away from the Cape Frontier War; thus, my father has no knowledge about his origin and traditional rituals. This enabled me to understand that there was no alignment between their souls, spirits, and bodies as they were uprooted from their place of dwelling. Some died along the way, trying to escape and find a place to belong. Rau (2018) argues that belongingness is associated with identity, and the two are reflected in people's everyday lives.

According to Brown (2000), defining the concept of spiritual healing is challenging since the focus is dependent on the visions of the healer. However, spirituality entails meaning, reconciliation, and transcendence. Healing focuses on an individual's approach and intention. An individual must open him/herself to receive and accept healing; the approach determines the outcomes in this process. I learned our clan's name '*iziduko*', in isiXhosa. A clan name grants an individual to know his/her roots and enables one to reconcile with one's ancestry. Through this study, I gained a self-understanding of my lifeworld and role in healing my family and those around me. By gaining knowledge of my lineage, my father and I have a sense of belonging and

knowledge of my purpose as a healer. I may not have had the opportunity to experience rites of passage rituals, but I have gained knowledge of self-identity.

The conceptualisation of this study, since it focuses on understanding men's and, to a lesser extent, women's construction and experiences of masculinity and fatherhood, led me to recognise male pain and the marginalisation of some men in society. The study revived lekgotla gatherings in Kagisanong, where young and old men reconciled and were able to share ideas and advice with the hope of raising a different generation of men who understood their positions in the family and community.

### ***9.6 Summary***

The chapter outlined qualitative research as interacting with participants' private spaces and lives. The intention is to highlight the need to see the world through the eyes of the participants and the experiences that accompany such an attempt. The chapter reflects on the researcher's emotional encounter in conducting qualitative research. It also focuses on the intersubjectivity of qualitative research. The chapter highlights the possible feelings that researchers may feel, such as pity, empathy, and a saviour attitude, while interacting with participants.

The chapter also critically reflects on the emotional burden of the researcher immersing him/herself with data via listening to audio recordings and transcriptions. However, little formal empirical work has been done to explore the effects of immersion. The chapter discussed the healing process of the researcher through the study. Immersing myself in the study ignited my ancestry gift of healing. I was not expecting this. I gained a different understanding of healing, what it entails and the function thereof. Undertaking this research reconciled me with my forefathers and provided me with the opportunity to know my identity and their origin.

In closing, I thank *uQamata* (the God of my forefathers) and *Izinyanya-zam* (my ancestors) for allowing me to share my emotions and healing encounters within the qualitative research journey.

## CHAPTER TEN: DRAWING TOGETHER THE THREADS

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### *10.1 Introduction*

This chapter aims to draw together the common threads of the study. Chapter One pp. 18-19 outlines research aims, objectives and questions posed by the study. The summaries and concluding remarks of the key findings of the study are provided in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. Like femininity, the social construction of masculinities and fatherhood has complexities that are influenced by local circumstances, socio-economic position, social interaction and historical background. Qualitative and indigenous research methodologies enabled me to document participants' perceptions and experiences of masculinities, manhood and fatherhood.

The following are common findings that I identified within the study.

### *10.2 Gender in an ever-changing world*

This study reflects on traditional as well as progressive ideas and practices of masculinity and fatherhood; it also illustrates their continuous negotiation and re-negotiation. It is worth pointing out that the concept of 'traditional masculinity' is not synonymous with primitive or backward thinking that is static and not evolving. In this study, 'traditional' refers to historically long-standing, formative customs, rites of passages and images of manhood and fatherhood.

Participants define masculinity and fatherhood in the context of accountability and responsibility towards one's social conduct, social morals and people one encounters. These all resonate with the notions or features of African human 'Personhood'. The expectation of immediate financial provision is at the center of being a man and far less attention goes into securing financial means for future generations or accumulating generational wealth. This

indicates the burden bestowed upon masculinities and fatherhood – of being a man and being a father - particularly for men from impoverished social locations as they lack the capacity to meet the social expectations of family and community to provide financially, particularly for family. Participants also see the need to provide protection as one of the main attributes of masculinities and fatherhood. In the context of the study, participants talk about the benefits they derived from their biological fathers' social status, which provided a sense of security and lowered their chances of becoming victims of crime. This is not a privilege available to children whose biological fathers are absent and uninvolved. The absence of the biological father is often associated with that father abandoning his children. A participant in this study brings to our attention a different reason of the absence of his biological father, which was caused by a life tragedy – death. This context highlights the absolute absence of a biological father. This context highlights the absolute absence of a biological father and provides a different understanding relating to the absence of a biological father. In this context, a biological father did not abandon his children; however, death is the cause of his absence. Another participant provides a different interpretation, perhaps more common, of the idea and reality of absent and uninvolved fathers. In his context, he met his father in his teenage years, and never lived with his biological father, but maintained contact with him. Due to his father's lack of responsiveness to his needs, he sees his father as an uninvolved rather than an absent father, which demonstrates a different understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon. Cabrera et al. (2000) point out the importance of fathers' active involvement in their children's lives and spending time with them, as discussed Chapter Four p94. Men's active participation is not only beneficial to their children but also to the family unit. Men commonly understand societal notions of fatherhood and what society deems to be a good father. But these notions and norms are changing as society evolves.

This study sheds light on the presence and influence of *inclusive masculinities* that encompass a new image of a masculinity and fatherhood. The new image of masculinity and fatherhood represent men who do not conform to the stereotypical notions of gender. This new image of what it is to be a man and father surfaces in participants' interactions with others and their

practices of fatherhood, which signify social changes. bell hooks (1984: p68) brings to our attention the importance of recognizing male pain stemming from the system of patriarchy. My study points out the emotive aspects of being a man and being a father. Participants of the study freely expressed their emotions, i.e., sadness, joy, disappointment and emotional pain. Community leaders and participants of the study formed a support group since Lekgotla does not seem to meet the needs of a younger generation. The findings of the study highlight that men do confide in one another, but the quality of exchange serves to double down on unhelpful behavior, such as the use of alcohol, and unhelpful ideas such as othering women.

### ***10.3 Africentric thinking and indigenous values in an ever-changing society***

This study provides insight on Africentric thoughts and values, including their importance in terms of communitarian efforts in raising a child. Social connectedness is the core foundation of communitarian living. The findings of the study outline the communitarian connectedness that participants witnessed in their upbringing, and that they experience within their communities. The findings of the study reflect on the socialization process that contributed to their perceptions and understandings of masculinity and fatherhood taking place within different social institutions such as family, community, workspace, media, and the spiritual and religious environment.

This study sheds light on the cosmology of an African 'Person', who comprises of the soul, spirit and body. Reviewed literature and the narratives of some participants allude to the spiritual connection between the living and non-living. In the African context, the non-living are perceived to exist in the spiritual realm, which is beyond the physical context. The findings highlight the importance of aligning the physical and spiritual being in the process of rites of passages. Though participants are of the view that the custom of initiation practice has lost its meaning, it still plays a crucial role in the transition from boyhood to manhood among various South African Black ethnic groups. Like Schütz's (1970: p72) view of the stock of knowledge (see Chapter Two pp29), initiation customs and their teachings are based on the knowledge of

our forefathers which has passed down from generation to generation. Participants talk about the unpleasant changes that altered the nature and function of the custom. Some see teachings of the initiation school as being based on and shaped by traditional and *damaging* ideas about manhood, particularly in connection to the relationship between men who have gone through the custom and other men who have not completed the initiation ritual. Other participants point out the traditional and patriarchal teachings they have learned while undergoing the initiation school, teachings that relate to how a man is expected to treat a woman. This also reflects the realization of changes occurring in how people think about gender roles and responsibilities.

