Fatherhood in South Africa and Abroad

A focus on causes and interventions into father absence

Literature Review for the Heartlines "Fathers Matter" Campaign

Introduction

This Heartlines initiative takes place at a time when the concept of fatherhood has been unsettled by significant cultural and socio-economic shifts. As Real (2002) points out, in a world where men are secure in their demarcation as 'the breadwinner', the task of engaged fatherhood remains discretionary. However, factors such as women's increased participation in the paid labour force, economic uncertainties, changes in family structures and expectations regarding 'good fathering', have seen men negotiating multiple and sometimes contradictory cultural messages about their role as fathers (Kay, 2007).

In correspondence with the above changes, increased research attention has been given to fathering over the past few decades, both in South Africa and abroad (Lamb, 2010; Richter and Morrell, 2006). It is now widely recognised that fatherhood is a diverse and complex concept, sensitive to socio-historical context, cultural, political and highly localized and family-specific factors (Hakoama and Ready, 2011; Lewis and Lamb 2007). Notwithstanding these complexities, a substantial body of research points to the potential benefits that fathering may bring to men, women, and children (Astone & Peters, 2014; Richter, 2006).

The benefits of father involvement

An enduring area of research interest has been the notion of father 'involvement' (Morman & Floyd, 2006; Pleck and Masciadrelli, 2004). Debates continue regarding quite what it is that involved fathers bring to children, and whether their contributions differ in any substantial ways from those made by mothers (Pleck, 2010; Richter, 2006). Some commentators point to the indirect benefits a family accrues by having an involved father, such as increased financial

security, physical protection, maternal support, and enriched community ties (Guma & Henda, 2004; Jarrett, 1994; Marsiglio and Day, 1997; Richter 2012; Townsend, 2002a; Redpath et al., 2008). Women's health and well-being is enhanced by men's participation as parents. Central American research shows that women and children are more vulnerable to poverty if fathers neglect their financial responsibilities (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, ibid.). Women who enjoy equitable, healthy relationships with men who contribute to the care of children, experience less stress, are less likely to experience mental health problems, and experience more satisfaction in being mothers (Richter et al. 2011).

Other researchers have explored the direct benefits of father presence, and research has found positive correlations between father presence and children's school achievement (Amato, 1998; Johnson, 1997) and emotional well-being (Johnson, 1997). Some researchers have found that father presence is particularly beneficial to male children, contributing to enhanced social competence, behavioural control and school achievement in boys (Harris, Furstenberg, & Kramer, 1998; Jones, 2004; Mandara & Murray, 2006; Mboya & Nesengani, 1999; Mott, 1994; Richter et al., 2011; Singer & Weinstein, 2000). Veneziano (2000) found that paternal acceptance was significantly and positively related to youth's self-reported psychological adjustment and Culp et al. (2000) found that paternal acceptance contributed to children's development of self-concept and esteem. By contrast, Marcus and Betzer (1996) found that adolescent boys' antisocial behaviour was related to poor father-son attachment quality. Other research suggests that paternal rejection is associated with emotional instability, hostility, high levels of anxiety and poor mood in children (Coley and Chase-Landsdale, 2000; Veneziano and Rohner, 1998).

The centrality of the relationship

More recently, research has moved away from a presence/absence frame and towards a focus on the quality of relationship between father and child. Indeed, as Richter (2006) and Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) point out, whether or not father presence is beneficial to a child seems to hinge on the nature of the relationship between father and child. In this sense recent research has moved away from the idea that fathers, by dint of being men, bring something unique to their children. Instead, research suggests that fathers contribute to their children's welfare because they are warm, nurturing and positive parents (Lamb, 2010), thus dissolving any particular distinctions between the contributions of fathers and mothers.

Extensive research supports Baumrind's (1991) notion that parent-child relationships which are characterised by both warmth and limit-setting, contribute to positive child features. These include social competence, self-esteem, school achievement and fewer emotional and behavioural problems (Richter, 2006).