African thinkers Menkiti, 1984, Beck & Oyowe, 2018, Motsamai, 2018, and Matolino, 2011 (see Chapter Three pp44) argue that an individual's status of being '*umtu*' is acquired over a lifetime and is based on the premise of having attained moral and ethical reasoning. Community members are the ones to bestow this status upon a person due to his/her social conduct and interactions with others. Therefore, a person can fail to gain recognition of being '*umtu*' due to not adhering to social norms and values. Like the status of African human personhood, an individual man can fail at attaining the status of being a real man and a good father due to not adhering to social norms, attributes and expectations of these roles. Social expectations overburden some men with responsibilities that are beyond their means because of their various natural/social circumstances. Also, adhering to social norms and expectations does not guarantee that an individual man will gain the status of being a real man and a good father, since it is dependent on others' perceptions. Failure to attain the status of '*umtu*', '*real man*' and '*good father*' does not reduce a person to becoming an animal or object, even though the community might view and treat him differently. A participant narrates how his late brother engaged in gang and criminal activities with the intention of providing for his siblings. This highlights some of the complexities around South African Black masculinities and fatherhood. To his family, his late brother had gained the status of being a good man and social father since his behavioral misconduct stems from the need to address his siblings' needs. However, the community feared him due to his social conduct and affiliation with gangsterism. The

complexity of this matter raises a question of who is in a better position to bestow the status of being a real man or a good father, an individual's family and intimate circle, or the community at large?

The notion of African human personhood is based on the premises of Ubuntu, '*I am because we are*'. This study pays attention to the African philosophy of Ubuntu to gain understanding of the meaning of South African Black masculinities and fatherhood. Chapter Three pp55 outlines the four domains of support, i.e., communitarian, emotional, spiritual and financial support, which are anchored in the core principles of Ubuntu: communitarianism, dignity, respect, compassion, and care. The findings of this study highlight some of the challenges that men face, particularly given the recent economic circumstances of South Africa, which constrain some men and fathers from carrying the burden of providing financial support to their families and others. Moreover, in recent years the domains of support have become more limited to one's intimate circle, since people have begun to gravitate towards individualistic rather than communitarian ways of being.

African masculinities and fatherhood are portrayed in the image of distant, authoritative and disciplinarian figures who instill socially desirable attributes and mete out discipline. This view is underpinned by the notion of instilling respect and inculcating humanitarian attributes that are socially desirable – of socializing children to become '*abantu*'. In this regard, respect is not earned but commanded and, rather often, instilled by force using corporal punishment. This can create strain on the relationship between men, and between fathers and their biological children, as well as children in the wider community.

Mnacana et.al (2016) state that fatherhood is a communitarian responsibility, particularly among South African Black communities where children are born and raised within the extended family structure. In the absence of a biological father, men in the family and community usually step into the fathering role to ensure children's needs are met. The concept of social fathering has long been in existence in extended family structures and South African

Black communities and has gained greater recognition by social scientists (Richter et al., 2013, Morrell, 2006, Hobson, 2004: p246, Ratele et.al, 2012 and Swartz & Bhana, 2009: pp3) in the process of unpacking the phenomenon of Black masculinities and the absence of biological fathers. The findings of the study the earlier sections '*Being a Person*' (Chapter Six) and '*Being a Man*' (as discussed in Chapter Seven, pp195 ) some men observe others who *expect* to receive respect because they are older, or in a more powerful position, whereas they do not conduct themselves in a mature or respectful manner. In other words, they claim, rather than earn, respect. I argue that respect should be earned – it does not emerge from acts of power-over, or from corporal and other forms of punishment – it emerges out of being a *person*.

#### ***10.4 Interpretive tradition***

This study uses Interpretive Sociology and Africentrism as theoretical lenses to unpack participants' perceptions, lived experiences and understandings and interpretation of masculinity and fatherhood. Interpretive Sociology and Africentrism provide similar as well as different views on how people experience their everyday lifeworld and the meanings they derive from their social interactions.

Interpretive sociology brings our attention to how individuals make sense of their everyday lifeworld. Through social interaction and having similar experiences, people develop common understandings of the social world. People often interpret their common understanding as having *objective* reality, whereas their reality is, in effect, socially (co)constructed via agreement between many individual members of society (Schütz, 1970: p72). Social interaction plays a significant role in shaping people's understanding of the multiple truths of their lifeworld. Africentrism places emphasis on social connectedness, with a greater emphasis on communitarianism via the principle of Ubuntu. The findings of this study confirm that communitarian existence is crucial in the socialization processes of '*Being a Person*' as indicated in Chapter Six 140. From early human developmental stages, social interaction and communitarian living are crucial in instilling and modelling socially desirable behavior.

Participants understanding and how they make meaning of masculinity and fatherhood, are shaped by social norms and communitarian expectations. Participants talk about the burden of the normative expectations on men, particularly men who find themselves in impoverished circumstances and who are unable to meet the social expectations of being a man and father. The lifeworld of African participants in this study is deeply influenced by the traditional context of a community of people creating a shared sense of reality. Communitarian existence is often guided by the aspiration of maintaining and adhering to social norms and conducts that are shared by local people; this Schütz (1970, p71) describes as the habitual sense. The habitual sense is often not questioned as it is viewed as how the lifeworld *is*, which can be damaging to individuals who are unable or unwilling to see the importance of subscribing to social norms and expectations.

Ubuntu is based on the principle of reciprocity – *I am because we are, we are because I am*. Reciprocity promotes the idea that people share common knowledge and understanding of normal behaviour or socially acceptable behaviour. Also, reciprocity encourages the idea that people often have similar experiences hence they are able to participate in ideas and events that are understandable to others as much as they are understandable to them. Knowledge relating to social norms and values is instilled by different institutions throughout an individual's human development stages. The findings of this study provide insight into the role of different institutions in the socialization phase of childhood and the communitarian efforts that go into raising a child, including instilling socially desirable behaviour. Participants talk about how they got to learn about appropriate and inappropriate social interaction. In this regard, most participants refer to the use of corporal punishment as a method which was commonly used by their fathers to correct ill behaviour such as ill-discipline, demonstration of lack of respect for elders and other socially undesirable behaviours. Contrary to the more modern, perhaps Western-influenced, approach whereby respect is *earned*, the African context of this study demonstrates how respect is *commanded* from children. It, also, indicates the power dynamics that exist between African fathers and their children. Furthermore, Ubuntu promotes the act of selflessness over that of pursuing individualistic wellbeing. Chapter

Three p55 highlights the four domains of Ubuntu support, i.e. communitarian support, emotional support, financial support and spiritual support.

It is evident that the social expectations of manhood overlap with the expectations of fatherhood. It is worth pointing out there are not only social expectations, but also normative gender roles attached to being a man and being a father.

Theoretical notions of African human personhood (as discussed in Chapter Three pp44 to 52) and Western Interpretive Sociology, represented in the ideas of Schütz (1970, p72) (as discussed in Chapter Two) agree in as far as they both recognise that our predecessors experienced and interpreted the intersubjective world in ways that gradually changed it, so that eventually the lifeworld evolved into what has become accepted as our real, or objective, world – our truth. Therefore, our understanding of the lifeworld and our stock of knowledge is passed from generation to generation. As society evolves people's understanding of the lifeworld also evolves and their experiences also provide different understandings of a particular phenomenon. Therefore, although our stock of knowledge is pre-defined by our predecessors, particularly when it comes to rites of passages and traditional customs and rituals, as society evolves the original thinking and understanding of these practices often take a different form. In my understanding, interpretive sociology explains that individual's actions and experiences, in the context of their relationships with others shape their understanding of the lifeworld, while Ubuntu place emphasis on *communitarian engagement* in forming knowledge and understanding the everyday world. In my opinion, African society is unlikely to ever lose its basis in communitarian values, which will survive irrespective of social changes. But as a social scientist, I must acknowledge how social changes have started a process of promoting individual selfhood, rather than communitarian selfhood in modern African society. It remains to be seen how African society in general, and African communitarian engagement in particular, will evolve.

Language is *intersubjective* and it is *integral* to Interpretive Sociology. The findings of the study outline how language can be used as a form of inclusion or exclusion of others. Given the long-standing tradition of circumcision within the male Xhosa population of my study, inclusion and exclusion play out in the context of initiates using language that can only be understood by those who underwent the process in traditional gatherings. Participants of the study also use some of the South African ethnic idioms to describe the lens through which they or others view and unpack social context or circumstances, for example “*molaya kgosi wa itaya*” meaning *a king discipline himself*. These idioms also give clarity on how participants understand meaning in their lifeworld.