In summary, regarding the centrality of the father-child relationship, Lamb (2010) makes the following observation:

> As research has unfolded, psychologists have been forced to conclude that the characteristics of individual fathers – such as their masculinity, intellect, and even their warmth – are much less important, formatively speaking, than are the characteristics of the relationships that they have established with their children. Children who have secure, supportive, reciprocal and sensitive relationships with their parents are much more likely to be well adjusted psychologically than individuals whose relationships with their parents – mothers or fathers – are less satisfying. (p.10)

Turning to fathers themselves, research shows that men also benefit from having close relationships with their children (Astone & Peters, 2014; Eggebean & Knoester, 2001; Heath, 1994; Pleck, 1997; Snarey, 1993). Men who take up the responsibilities of fatherhood are less likely to engage in risk behaviours and are more likely to maintain steady employment (Magruder, 2010). Fathers who are actively involved with their children are less likely to be depressed, to commit suicide or to beat their wives. They are more likely to be involved in community work, to be supportive of their partners, and to be involved in school communities.

Emmett et al. (2004) found that young South Africans defined adulthood in terms of their capacity to care for and support children. This suggests that fatherhood can be viewed as providing men with an opportunity for developmental growth. Erikson, a developmental theorist, proposed that the capacity to care for others is foundational to adulthood. He identified generativity – the motivation to make the world a better place for the next generation – as an important developmental accomplishment for adults. Generativity refers to "any caring, outwards directed activity that contributes to the generation of new or more mature individuals, ideas, products or works of art" (Clare, 2001, p. 171). Fatherhood provides men the opportunity to acquire generativity, thus fostering personal growth (Daly, 1995; Snarey, 1993). Fathers who are involved in their children's lives are more likely to display psychosocial maturity (Pleck, 1997; Snarey, 1993); be more satisfied with their lives (Eggebean & Knoester, 2001); feel less psychological distress (Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992) and be more able to understand themselves, empathically understand others, and integrate their feelings (Heath, 1994). Involved fathers are more likely to participate in the community (Townsend, 2002), and serve in civic or community leadership positions (Snarey, 1993). Fatherhood encourages men to increase extended family interactions and participate in service-oriented activities and hours in paid

labour (Eggebean & Knoester, 2001). Lerman & Sorensen (2000) found a positive relationship between greater involvement of fathers and additional hours of work and increased earnings. Overall, men who are involved fathers during early adulthood usually turn out to be good spouses, workers and citizens at mid-life (Snarey, 1993; Townsend, 2002). It is evident then, that the father-child relationship holds significant potential to contribute positively to the lives of men and their children.

Reflections on father absence

If what matters is the quality of relationship between father and child, then it becomes clear that absence is not a simple or easily definable variable. Qualitative research has shown that relationships between 'absent' fathers and their children can vary widely (Way & Stauber, 1996; Weil, 1996). Binary notions of father absence/ presence may mask wide variations in the involvement of biological fathers and the presence of social or substitute fathers in the lives of children (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000). On this note, Swartz and Bhana (2009) have proposed four different categories of absent fathering: absent – deceased; absent – never known/no contact; absent – occasional contact; and absent – regular contact. Eddy, Thomson-de Boor and Mphaka (2013) have suggested that father absence may be understood as referring to men who do not live with their children, do not maintain communication and do not pay maintenance. It could be argued however, that whilst these distinctions provide a wider lens on father absence, they do not seem to address the actual quality of father-child relationship in any direct way.

From another perspective, Lindegger (2006) cautions against the simplistic notion that father absence is 'bad', whilst father presence is 'good'. For Lindegger (ibid.), while it is important to

address the possible negative consequences of absent fathering, overly simplistic readings can lead to an unwitting idealization of fathers' contributions and an uncritical promotion of father presence. This can have the effect of stigmatizing women-headed homes as somehow deficient which could have unintended negative consequences on children and families. Furthermore, simplistic readings can misrepresent the contributions made by 'social fathers' (see below) and by fathers who have to work away from home (Ratele, Schefer, & Clowes, 2012). It needs to be remembered that father absence co-varies with other relevant family characteristics such as the lack of a male income, the absence of a second adult, and the lack of support from a second extended family system (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999).

If the quality of relationship between father and child is central, then one may argue that it is relational absence or abandonment that is most cause for concern. In this vein, fathers who live and work away from home may in fact be 'present' fathers because they share a good, predictable and trustworthy relationship with their children. In contrast, fathers who live with their children may be destructive because they are emotionally absent, or critical, abusive, and domineering. With a relational lens in place, the absence under focus is that which signifies *not caring*, which may or may not include physical absence. One way of framing problems within the father-child relationship would be to consider mistreatment by commission or omission. This axis makes it possible to consider how acts of violence and/or oppression contribute to the pain and loss children experience when present fathers are not caring or loving.

The importance of 'social fathers' in South Africa

Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes (2012) emphasize the importance of 'social fathers' in Black communities– significant male role models who, often in the absence of biological fathers, contribute to children's lives in meaningful ways. The authors point out that the nuclear family has not been the norm for many African communities and argue that normative notions of the family have nourished generalizations regarding the absent 'bad father'.

According to Engle (1997) and Mkhize (2006), social fathers often play a critical role in the lives of children, by providing financial and emotional support, adult male presence and a sense of constancy or stability. As Morrell (2005) states: "A biological connection with a child is not necessary for successful fathering. More important are love, reliability, availability, dependability and support" (p.86).

Obstacles and barriers to healthy father-child relationships

According to Statistics SA (2011), South Africa has one of the highest rates of father absence in the world. It is perplexing to note that rates of father absence have increased over the past two decades of democracy (Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes, 2012). Morrell et al. (2012) found that many South African fathers have little or no role in the raising of their children (in 2002 estimates were that 46 percent of South African children lived without their fathers). In Langa's (2011) study of adolescent boys living in Alexandria Township, several of the participants indicated that they had little or no contact with their fathers.

In their attempts to account for this concerning state of affairs, social scientists typically identify the following contributing factors:

1. *Unemployment and poverty*

The Apartheid migrant labour system had a devastating effect on the welfare of Black families. Although this system has been dismantled in a formal sense, due to poverty and economic difficulties, many fathers continue to live and work away from their families (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). It has been estimated that more than a quarter of the SA population derives at least some of its income from family members working away from home (Richter, et al. 2011) Aside from turning fathers into migrant workers, poverty also leads to tremendous flux in family life, as family members move about in order to manage the burdens of poverty. Many children move between households and often live separately from their parents (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2010; Richter et al. 2011). Although the importance of social fathers has already been noted, the presence of non-parental adults in the household increases the risk of father absence. If the child has access to a non-parental breadwinner, s/he faces substantially elevated risk of non-contact and non-support from fathers.

Morrell (2006) argues that "poverty is the most important factor undermining the role of fatherhood and the involvement of fathers" (p. 20). In his review of research into fathering among the poor in KwaZulu-Natal, Denis & Ntsimane (2006) concludes that "among the poor, single mothers raise most children" and that children's "biological fathers play a marginal role in their lives" (p. 247). Linked to this is the growing economic independence of women, which also means that women are more willing and able to live apart from unsupportive or abusive partners (Richter et al. 2010).

In South Africa, fatherhood is most commonly associated with being the breadwinner, whilst care-giving is viewed as the preserve of women (Richter & Morrell, 2006; Eddy, Thomson de-Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). In traditional African and other families, the father constitutes the authority figure who must carry the major responsibilities for his family. Consequently, due to poverty, many fathers are left feeling helpless and ashamed about their inability to provide for their families (Ramphele and Richter, 2006; Wilson 2006), which results in fathers withdrawing from their families, either physically or emotionally. Due to the dominance of the 'provider role', men who are unable to provide for their families are more likely to abandon or deny their fatherhood roles (Morrell, 2006). On the flip side, Rabe (2007) has found that working class men with secure jobs and enabling working conditions took up more engaged and caring versions of fathering.

Local research suggests that fathers who fail to provide may be prevented from seeing their children by mothers and/or members of the mother's family (Eddy, Thompson de-Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). The authors surmise that participants who reported being prevented from seeing their children may have been blocked because of their unwillingness to contribute towards their children's welfare, or because of other negative behaviours.

Adolescent fathering is linked to low economic backgrounds, fewer employment opportunities, and lower educational attainment (Holborn & Eddy, 2011), and according to Jacobs and Marais (2013), in the developing world, adolescent fathers are mostly viewed as inaccessible by social service providers.