### ***10.5 Narratives and memory***

Rau & Coetzee (2022) describe narratives as unfolding events that are an amalgam of logic, emotion, time-dependent understandings of life happenings and audience dependent re-framings of these understandings. Narratives are embedded in the qualitative interpretive research methodology since they focus on the telling and hearing of stories, on capturing people’s perceptions, their understandings of social reality and their shared human experiences. In this study, participants’ narratives were explored in a logical sequence: from their early encounters with men and women who shaped their understanding of masculinity and fatherhood, proceeding through different phases of their lives. According to Rau & Coetzee (2022), narratives are age old, yet one of the more recent research approaches that compel an individual to perceive, communicate, and make sense of the shared human experience. Like narratives, focused life stories enable a qualitative researcher to understand the interaction and connection between an individual and their communities. Participants unpacked their lived experiences in relation to their understanding of their everyday life and the bond or lack thereof with their fathers, other men, women, children and their wider communities.

Memory is central to the narrative approach and thus to interpretive qualitative research. Through memory, participants are able to recall the sequence of their life experiences.

Participants retrieved memories of different phases of their lives filled with different emotions. Participants' memories of past experiences and present realities triggered different types of emotions, such as sadness, disappointment, hurt, joy and frustration. It is worth mentioning that memory is intersubjective since people's understanding of their lifeworld is mediated by how relate to others: what stands out, what is forgotten, what is adjusted, what is agreed or disagreed upon. Through the interactions with participants of this study, I found myself recalling my past experiences and recent reality, and I reflected on how participants' life stories triggered my emotions as I could relate to some of their lived experiences. As was shortly discussed a chapter is devoted to the qualitative encounter as an important, yet mostly unspoken of, aspect of research.

## ***10.6 Critical engagement with the research process***

### ***10.6.1 Care for the researcher and other ethical issues***

Upon conceptualizing the research topic, and identifying the aims, objectives and questions of the study, I sought and obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Free State's Scientific and Ethics Committee to pilot my data collection instruments (Ethics clearance number: UFS-HSD2019/2096, issued on 14 February 2020).

The process of the ethics application requires the researcher to pre-empt questions that are relevant to the study and guided by the literature and to test the instruments without engaging with participants or communities where the actual study will be located. Therefore I also sought ethical clearance to pilot my data collection instruments. Also, the ethics protocol is more focused on not causing harm to participants, and less attention goes into researchers setting up psycho-social support for themselves in case participants share some triggering information during data collection. This qualitative study focused on retelling the stories and lived experiences of participants relating to masculinity and fatherhood and I thought about it I never anticipated the true sensitivity of the topic, until I started to pilot of data collection

instruments. Qualitative research can be triggering for qualitative researchers and participants particularly when participants talk about experiences that are very emotive, or that might be similar to the experiences of the researcher.

Chapter Nine is dedicated specifically to the qualitative research encounter, where I reflect on participants' life stories that are similar to mine and the triggers that were recharged by participants' narratives. I then realised that the researcher may not be able to distance him/herself from participants' realities that mirror those of the researcher, or that trigger the researcher's sociological imagination. Conducting qualitative and indigenous research requires the researcher to be mindful of participants' various circumstances, hence it requires a humanistic approach to research. Informed by my experience as a qualitative researcher, I urge that ethics protocol does more to encourage qualitative researchers to seek psychosocial or debriefing support.

Data collection instruments, information sheets and consent forms were translated to participants' native languages, Sesotho, Setswana and isiXhosa, for the pilot study. From the pilot study, I established that most participants felt comfortable to engage in Sesotho and Setswana since those are prominent languages used by locals in Mangaung. I piloted data collection instruments because I wanted to gain understanding of whether questions that I had pre-empted when I applied for ethical clearance were relevant and able to address the main aims and objectives of the study. I also wanted to identify questions that are suitable for in-depth interviews, focus groups and lekgotla gatherings. I realised the sensitivity of some questions and identified questions that are more suitable for in-depth interviews, such as participants' relationships with their fathers, memories of their absent or departed loved ones who shaped their understanding of masculinity and fatherhood.

Piloting my data collection instruments was beneficial as it assisted me with the planning and navigating data collection phase. In my view as a qualitative researcher, pre-empting questions before engaging with the community has advantages such as the researcher being able to pre-

empty questions based on the reviewed literature and theoretical framework. It comes somewhat as a shock, though, to discover that participants and communities are either not being confronted by, or that interested in, the phenomena that interest the researcher. I recommend that the ethics board enables and *encourages* PhD-level researchers to investigate if the phenomenon of their interest is prevalent among communities prior to registering their research title. This will enable young researchers to gauge the relevance as well as the sensitivity of their research interest. Also, to allow for people within the communities to identify communitarian happenings in their respective location and play a more active role as co-constructors of knowledge.

Since the study focuses on participants' perceptions, understandings and lived experiences of masculinities and fatherhood, I used a matched-gender interview approach by employing a male research assistant. I became a non-participant observer while the research assistant conducted interviews and focus group discussions with male participants. I observed the interaction between the research assistant and participants as I sat quietly behind the participants and took field notes – this was to create a conducive environment as they engaged with the research assistant. It is worth mentioning that I could not engage with male participants and probe further questions relating to their responses since the discussions were around their lived experiences and sensitive topics, which I view to be one of the limitations of matched gender interviewing.

Gatekeepers who are elders of the community granted the researcher and research assistant the opportunity to observe lekgotla gatherings where the elders, not the researchers, engaged in matters relating to being a man and being a father. Due to being a female researcher, I observed and took field notes of the engagement between gatekeepers' interaction with other men. Also, the research assistant was not permitted to engage in discussions since he is young and an outsider since he was not a resident of the community. We were not granted the opportunity to engage with attendees of Lekgotla gatherings, which I consider as another

limitation of gender interviewing, as well as Lekgotla as an open research space, because neither of us could probe further questions relating to matters discussed in Lekgotla. So lekgotla was an interesting space for research, and I learned things, but it is closed, almost elite, and run mainly by older males, which can be alienating – even within the male populace (Rasweswe (2023)). I recommend qualitative and feminist researchers to pay attention to gender interviewing approaches since there is little information about the role of gender when collecting *qualitative* data from African men.

### **10.6.2 Strengths of the study**

In the traditional context, Lekgotla can only be attended by matured men to discuss matters and resolving disputes in the community. Encouraged by data collection method, and the information shared during Lekgotla gatherings, gatekeepers established men's forum to address issues that are confronting men in the community; importantly the forum would be inclusive of young men in the community.

Also, gatekeepers developed a forum encompassing men and women focusing on gender-based violence, parenting, and crime prevention in the community. Together with the UFS gender-desk and Student Counselling and Development, the researcher started *Lekgotla: Gentle Man's Gazelle* intended to be active among male residents living in UFS student housing. The plan is for male students to meet and discuss matters affecting them as young men and fathers.

Importantly, and continuing in the vein of support, a strength of my study is that it created a space for participants to share their thoughts, emotions and lived experiences relating to masculinity, manhood and fatherhood. Several of the participants were very moved by this sharing, some quite visibly, even shedding tears. So it was a space where men could abandon a public stance of resilience to hurt; it was a space where they felt safe.

### ***10.6.3 Limitations of the study***

The pilot of data collection instruments took place at the time of the global pandemic of Covid-19. I was unable to pilot data collection instruments for the Lekgotla gathering. However, I was able to pilot data collection instruments for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The actual data collection also happened at the time of Covid-19 lockdown. Social gatherings were prohibited, therefore, the gatekeepers postponed Lekgotla gatherings. Public facilities were closed due to the pandemic, therefore, finding suitable venues to conduct focus group discussions became a challenge. The focus group discussions were also postponed until the researcher and gatekeepers located a suitable venue; in line with Covid-19 regulations. Some participants withdrew from the study due to contracting the virus or being in close contact with someone who had contracted the virus. This occurred frequently among female participants who are mothers, as schools were closed due to the pandemic. Challenges presented by the pandemic delayed the data collection phase. Collecting data on a sensitive topic may work telephonically in some cases, but this could not match the in-person, directly felt and intuited, quality of the qualitative encounter.