2. *The HIV/AIDS pandemic*

According to Holborn and Eddy (2011), the HIV/AIDS pandemic has profoundly affected the health and well-being of families and family members, and has led to a dramatic increase in orphans and child-headed households. In 2010, of the 9.1 million double orphans in sub-Saharan Africa in 2005, about 60% had lost at least one of their parents to AIDS (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). The authors note that, although the pandemic in SA has stabilized, and the infection rate is starting to decrease, the number of orphans will continue to grow or at least remain high for some years, reflecting a time lag between HIV infection and death.

Widowed women are more likely to assume responsibility for children than widowed men (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Maternal orphans face higher risks of losing contact with and not receiving support from the surviving father than non-orphans. However, Richter, et al. (2011) point out that the father's relationship with the mother's extended family and the levels of ongoing support that the children receive from their maternal relatives are mediating variables that can influence whether or not the father maintains contact with his children.

3. Cultural factors

In South Africa, particular cultural practices may lie between men and hopes of engaged fathering. Many South Africans never marry. Part of the reason for this is that, in situations of poverty, many men are unable to afford the *ilobola* payment, which forms part of the formalization of traditional marriages. Frequently, *ilobola* requirements may lead to delayed marriages, which may weaken fathers' capacity to care for their children.

In cases where children are born out of wedlock, some traditions require men to pay 'damages' to the maternal families. These payments often involve significant amounts of money that are

well out of reach of (often) young and poor men. According to Nduna & Jewkes (2012), a man who fails to acknowledge paternity, and fulfill his obligation to pay damages, is rejected by the women's family as irresponsible and incompetent. In their study of young fathers, the authors report that "some men say when they anticipate negative responses from their parents, and inability to pay 'itlawulo' and child support to the woman's family this results in a sense of 'self-embarrassment' and contributes to fatherhood denial" (p. 315). According to Jacobs and Marais (2013), young fathers are often excluded from family discussions and negotiations regarding child-care arrangements.

A large body of research finds that fatherhood is influenced by factors such as confirmation of paternity and co-residence. In the bt20 study (Swartz & Bhana, 2009), it was found that children whose mothers were older, and in a formal union at the time of birth face lower risks of father absence ('non-contact' and 'non-receipt of financial support'). According to prevailing cultural practices, the attribution of the father's surname to his children marks the integration of children into their father's family and places them in the family lineage in full relationship with other forefathers or ancestors (Mkhize, 2006; Nduna & Jewkes, 2012). Recent research has shown that men feel displaced as fathers when, due to absence, their children don't carry their surname (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013).

4. The mother-father relationship

Father absence appears to be closely tied to the quality of relationship between parents, particularly following a divorce or break-up. Conflict ridden and acrimonious exchanges lead to a collapse of the relationship between parents, which then results in the father being prevented from relating to his children. In this vein, some men believe that their ex-partners use access to

the children as a way of maintaining power in the relationship (Eddy, Thompson - de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). On the other hand, biological fathers (whether resident or not) who have some kind of romantic relationship with the mother, are more involved with their children than those fathers who do not have a relationship with the mother (Cabrera, et al. 2004). Jacobs and Marais (2013) report that mothers and the mothers' families often act as gatekeepers between adolescent fathers and their children. The authors also point to the limited services available to young fathers and the fact that these fathers tend to feel dismissed as irrelevant by existing services for new parents.

The marital status of parents effects whether children will have ready access to both parents. According to Holborn and Eddy (2011), children born to unmarried parents are more likely to live in single parent homes than those with married parents. The authors cite research based in Johannesburg and Soweto which found that only twenty percent of unmarried fathers maintained contact by the time their children had turned eleven. International research finds that there is a positive correlation between marital quality and the quality of father-child relationship (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998), the father's satisfaction in his own parental role, and his competence as a parent (Bouchard & Lee, 2000). Men are more likely to understand their role of being a father and a husband as a 'package deal' – one hinging on the other (Townsend, 2002). Interestingly, some research suggests that father involvement can have a positive effect on the quality of the mother-father relationship. Competent fathering behaviors are linked to increased marital satisfaction and marital stability in later life (Heath & Heath, 1991; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Divorce

Clare (2001) argues that divorce 'unfathers' men. As a result of divorce, most fathers do not

enjoy contact with their children 'at will'. Instead, contact is relegated to restricted visitation schedules. Following divorce, men may be restricted from involvement due to simple factors such as greater geographical distance between themselves and their children (Braver & O'Connell, 1998).