### ***10.7 Research for future studies***

The following are possible directions for future research that emerged out of my study:

- Participants describe initiation as a communitarian practice (see Chapter Seven). It would be interesting to explore the communitarian role and support provided to the initiates and their families (including female members of the families) in the process of initiation and how the practice has evolved.
- It could be thought provoking to see what masculinity and fatherhood studies can yield in investigating men and fathers across different social classes and locations; particularly those who have wealth and are situated in affluent Black South African communities.

- Also, it would be interesting to investigate co-parenting relationships, especially where parents no longer have intimate relations, as my data show that co-parenting influences the relationship between fathers and their children.
- Various scholars (Nare et al., 2018, Pienaar, 2017 and Rasweswe, 2023) describe Lekgotla as a problem-resolution practice. I recommend the use of Lekgotla when investigating Gender Based Violence and femicide in South Africa as it might yield a dialogue that could produce possible initiatives to decrease its prevalence.
- It would be interesting to investigate the notion of positive masculinity and fatherhood, caring masculinity and fatherhood, and the new image of men and fathers, particularly amongst Black South African men and their partners.
- Lastly, I recommend further research on the role that media currently plays in connecting children with their biological fathers. Also, an exploration on whether or not children who sought their biological fathers and found them via social media, managed to establish sustainable and meaningful relations.

### ***10.8 Contributions to the discipline of Sociology and the field of Masculinity***

It is still not common for Sociology to apply Africentric theory and methods to conceptualize and conduct research. This is a gap in higher education and research in Africa and more specifically, in South Africa. My thesis is deeply anchored in my academic background, which is predominantly in Western thought. It is also deeply anchored in my lifeworld as a Black South African. My intention with this thesis is that it would meaningfully integrate both worlds in terms of theoretical gaze as well as in the more social, interactive aspects of research, namely the methods.

While there is a growing body of research in South Africa on Black Masculinity and to some extent on Black Fatherhood, these fields remain under-researched. Findings from my study fill some of the gaps in understanding these phenomena and to the body of literature. I believe that the depth at which these have been investigated in this thesis adds meaningful knowledge Black South African men and fathers by focusing on participants' *whole personhoods*: both the private and personal aspects of their spiritual, communitarian, and everyday lifeworlds.

Qualitative research has many checks and balances to control how research is conducted in order to produce research that is high quality, ethical, believable, and neutral. Less attention is focused on the fact that the qualitative researcher herself is also a research 'instrument'. She affects the research. Nowadays there is an increasing interest in this phenomenon. A chapter in this thesis is therefore dedicated to the effects of qualitative research on the researcher – on my personal engagement with the qualitative research encounter.

My stance in terms of researching such an engendered topic as masculinity and fatherhood is firmly rooted in third wave feminism. In other words I, and my research, operate in a space that appreciates the merits of different genders working together with one another, not against one another. As such this thesis contributes to the principles and practice of inclusive masculinity.

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout the thesis, hooks's name and surname are in lower case letters, in keeping with her personal and professional wishes.

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## APPENDICES

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### *Appendix A: Ethical Clearance*



### **GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)**

14-Feb-2020

Dear Miss Velelo, Nontombi NL

#### **Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**Masculinity and Fatherhood: A Narrative Study of Black South African Men living in Mangaung**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2019/2096/1402**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Derek Litthauer**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

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## *Appendix B: Research Assistant Contract*

### RESEARCH ASSISTANT APPOINTMENT CONTRACT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Dear Mr. Sele Sello, I hereby confirm your appointment as a research assistant in the study entitled *Masculinity and Fatherhood: A Narrative Study of Black South African Men living in Mangaung, South Africa*. Please read this entire document carefully before signing.

#### **1. Instructions**

Kindly note this agreement applies only to the position of research assistant in this specific study. Once this form is signed, it should be submitted to the principal researcher Ms. Nontombi Velelo. Once signed, the principal researcher will scan and upload the agreement to UFS Graduate Research Management (GRM) system as required by the Central UFS ethics committee. The principal researcher will send you a copy of a scanned signed document for your records.

#### **2. Nature and the process of the study**

I will explain the study's data collection in detail to you. Kindly also take time to read the information sheet and consent forms for each of the data collection processes — one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, and Lekgotla gatherings — to ensure that you understand what the study about, how the study will be conducted, with whom, and what participation entails.

Kindly direct any questions related to the study to myself as principal researcher. Know that it is within your rights to receive satisfactory answers for the questions you ask. Should you have concerns related to the study and its conduct, you should contact my study supervisors Dr A. Rau at [rauahm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:rauahm@ufs.ac.za) and Professor J. Coetzee at [coetzejc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:coetzejc@ufs.ac.za) and/or the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer Mrs. Charne Vercueil at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za).

### **3. Confidentiality of a research study**

Confidentiality has to do with the treatment and protection of the information an individual discloses in a relationship of trust. The main expectation, with confidentiality, is that the provided information will not be disclosed without permission or divulged to others in ways that are inconsistent with the understandings governing the original disclosure. Confidential information relating to participants in this research study include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Name, age, address and contact information,
- Sexual orientation,
- Ethnic origin,
- Educational background,
- Employment status,
- Socio-economic background,
- Political views and religious beliefs,
- Personal issues and views,
- What participants say in data collection sessions.

As a research assistant, you have access to the confidential and potentially sensitive information of this study. Participants need to feel and be assured of all the researchers' efforts to maintain confidentiality and treat them with respect. Therefore, it is important that you, as a research assistant, maintain absolute confidentiality when dealing with participant's information and data that is collected from them in the study.

Kindly take note of the following expectations you are required to meet as a research assistant.

### **4. Expectations of a research assistant**

To maintain confidentiality, as a research assistant, I agree to the following:

- a) Keep the research information (i.e., audio recordings, field notes and data transcripts) confidential by not disclosing or discussing the information with any other person other than the principal researcher.

b) Ensure the security of the information gathered during the study, while it is in my possession. This includes:

- Keeping printed documents, i.e., consent forms and interview schedules, and audio record devices in a secured location.
- Keeping documents or data related to the study secured on a password-protected computer.
- Recording data on a dedicated audio-recorder and not recording or storing data on a mobile phone or other such devices.
- Not duplicating the documents or data related to the study unless instructed to do so by the principal researcher.
- Providing the information and data related to the study and participants to the principal researcher upon request from the principal researcher.
- Once discussed with and permitted by the principal researcher, erasing all the information and data related to the study that is in my keeping.

##### **5. Conduct of the research assistant**

You are expected to show respectful treatment of participants at all times. Participants have the right to ask questions and have these answered to their satisfaction. Should you be in a position of not being able to provide answers to the participants, you should consult the principal researcher.

You may not discriminate against or stigmatize participants on any basis, including the information they share during data collection. You are expected to acknowledge and respect their views, actions, and perceptions, even if they differ from your own views and perceptions. Therefore, you are expected to remove your preconceived notions and not to impose your views on the participants or disregard their views.

You are expected to be sensitive towards any form of discomfort participants might experience. This includes giving participants time to recover, offering them the opportunity to reschedule meetings or continue at a later stage, reminding participants that they are not obliged to share any information they wish not to share, and reminding them that their participation is entirely

voluntary therefore they have right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice from us. You should never force, intimidate, nor bully anyone into participating or recruiting participants for the study.

## **6. Logistical arrangements**

It is the responsibility of the principal researcher to contact participants and make arrangements for when and where data will be collected. The principal researcher will make the fieldwork schedule available, in advance, to you. It is the responsibility of the principal researcher to arrange transport to the field. You are expected to travel with the principal researcher to the location of the fieldwork. You are expected to meet with the principal researcher 30 minutes before the indicated time of departure; at the location identified by you and the principal researcher. This is to ensure that the audio recording devices, information sheets, consent forms, interview schedules and other materials to be used for fieldwork are organized for fieldwork and packed into her car. You are expected to assist the principal researcher with arranging refreshments for focus group discussions and lekgotla gatherings.

## **7. Claims and remuneration**

You will be required to complete an ad-hoc claim form for payments for your work. Forms will be sent to you by Ms. Velelo (the principal researcher) via email. Claims for remuneration must be approved by the principal researcher, researcher's supervisor and the Academic Head of Department of Sociology. Claims will not be paid in advance but rather every month. Claim forms submitted after the 2<sup>nd</sup> of every month will be considered to be late submissions and will only be paid the following month. Claims will be payable on the last day of the month, per university remuneration procedure. Payments will be paid over according to the banking details you have provided. Claims should not exceed the number of hours stipulated. Remuneration will be guided and in accordance with the University's remuneration scale, per hour worked. Fieldwork and transcription will cost R12 000.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the content of this document and key fieldwork documents such as participant consent forms and data collection guides. I agree to adhere to the stipulated instructions and expectations as a research assistant

under the leadership of the Principal Researcher, Ms. Nontombi Velelo. I agree to adhere to the confidentiality agreement while performing my duties as a research assistant. I am aware of and accept that failure to comply with stipulated expectations and confidentiality agreement will result in the termination of my contract as a research assistant.



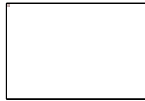
Sele Sello 26/07/2021

Research Assistant (Printed Name) Signature Date

Physical Address: 3 Jim Fouche, Universitas, Bloemfontein, 9301

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Nontombi Velelo 26/07/2021

Principal Researcher (Printed name) Signature Date

Physical Address: House 70 Westcliff Complex, Sieraard Road, Fleurdal, Bloemfontein, 9301.

Telephone: 079 833 0282

Email: [velelonl@ufs.ac.za](mailto:velelonl@ufs.ac.za)

*Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms and Gatekeeper Consent Forms*



**RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW**

**DATE**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**Masculinity and Fatherhood: A Narrative Study of Black South African Men living in Mangaung**

**PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):**

*Nontombi Velelo*

*2003017809*

*079 8330 828*

**FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:**

*Faculty of Humanities*

*Department of Sociology*

**STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:**

*Dr. Asta Rau. Email; [rauahm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:rauahm@ufs.ac.za)*

*Prof Jan Coetzee. Email: [coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za](mailto:coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za)*

### **WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

*The study is being undertaken for a PhD qualification. The study intends to describe and explain Black African men's experiences and ideas about manhood and fatherhood.*

### **WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?**

*My name is Nontombi Velelo. I am registered for a PhD in Sociology at the University of the Free State.*

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

*This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.*

**Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-HSD2019/2096/1402**

### **WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?**

*You are invited to take part in the study because you are:*

- *A Black African man, born in South Africa, and living in Mangaung,*
- *Between 18 and 65 years old,*
- *From one of the following ethnic groups; Basotho, Batswana, or Xhosa.*
- *I believe that you will make a valuable contribution to my study.*

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

*Your role in the study would be to partake in one, maybe two, in-depth interviews. Interviews will be audio-recorded. There will be a male research assistant who will be leading the interviews. I will be present as an observer. The interviews will each take approximately 1 to 1½ hours.*

*Your involvement will mean that you will revisit memories and lived experiences of manhood and fatherhood. If this upsets you and you feel the need to seek professional assistance, feel free to contact*

*Mr. Chweenemang, a counselling psychologist, on 051 4357 926 for a maximum of three debriefing sessions. The costs of the debriefing sessions will be covered by Nontombi Velelo, the researcher.*

#### **CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?**

*Yes, participants can withdraw from the study at any time should you wish to do so. Participation is voluntary. And there will be no penalties or harm towards participants as a result of withdrawing from the study.*

*Before collecting data, the research assistant will go through the ethical principles with you, so that you understand your responsibilities and your rights. After that, the research assistant will provide you with a consent form. If you agree to partake in the study, you will be asked to sign this form. You will receive a copy of this information sheet and the consent form for your records.*

#### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

*The study might not have a direct impact on your life; however, the study will contribute to scientific knowledge. The study provides men in your community with the opportunity to provide a shared meaning of manhood and fatherhood. The study also provides men in your community an opportunity to identify the common experiences related to manhood and fatherhood, which can perhaps help build a greater sense of unity among men. There is no payment for participating.*

#### **WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

*No serious inconveniences are expected from participating. I intend to plan interviews in advance. You will decide on the date/s convenient for you. You, myself, and my research assistant will agree on a place to meet that is convenient for you and suitable for conducting research.*

#### **WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

*I will protect your identity in all ways possible so that the information you provide will not be linked to you. Your real name will not appear anywhere in any publication.*

*I intend to personally transcribe and analyse data myself. My study supervisors will be given transcripts that do not show real names. Data may be reviewed by people at the university who are responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including members of the Research Ethics Committee. However, no other external person(s) will be given access to the information you provide.*

#### **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?**

*All records of your participation in the study will be stored in a locked cabinet at my office. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer, and documents will also have a password (known only by me, the principal researcher). Once I have finished with the data/information and nothing more has to be done, audio-recordings will be deleted, and other copies will be destroyed so that no trace of the information you provided is left.*

#### **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

*No, you will not receive any payment or incentives for participating in the study.*

#### **HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

*I will distribute a preliminary report of analysed findings to you for your comments and criticisms, and for you to see that the information captured during the interviews matches what you said. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Nontombi Velelo on 079 8330 282 or email [velelonl@gmail.com](mailto:velelonl@gmail.com).*

#### **WHO SHOULD PARTICIPANTS CONTACT IF THERE ARE ETHICAL QUERIES?**

*Please feel free to contact Mrs. Charné Vercueil, Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer, on 051 4017 083 or at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za) should you have queries related to ethics or ethics conduct of the researcher and/or research assistant.*

**WHO SHOULD PARTICIPANTS CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

Please feel free to Ms. Nontombi Velelo should you need further clarification on the study on 079 8338 0282 or send an email to [velelonl@gmail.com](mailto:velelonl@gmail.com), and/or my study supervisors Dr. A. Rau at [rauahm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:rauahm@ufs.ac.za), and Professor J. Coetzee at [coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za](mailto:coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za) and/or the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer Mrs. Charné Vercueil at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za).

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.**

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**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study, as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I am aware and understand that I can seek the help of the counselling psychologist, Mr. Chweenemang, at 051 4357 926, if I need debriefing or help as a result of participating in this research. I am aware that the researcher is responsible for the payment of three sessions only.

I agree to the recording of the *in-depth interview*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE: 21/01/2022**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**Masculinity and Fatherhood: A Narrative Study of Black South African Men living in Mangaung**

**PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):**

*Nontombi Velelo*

*2003017809*

*079 8330 828*

**FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:**

*Faculty of Humanities*

*Department of Sociology*

**STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:**

*Dr. Asta Rau. Email: rauahm@ufs.ac.za*

*Prof Jan Coetzee. Email: coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za*

### **WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

*The study is being undertaken for a PhD qualification. The study intends to describe and explain Black African men's experiences and ideas about manhood and fatherhood.*

### **WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?**

*My name is Nontombi Velelo. I am registered for a PhD in Sociology at the University of the Free State.*

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

*This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.*

**Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-HSD2019/2096/1402**

### **WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?**

*You are invited to take part in the study because you are:*

- *A Black African man, born in South Africa, and living in Mangaung,*
- *Between 18 and 65 years old,*
- *From one of the following ethnic groups; Basotho, Batswana, or Xhosa.*
- *I believe that you will make a valuable contribution to my study.*

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

*Your role in the study would be to partake in a small group discussion of 4 to 8 people. Group discussions will be audio-recorded. There will be a male research assistant who will be leading the group discussion, and I will be present as an observer. The group discussion will take approximately 1½ to 2 hours.*