It may be argued that divorce occurs in a context of gender bias, where legal emphasis is again placed on the father's role as provider (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). Consequently, fathers who do not provide financially for their children following divorce or separation are marginalized as 'deadbeat dads' (Braver & O'Connell, ibid.). Furthermore, over the past few decades, custody decisions have seldom been gender neutral (Buehler, 1995).

According to Clare (ibid.) there is strong evidence that the role of the father is particularly vulnerable to marital disruption. Clare cites research which suggests that boys who don't live with their fathers are twice as likely to describe their relationship with their fathers as poor compared with boys who do live with their fathers. According to McKenry (2004), whilst numerous studies demonstrate that post divorce involvement benefits both children and men; divorce typically leads to decreased father-child contact over time. Research suggests that, following divorce, men are likely to reformulate their identities as fathers (Arendell, 1995; Arditti & Allen, 1993). Eddy, Thomson de-Boor & Mphaka (ibid.) found that men feel restricted to a provider role by their ex-partners, which means that men are then wholly excluded if they fail to provide.

In her study of divorced fathers in South Africa, Khunou (2006) argues that many divorced fathers love their children and desire to spend time with them, but that fathers feel prejudiced by current laws regarding maintenance and custody, as well as the attitudes of courts and law

enforcers towards fathers. According to Khunou, fathers express "acute frustration concerning the obstacles placed in their way by ex-partners and by legal processes. Fathers acknowledged their responsibilities as providers, but felt that they should then be given more say in choices made regarding their children (e.g. choice of school). Interestingly, South African research suggests that there is a strong link between paternal financial support and whether or not the father has contact with his child (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013).

Exploratory research conducted by Sonke Gender Justice Network has demonstrated that many fathers are absent from their homes because of migration and the fact that they are not expected to help out in the home. Thus men's levels of involvement as fathers may be moderated by mothers' cultural beliefs about the role of the father. More generally, the mother's attitude to the father's ability as co-parent, influences how involved men become in fathering (McBride et al. 2005). Again then, there is the notion that mothers can serve as 'gatekeepers' to the father-child relationship (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). When mothers are supportive of the father's parenting (view them as competent parents, provide encouragement, view parenting as a joint venture) men are more likely to be involved with and responsible for their children (Biller, 1993; De Luccie, 1995; 1996). Supported fathers feel recognized as a parental figure, place a greater importance on their father role identity (Pasley et al., 2002), and feel more satisfaction, competence and comfort in their paternal role (Bouchard & Lee, 2000).

Certainly, following divorce, research shows that maternal gate keeping and ongoing conflict impacts negatively on the relationship between fathers and their children (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Palsey & Minton, 1997). Some evidence shows that when fathers and their young children are asked, both wanted more contact than either the mother or the decree allowed (Fabricius & Hall, 2000); although ongoing conflict between parents appears to be a mediating factor in this

regard (Rettig, et al., 1999) . It seems then, that regarding father contact and the relationship between mother and father following divorce, both mothers and fathers carry responsibility for the health of the father-child relationship. Indeed it appears that, post divorce, the number of South African men who default on paying maintenance is high (Duncan, 2011), and Eddy, Thomson de-Boor & Mphaka (ibid.) suggest that this defaulting may be form part of a tit-for-tat between mother and father. Regardless of the reasons, neglect the obligation to financially support children constitutes a form of abandonment and further weakens the father-child tie (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996).

Following separation, men's access to their children may become difficult due to the child's integration into the mother's extended family (e.g. the grandmother). Alternately, if the mother forms a new partnership, the new partner may block the father's access to his child. It also appeared that men who had children with multiple partners had difficulty maintaining contact with their children (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, ibid.).

5. *Issues of masculinity*

Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) argue that there is a multiplicity of masculinities in South Africa, with widely differing conceptions of what it means to be a man. According to Morrell (2006), masculinity and fatherhood implicate one another, such that, in positioning oneself as a certain type of father, one is also positioning oneself as a certain type of man. Consequently, ideas and beliefs about masculinity are critical to the ways men take up the task of fatherhood (Richter et al. 2012).

Apartheid and the racially divided workplace have meant that men have very different experiences of, and models for fatherhood (Richter & Morrell, 2005). Generally, men's family roles have resisted change and, despite socio-economic and cultural shifts, fatherhood in South Africa still tends to be defined as providing, protecting, and sometimes disciplining children (Brown & Barker, 2004).

Gender researchers have long held the view that problematic versions of masculinity work against good fathering (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, ibid.). In Africa generally, fatherhood still tends to be equated with terms such as provider and disciplinarian, both of which validate men's rights to wield power over others. Even the notion of 'responsibility' needs to be carefully considered because it can be used to justify men's abuse of power (Richter et al., 2012; Finn & Henwood, 2009). Worldwide, good fathering has been associated with providing for one's family (Gottzen, 2011), but this can be linked to men's assumptions of power, privilege, and authority within the family. Consequently, it has been argued that notions of masculinity and fatherhood that emphasize financial provision and gender difference block expressions of alternative, more caring versions of fatherhood (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). Certainly, Hearn (1999) suggests that, worldwide, orthodox versions of masculinity tend to be equated with 'not caring'.

Gender norms in South Africa tend to equate manhood with dominance, aggression, sexual conquest, and the pursuit of multiple partners (van den Berg et al. 2013). Performances of masculinity are implicated in our very high levels of alcohol abuse and neglect of and abuse of women (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011). Many scholars argue that ideal forms of masculinity for black and white South African men include an acceptance of the use of violence (Glaser, 1998; Mager, 1998; Wood & Jewkes, 2001). Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) propose that South

African masculinity continues to be founded on male superiority, and tends to be synonymous with problematic male attitudes and behavior, such as violence and abuse of women and children, substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviors.

Gender-based violence is cited as a leading cause of women and children living apart from fathers (Richter, 2011). According to The State of the World's Fathers Report (2015), approximately one in three women experiences violence at the hands of a male partner in her lifetime, and three quarters of children between two and fourteen years of age experience some form of violent discipline in the home. This indicates the wide-ranging prevalence of versions of masculinity that legitimate domestic violence.

The South African female homicide rate is six times higher than the rate worldwide, and at least half of female victims are killed by their male intimate partners (Abrahams et al., 2009). The country also has very high rates of rape. The SAPS receives fifty-five thousand reports of rape each year, but the actual number of rapes per annum is estimated to be nine times higher than this figure (SAPS 2005/06; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

Here the concept of hegemonic masculinity seems to hold some utility (Connell, 2005). According to Morrell (1998), hegemonic masculinity:

> "is the form of masculinity which is dominant in society…. In addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities…such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy. In turn, it presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative 'real men' do behave, as the cultural ideal. The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a

> particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own" (pp. 607-8).

Wood and Jewkes (2001) have argued that control over women is central to South African hegemonic masculinity, which has meant that violence is employed to maintain control over women. Interestingly, the authors argue that male vulnerability underpins men's misogyny, particularly in situation of poverty. Elsewhere Lindegger and Quayle (2009) have argued that the vulnerability inherent in hegemonic masculinity - such as the constant threat of shame – must be acknowledged and addressed in society and in interventions. They argue that men need to learn skills to manage these vulnerabilities. Perhaps it could be argued that because fatherhood is important to men's identity, and many men desire to share strong bonds with their children, the father-child relationship affords men an important opportunity and context within which they may engage in the difficult work of reflecting on and managing their vulnerabilities. Engaging in 'good fathering' of children who are loved, can help men to open up to their vulnerabilities and learn skills to manage difficult emotions such as disappointment, frustration, and shame (Pluke, 2014).

It is also important to note that hegemonic masculinity should not be automatically equated with 'bad' masculinity. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) note:

> The conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratizing gender relations, of abolishing power differentials, not just of reproducing hierarchy. A transitional move in this direction requires an attempt to establish as hegemonic among men a version of masculinity open to equality with women. In this sense, it is possible to define a hegemonic masculinity that is thoroughly

> 'positive'…Recent history has shown the difficulty of doing this in practice. A positive hegemony remains, nevertheless, a key strategy for contemporary efforts at reform. (p. 853).