*Your involvement will require you to revisit memories and lived experiences of manhood and fatherhood. If this upsets you and you feel the need to seek professional assistance, feel free to contact Mr. Chweenemang, a counselling psychologist, on 051 4357 926 for a maximum of three debriefing sessions. Ms. Velelo, the researcher, will cover the cost of three debriefing sessions only.*

#### **WHAT ARE THE RULES OF PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?**

*You are required to please respect the privacy of the other group members, and each other's views. You are required to please treat all the information shared in this group with confidentiality. You are asked not to disclose anything said within the context of the discussion. You should please refrain from interrupting each other.*

#### **CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?**

*Yes, participants can withdraw from the study at any time should you wish to do so. Participation is voluntary. And there will be no penalties or harm towards participants as a result of withdrawing from the study.*

*Before collecting data, the research assistant will go through the ethical principles with you, so that you understand your responsibilities and your rights. After that, the research assistant will provide you with a consent form. If you agree to partake in the study, you will be asked to sign this form. You will receive a copy of this information sheet and the consent form for your records.*

#### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

*The study might not have a direct impact on your life; however, the study will contribute to scientific knowledge. The study provides men in your community with the opportunity to provide a shared meaning of manhood and fatherhood. The study also provides men in your community an opportunity to identify the common experiences related to manhood and fatherhood, which can perhaps help build a greater sense of unity among men. There is no payment for participating.*

### **WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

*No serious inconveniences are expected from participating. I intend to plan interviews in advance. You will decide on the date/s convenient for you. You, myself, and my research assistant will agree on a place to meet that is convenient for you and suitable for conducting research.*

### **WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

*I will protect your identity in all ways possible so that the information you provide will not be linked to you. Your real name will not appear anywhere in the thesis or any form of publication.*

*Because there will be a group of people, I cannot guarantee that other participants will keep what is said in the group confidential. I can also not guarantee that they will not mention your name to others outside of the group. What I ask you, and every participant is that you do not discuss anything that happens in the group discussion, including the names of group members, with anyone outside the group. By signing a consent form, you agree to this.*

*I intend to personally transcribe and analyse data myself. My study supervisors will be given transcripts that do not show real names. Data may be reviewed by people at the university who are responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including members of the Research Ethics Committee. However, no other external person(s) will be given access to the information you provide.*

### **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?**

*All records of your participation in the study will be stored in a locked cabinet at my office. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer, and documents will also have a password (known only by me, the principal researcher). Once I have finished with the data/information and nothing more has to be done, audio-recordings will be deleted, and other copies will be destroyed so that no trace of the information you provided is left.*

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

*No, you will not receive any payment or incentives for participating in the study.*

**HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

*I will distribute a preliminary report of analysed findings to you for your comments and criticisms, and for you to see that the information captured during the interviews matches what you said. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Nontombi Velelo on 079 8330 282 or email [velelonl@gmail.com](mailto:velelonl@gmail.com).*

**WHO SHOULD PARTICIPANTS CONTACT IF THERE ARE ETHICAL QUERIES?**

*Please feel free to contact Mrs. Charné Vercueil, Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer, on 051 4017 083 or at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za) should you have queries related to ethics or ethics conduct of the researcher and/or research assistant.*

**WHO SHOULD PARTICIPANTS CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

*Please feel free to Ms. Nontombi Velelo should you need further clarification on the study on 079 8338 0282 or send an email to [velelonl@gmail.com](mailto:velelonl@gmail.com), and/or my study supervisors Dr. A. Rau at [rauahm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:rauahm@ufs.ac.za), and Professor J. Coetzee at [coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za](mailto:coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za) and/or the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer Mrs. Charné Vercueil at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za).*

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.**

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study, as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I am aware and understand that I can seek the help of the counselling psychologist, Mr. Chweenemang, at 051 4357 926, if I need debriefing or help as a result of participating in this research. I am aware that the researcher is responsible for the payment of three debriefing sessions only.

I agree to the recording of the *focus group discussion*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR GATEKEEPERS' AND CONSENT FORM**

**DATE**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**Masculinity and Fatherhood: A Narrative Study of Black South African Men living in Mangaung**

**PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):**

*Nontombi Velelo*                      2003017809                      079 8330 828

**FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:**

*Faculty of Humanities*

*Department of Sociology*

**STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:**

*Dr. Asta Rau. Email; rauahm@ufs.ac.za*

*Prof Jan Coetzee. Email: coetzeejk@ufs.ac.za*

**WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

*The study is being undertaken for a PhD qualification. The study intends to describe and explain Black African men's experiences and ideas about manhood and fatherhood.*

### **WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?**

*My name is Nontombi Velelo. I am registered for a PhD in Sociology at the University of the Free State.*

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

*This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.*

**Approval number:**

### **WHAT I NEED YOU TO HELP WITH?**

*I would appreciate your help in identifying people willing to participate in the study. They need to be:*

- *Black African men, who were born in South Africa, and who now live in Mangaung.*
- *Between 18 and 65 years old.*
- *From different ethnic groups (Basotho, Batswana, and Xhosa).*
- *From any educational and socio-economic backgrounds.*

*I would need you to distribute an information sheet, provided by me, among men in your community, and direct those who are interested in participating in the study to me, Ms. Nontombi Velelo.*

*Apart from seeking permission to conduct the study in your community, I also ask you to arrange a Lekgotla of men to discuss manhood and fatherhood.*

*I also ask for permission for myself and my assistant to attend Lekgotla gatherings where issues of men and fatherhood will be discussed. We need to collect information (data) for the study during Lekgotla gatherings. We promise to adhere to the practices of Lekgotla gathering and understand that as community elders, you are responsible for chairing the gathering.*

*I will provide you with a few questions that are very important to ask in the Lekgotla. I am hoping to audio-record the meetings and take notes during the meeting. I promise to protect participants' privacy and identity, and I will never use participants' names in any documents or reports.*

### **WHAT WILL THE RESEARCH INVOLVE FOR OTHER PARTICIPANTS?**

*Participants will contribute to the study in three different ways (a) interviews, (b) small group discussions, and (c) Lekgotla gatherings (community men). Please note the number of sessions and people participating in the study will depend on the quality of data collected.*

*Participation in the study is voluntary; participants have the right to not be in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time. I do not foresee that they study will do any harm to participants. But if their memories upset them and they need professional help, provision has been made for this, and all details on how participants can access help are included on the information sheet that every participant will get.*

### **CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?**

*Yes, participants can withdraw from the study at any time should you wish to do so. Participation is voluntary. And there will be no penalties or harm towards participants as a result of withdrawing from the study.*

*Before collecting data, the research assistant will go through the ethical principles with you, so that you understand your responsibilities and your rights. After that, the research assistant will*

*provide you with a consent form. If you agree to partake in the study, you will be asked to sign this form. You will receive a copy of this information sheet and the consent form for your records.*

#### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

*The study might not have a direct impact on your life; however, the study will contribute to scientific knowledge. The study provides men in your community with the opportunity to provide a shared meaning of manhood and fatherhood. The study also provides men in your community an opportunity to identify the common experiences related to manhood and fatherhood, which can perhaps help build a greater sense of unity among men. There is no payment for participating.*

#### **WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE DATA?**

*The principal researcher, the research assistant, and academic supervisors are the only people who will see the information and data from the study. They are all bound by ethical practices of the University and have signed confidentiality agreements agreeing to keep information related to the study, and personal details of participants, confidential.*

#### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

*The findings of the study will be published as a PhD thesis, journal articles for formal academic publications, and academic conferences. No real names or identifying information of participants will appear in any publications.*

#### **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?**

*All records of your participation in the study will be stored in a locked cabinet at my office. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer, and documents will also have a password (known only by me, the principal researcher). Once I have finished with*

*the data/information and nothing more has to be done, audio-recordings will be deleted, and other copies will be destroyed so that no trace of the information you provided is left.*

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

*No, you will not receive any payment or incentives for participating in the study.*

**HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

*I will distribute a preliminary report of analyzed findings to you for your comments and criticisms, and for you to see that the information captured during the interviews matches what you said. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Nontombi Velelo on 079 8330 282 or email [velelonl@gmail.com](mailto:velelonl@gmail.com).*

**WHO SHOULD PARTICIPANTS CONTACT IF THERE ARE ETHICAL QUERIES?**

*Please feel free to contact Mrs. Charné Vercueil, Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer, on 051 4017 083 or at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za) should you have queries related to ethics or ethics conduct of the researcher and/or research assistant.*

**WHO SHOULD PARTICIPANTS CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

*Please feel free to Ms. Nontombi Velelo should you need further clarification on the study on 079 8338 0282 or send an email to [velelonl@gmail.com](mailto:velelonl@gmail.com), and/or my study supervisors Dr. A. Rau at [rauahm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:rauahm@ufs.ac.za), and Professor J. Coetzee at [coetseejk@ufs.ac.za](mailto:coetseejk@ufs.ac.za) and/or the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Officer Mrs. Charné Vercueil at [vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za](mailto:vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za).*

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.**

## CONSENT TO FACILITATE LEKGOTLA

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (gatekeeper's name), confirm that the person asking my consent to conduct this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation. I agree to assist in facilitating this study.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study, as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to assist in identifying the participants for the study. I also agree to assist by chairing Lekgotla gatherings. I understand that my assistance is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my assistance at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I am aware and understand that participants can seek the help of the counselling psychologist, Mr. Chweenemang, at 051 4357 926, if participants need debriefing or help as a result of participating in this research. I am aware that the researcher is responsible for the payment of three sessions only.

I agree to the recording of *lekgotla meetings*.

Full Name of Gatekeeper: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Gatekeeper: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Appendix D: Data Collection Instruments***

### ***Research Questions: In-depth Interview***

Thank you *very much* for agreeing to participate in the study.

I will be asking you about how you have experienced manhood and fatherhood throughout your life, from a child to where you are now. I am interested in anything you have to say, so please speak freely — I want to hear about good experiences, as well as bad or difficult ones.

Please feel free to stop me if you do not understand a question. I may also need to stop you, to make sure I understand your answers.

Our discussion will take about an hour to an hour and thirty minutes.

I would like you to share a little information about you; this will help me to know who you are:

- How old are you?
- Tell me about your educational background, which school did you attend to? When did you leave school ( before or after completing a grade primary school, before or after completing a grade in high or I never attended school)? For participants who completed grade 12: were you able to further your studies after completing matric?
- Do you currently have a job? Are you employed, self-employed or unemployed?
- Are you married? If yes, for how long have you been married? If no, are you in a relationship?
- Are you a father? How many children do you have?

1. I would like you to think of *a man in your life* who really influenced you in the past or is still influencing you presently. Tell me about him.

Tell me, who is he?

Tell me about your relationship with him. How do you know him?

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about him or your relationship with him. Please give an example so I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) not like about him or your relationship with him. Please give an example so I can understand better.

What did he teach you about being a man?

How did he make you feel about being a man, and about yourself?

Thank you for sharing about your relationship with (name of the man). Do you have other men you would like to talk about?

Tell me, who is he?

Tell me about your relationship with him. How do you know him?

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about him or your relationship with him. Please give an example so I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) not like about him or your relationship with him. Please give an example so I can understand better.

What did he teach you, about being a man?

How did he make you feel about being a man, and about yourself?

I would like you to think about your biological father. Please tell me, how well do you know your biological father?

Do (did) you live in the same house?

Please tell me about your relationship with your biological father.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) together as father and son, if you have activities you do together please give me an example so that I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about your father-please give me an example so that I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you dislike(d) about your father- please give me an example so that I can understand better.

I would like you to think about how you feel (felt) when you are (were) around him-sense of belonging, loved, scared or unwanted.

What did he teach you about being a father?

Please tell me, how does talking about him make you feel?

So many people never knew their biological fathers -- What did it feel like, for you, not to know him? I am wondering if there may have been another man who was like a father to you? Perhaps he lived in the same house or nearby. Perhaps he was a relative. Tell me about him. Tell me about how he was good at being a father. What were his shortcomings?

2. I would like you to think about the woman in your life who really influenced you in the past or is still influencing you presently. Tell me about her.

Please tell me, who is she?

Please tell me about your relationship with her.

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about her-please give me examples so that I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) like about her-please give me an example so that I can understand better.

I would like you to think about the way you feel (felt) when you are (were) around her- feeling of a sense of belonging, being wanted, loved, scared or unwanted.

Please tell me about the things you learned from her about being a man.

Please tell me about the things you learned from her about being a father.

Do you have another woman you would like to talk about?

Please tell me, who is she?

Please tell me about your relationship with her.

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about her-please give me an example so that I can understand.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) like about her-please give me an example so that I can understand.

I would like you to think about the way you feel (felt) when you are (were) around her- feeling of a sense of belonging, loved, scared or unwanted.

Please tell me about the things you learned from her about being a man.

Please tell me about the things you learned from her about being a father.

3. We all grow up in communities where we learn, through our beliefs, relationships, and language, about who we are. I am interested in knowing what you have learned about manhood.

a. I would like you to tell me about your family.

Please tell me about your relationship with your family.

I would like you to remember the things your family taught you about being a man, what are those things?

Please tell me about the things you think your family expects you to do as a man.

Please tell me what do you think about those things.

I would like you to think about the journey of becoming a man.

When do boys become men?

What does it mean to be a man?

What role does a family play in turning boys into men?

I would like to think about the journey to being a father.

Do you have any biological children?

How many children do you have?

Please tell me how old were you when you had your first child?

Were you expected to follow the traditional custom of paying “damages”?

Were you able to pay “damages”?

What do you think about paying “damages”?

Please tell me about your relationship with your child(ren).

Do you live with your child(ren)?

How does that make you feel?

Please tell me, what do you think your child(ren) need, that you can do for them as a father?

Please tell me what happens when you are not able to do them?

What do you think about this?

What are the things you think a father should do for his child(ren)?

Now that you have mentioned that you do not have a biological child, is there a child in your life you must be a father for (in your household or a relative)? Please tell me about your relationship with the child. How do you relate with the child? Please tell me about the things you do together with this child. What do you think about doing these things? What do you think a child needs, that you can do for them? What are the things you think a father should do for his child(ren)?

I would like you to think about the mother of your child(ren).

Please tell me about your relationship with her.

Please tell me about the things she expects you to do as a father, what are those things?

Please tell me how she treats you when you are not able to do the things, she expects you to do as a father.

How does that make you feel?

b. Now I would like you to think about your neighbours and people living in your community.

Please tell me about the things you think your neighbours and people in your community want you to do as a man.

Do you think people in your neighbourhood treat you differently if you do not do what they want you to do as a man?

How does that make you feel?

Please tell me about your relationship with other men in your community, do you have a men's group in your community?

Are you a part of a men's group?

How has being part of men's group influenced your ideas of being a man?

What have you learned from being part of men's group?

Would you advise other men to be part of a man's group?

Please tell me about the things you think the people in your neighbourhood expect a father to do.

What have you learned from other men, who are fathers in your community, about being a father?

c. I would like you to tell me about *your relationship with your friends.*

Tell me about the influence of your peers/ your friends on your ideas about manhood

Tell me about the influence of your peers/ your friends on your ideas about being a father

Tell me about the influence of your peers/ your friends on your ideas about women.

Please tell me about the things you think your friends want you to do as a man.

What do you think about those things?

Please tell me about some of the things that you and your friends talk about concerning men.

How do you feel knowing those are the things that they want you to do as a man?

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. It has been very interesting hearing your story and you have really helped me with my research.**

**I may need to call you in case there is something I am not clear about. Is that ok?**

**Thank you**

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### **Research Questions: Focus Group**

Thank you *very much* for agreeing to participate in the study.