According to social theorists, since the 1970's, 'new' (or 'involved') fathering has emerged as an prevalent way of being a father/man, particularly amongst white middle class men (Finn & Henwood, 2009; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Plantin, 2007; Plantin, Mansson, & Kearney, 2003). This emergence is seen to coincide with wider socio-cultural changes, such as women's increased involvement in the workplace and the coinciding decline of traditional patriarchal and masculine authority (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; McMahon, 1999). New fathering represents an alternative to oppressive versions of masculinity and fathering (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012). According to Coltrane (2007) the new father ideal conflates men's and women's traditional parenting spheres, and men are expected to assume more of the parenting and domestic duties.

The notion of 'new fatherhood' implies a reaction against traditional father discourses and hegemonic masculinity, wherein the father is positioned as authoritarian, disinterested, absent and emotionally distant. 'New' father discourses rework what it means to be a 'good father' by advocating egalitarian co-parenting, involvement, caring, and emotional warmth (Craig, 2006; Dermott, 2008). As Hollway (2007) points out, "the adoption of the word 'parent', in the position where until recently 'mother' was…claims, in its gender neutrality, that the sex (and gender) of this carer is unimportant, even irrelevant" (p. 83). Distinctions between mother and father are subsumed under the gender neutral notion of parenting.

However, several commentators see 'new fatherhood' as a cultural fallacy (e.g. Larossa, 1988). Lewis (2000) argues that fathers still occupy and, indeed, are expected to occupy the

breadwinner role in families, and research shows that fathers continue to align themselves with the 'breadwinner' ideal type (O'Brien & Shemlit, 2003; Warin, Solomon, Lewis, & Langford, 1999). Morrell (2006) argues that a dominant form of masculinity among white South African men continues to include values such as "a preference for physically demanding homosocial contexts", "unquestioning self-belief" and "unequal and careless relationships" with women and children (p. 19). Morrell (ibid.) points out that, although other versions of masculinity may exist, "it is the values and behaviours of these men that are accepted as 'normal' and, indeed, even lauded" (p. 19).

Very little research has been done concerning the emergence of 'new fathering amongst SA Black fathers. Instead, Black fathers are often linked to the 'absence' problem or, more damagingly, are depicted through the media as objects of suspicion with respect to violence and sexual abuse of women and children (Lesejane, 2006). Whilst new father ideals are associated with middle class or higher SES fathers, Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes (ibid.) found that Black men in their sample identified the value of a father 'being there' for his son, and subscribed to nurturing, non-violent and caring versions of fathering. This was identified as 'talking' fathering, and appears to approximate the 'new father' ideal. Other research finds that working class men are beginning to share household chores with their employed female partners and are providing care for their children. Informal observations in South Africa indicate that, because their female partners are employed, often for long periods of the day, men are increasingly taking children to health centers, taking children to and from school, and caring for them within the home (Richter, 2006).

Some have argued that the 'new father' model has been developed in the well-resourced context of the developed world, and therefore may not be well suited to men in poorly resourced

contexts. According to Ouzgane and Morrell (2005), models of masculinity which stress responsibility, protection, provision, wisdom and communal loyalty may better suit the African context. African feminists stress the importance of men and women depending on each other and that efforts should be made to strengthen bonds between men and women. Again, in this context, the model of desirable masculinity may look different from that of the first world 'new man' (Morrell & Swart, 2005).

Research carried out by Sonke Gender Justice found that older men were more open to changing gender practices (van den Berg, et al. 2013). The authors argue that young men may be resistant to change because their masculine identities "are an important resource through which to contest the marginalization and disempowerment that many men in this context (poverty) articulate and face" (p. 122). According to Jacobs and Marais (2013), in a context of poverty and limited opportunities, young men's sense of responsibility is bound to a version of masculinity where status is based on money and/or sexual prowess. The authors' review found that teenage fathers were more likely to care for their children if paternity was established, and where young fathers were determined either to repeat or correct the ways that they themselves were fathered.