I will be asking you about how you have experienced manhood and fatherhood throughout your life, from a child to where you are now. I am interested in anything you have to say, so please speak freely — I want to hear about good experiences, as well as bad or difficult ones. Please feel free to stop me if you do not understand a question. I may also need to stop you to make sure I understand your answers.

I would like us to discuss how few rules of this discussion. I would like

- Feel free to express yourself, do not hold back.
- Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.
- Allow others to talk about their experiences.
- You have a right to abstain from discussing certain things you have or are experiencing; I would all of us to partake in the discussion.
- Please respect the opinions of others even if you disagree with what is said. If you disagree with what the other person is saying, please feel free to do so openly and with respect.
- All responses are valid; there is no wrong response.
- Please try to stay on the topic; we may need to interrupt the discussion so that we can cover all the questions.
- Is there any other thing you think we should add?

Our discussion will take about an hour to an hour and thirty minutes.

I would like you to share a little information about you; this will help me to know who you are:

- How old are you?
- Tell me about your educational background, which school did you attend to? When did you leave school ( before or after completing a grade primary school, before or after completing a grade in high or I never attended school)? For participants who completed grade 12: were you able to further your studies after completing matric?
- Do you currently have a job? Are you employed, self-employed or unemployed?

- Are you married? If yes, for how long have you been married? If no, are you in a relationship?
- Are you a father/mother? How many children do you have?

1. I would like you to think of a man in your life who influenced you in the past or is still influencing you presently. Tell me about him.

Tell me, who is he?

Tell me about your relationship with him.

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about him or your relationship with him. Please give an example so I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) not like about him or your relationship with him. Please give an example so I can understand better. Can you remember the things you have learned from him about being a man?

Do you have other men you would like to talk about?

Now that you are thinking about him (them), how do you feel?

I would like you to think about *your biological father and another man who you consider as a father.*

I would like you to think about your biological father. Please tell me how well do you know your biological father?

Do (did) you live in the same house?

Please tell me about your relationship with your biological father.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) together as father and son, if you have activities you do together-please give me an example so that I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about your father-please give me an example so that I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you dislike(d) about your father- please give me an example so that I can understand better.

I would like you to think about how you feel (felt) when you are (were) around him-sense of belonging, loved, scared, or unwanted.

What did he teach you about being a father?

Please tell me, how does talking about him make you feel?

So many people never knew their biological fathers -- What did it feel like, for you, not to know him? I am wondering if there may have been another man who was like a father to you? Perhaps he lived in the same house or nearby. Maybe he was a relative. Tell me about him. Tell me about how he was good at being a father. What were his shortcomings?

2. I would like you to think about the woman in your life who influenced you in the past or is still influencing you presently. Tell me about her.

Please tell me, who is she?

Please tell me about your relationship with her.

Please tell me about the things you like(d) about her-please give me examples so that I can understand better.

Please tell me about the things you do (did) like about her-please give me an example so that I can understand better.

I would like you to think about the way you feel (felt) when you are (were) around her- feeling of a sense of belonging, being wanted, loved, scared or unwanted.

Please tell me about the things you learned from her about being a man.

Please tell me about the things you learned from her about being a father.

Do you have other women from your community you would like to talk about?

What would you say you have learned from these women about being a man?

What are the things you think women, from your community, expect from a man?

Are you able to do those things?

Do you think women treat you different when you are not able to do what they want?

How does that make you feel?

3. Now I would like you to think about *your neighbours and people living in your community.*

Please tell me about the things you think your neighbours and people in your community want you to do as a man.

Do you think people in your neighbourhood treat you differently if you do not do what they want you to do as a man?

How does that make you feel?

Please tell me about your relationship with other men in your community, do you have a men's group in your community?

Are you a part of a men's group?

How has being part of a men's group influenced your ideas of being a man?

What have you learned from being part of a men's group?

Would you advise other men to be part of a man's group?

4. I would like you to tell me about your relationship with your friends.

Tell me about the influence of your peers/ your friends on your ideas about manhood

Tell me about the influence of your peers/ your friends on your ideas about being a father

Tell me about the influence of your peers/ your friends on your ideas about women.

Please tell me about the things you think your friends want you to do as a man.

What do you think about those things?

Please tell me about some of the things that you and your friends talk about concerning men.

5. I would like you to think about *the journey of becoming a man.* Please tell me

When do boys become men?

What does it mean to be a man?

What role does a family play in turning boys into men?

What is the role of a man in a family?

I would like to think about your *journey to being a father.*

Do you have any biological children?

How many children do you have?

Please tell me how old were you when you had your first child?

Were you expected to follow the traditional custom of paying “damages”?

Were you able to pay “damages”?

What do you think about paying “damages”?

Please tell me about your relationship with your child(ren).

Do you live with your child(ren)?

How does that make you feel?

Please tell me, what do you think your child(ren) need, that you can do for them as a father?

Please tell me what happens when you are not able to do them?

What do you think about this?

What are the things you think a father should do for his child(ren)?

Now that you have mentioned that you do not have a biological child, is there a child in your life you must be a father for (in your household or a relative)? Please tell me about your relationship with the child. How do you relate with the child? Please tell me about the things you do together with this child. What do you think about doing these things? What do you think a child needs, that you can do for them? What are the things you think a father should do for his child(ren)?

I would like you to think about the *mother/father of your child(ren).*

I would like you to think about the mother of your child(ren).

Please tell me about your relationship with her.

Please tell me about the things she expects you to do as a father, what are those things?

Please tell me how she treats you when you are not able to do the things she expects you to do as a father.

What do you think about that?

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. I will have to call you in case I need clarity on some of the things we have talked about. Please join us for refreshments.**

**Thank you!**

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***Lekgotla questions:***

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this meeting.

There are few things I want to make sure you understand. Please make sure you sign a consent form given to you. This is to indicate that you agree to participate in today's discussion. If there is anyone who did not sign the consent form, please note your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your participation at any time. Please know we will be recording this meeting. Also note that Ms. Velelo and her research assistant will sit in our meeting today as observers.

Today we will be discussing how we have experience manhood and fatherhood. The issues we will discuss are based on our life experience. We will discuss the good and bad experiences we have experienced as men and fathers in our community. Please feel free to stop me if you do not understand the issues we are discussing. I may also need to stop you to make sure I understand what you are saying.

1. Gentlemen, I would like us to, firstly, talk about *becoming a man*.

When do boys become men? (Is it based on age, leaving school, starting to work, under-going the traditional ritual of becoming a man or becoming a father).

What does it mean to become a man?

2. Gentlemen, I would like us to talk about *the family*.

What role does a family play in turning boys into men?

What is the role of a man in a family?

Now I would like us to talk about our relationships with women in our homes.

What do you think women expect from us as men? How do women in our homes treat us when we do not do as they expect? What do you think about the way women treat us when we do not do what they expect?

3. Now I would like us to talk about our relationships with women in our community.

What do you think women expect from us as men?

How do they treat us when we do not do as they expect?

What do you think about the things they expect us to do as men?

I would like you to think about the mother of our child(ren). Let us talk about the things you think the mother of our child(ren) expect us to do as fathers. What do you think they expect from us as fathers? Are we able to do the things they expect us we do? Please tell me how they treat you when you are not able to do the things she wants you to do as a father.

4. I would like us to think about the journey of being a father.

Were you expected to follow the traditional custom of paying “damages”?

Were you able to pay “damages”?

What do you think about paying damages?

I would like us to think about how we relate to our children.

Do you live with your child(ren)?

How does that make you feel?

Please tell me about what do you think your child(ren) needs that you can do for them?

Please tell me what happens when you are not able to the things your children need?

What else do you think a father should do for his child(ren)?

5. Now I would like you to think about your neighbours and people living in your community.

Let us talk about what our neighbours expect us to do as men.

Let us also talk about the treatment we receive from our neighbours when we do not do what they expect from us as man

What do you think of that?

What do you think is the role of a man in a community?

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in the study. The researcher or her assistant may have to call you in case they need clarity on some of the things we have talked about.**

**Please join us for refreshments. Thank you**

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