In summary, it may be said that addressing the ways men 'do' masculinity takes one away from deterministic notions of what men and women can or should do. Instead, one works with a masculinity that is both changing and changeable. The literature shows that masculinities in South Africa are in a state of flux, which means that there is scope for interventions designed to foster positive versions of masculinity and fathering (Richter, 2006). Research suggests that gender change (i.e. movement away from oppressive versions of masculinity) may work best when men are encouraged to embrace gender equity in family and relationship contexts with women and children (Morrell, 2005). One effect of this model of masculinity (responsibility and

care-giving within the home) has been an increasing realization of the value of families for men and of men for families (Morrell, 2005).

Local and International Interventions to promote effective fathering

World-wide, there are numerous and diverse programs that address various aspects of fathering. Typical areas of focus include relevant aspects of policy (e.g. paternity leave), dissemination of information and instruction regarding the importance of fathers' contributions to children (aimed at men, mothers and state/service providers), skills development, and supportive forums for men. Some organizations make an explicit link between father interventions and broader human rights and feminist agendas.

For example, The Fatherhood Institute is a registered UK charity that focuses on policy, research and practice. The organization:

- Collates, participates in and publicizes research illuminating the benefits of father involvement
- Lobbies for legal and policy changes (e.g. paternal leave, equal parental engagement in schools)
- Helps public services, employees and others to become more father inclusive in their approaches (e.g. children's centers, managers, schools, crèches, hospital staff)
- Offers courses for family services, schools, workplaces

Programs include 'Early Years', which engages men in the care and education of children, 'Hit the ground crawling' which is designed to help health workers to engage with expectant fathers,

and ‘Staying Connected’, which is a workplace resource designed to help fathers maintain healthy relationships with their partners, their children, and to promote their own mental well-being. ‘Dads Included’ is a campaign designed to improve the ways children’s health care services engage with fathers. To this end ‘The Dads Test’ has been developed as an online resource for children’s services to assess their ability to engage with fathers.

As another example, The Canadian Father Involvement Initiative aims to promote understanding of and concerted action towards responsible father involvement as a supportive and protective condition of healthy child development and resiliency. Some of its goals include the following:

- To raise awareness and knowledge of the importance of father involvement in healthy child development.
- To promote awareness of father involvement at community level, province-wide, and across Canada.
- To encourage the creation of networks linking the development of healthy public policy (e.g. employment and working conditions) together with concerted action towards responsible father involvement.
- To educate and support fathers in their roles as contributors in shaping the lives of their children.

The organization’s main strategies for promoting father involvement are to strengthen community capacity for action, to build healthy policy, and to develop men’s personal skills and the capacity of organizations to enable involved fathering.

In a meta-analysis of programs designed to foster men’s engagement with their children, Fletcher et al. (2014) found that successful programs:

- Intervene early into men's transition into fathering
- Target co-parenting
- Use behavior change programs to address men's use of violence
- Link programs together, and build community awareness
- Build relationships between fathers, communities and service providers
- Focus on school-based programs

On this last point, Morrell (2005) stresses for the importance of school-based initiatives in South Africa. For Morrell (ibid.) schools need to help young men to think about issues of masculinity and gender equality. Schools also need to teach young men how to care as the fatherhood role is already being carried out by young men in families where parents are absent.

Richter et al. (2013) suggest that interventions to promote effective fathering may be separated into five groups. These are as follows:

1. *Early Identification of Paternity*

Morrell et al. (2012) report that establishing paternity at birth (e.g. Sure Start in the UK), increased the involvement of fathers in their children's lives, be this through financial support, father-child contact, and whether or not the father stayed at home overnight. In the US, the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study endorsed the notion that early identification of paternity enhances father involvement with the child (Maxwell et al, 2012).

According to Levtov et al. (2015), the involvement of fathers before, during, and after the birth of a child has been shown to have positive effects on maternal health behaviours, women's use of maternal and new-born health services, and fathers' longer-term support and involvement in the lives of their children. In low and middle income countries, research finds that men's

involvement is significantly linked to more skilled birth attendance and the use of post-natal care. In high-income countries, research shows that fathers' presence can be helpful in encouraging and supporting mothers to breastfeed. Fathers' support also influences mothers' decision to immunize their children and to seek care for childhood illnesses (Levtov, et al, 2015).

2. *Involvement in the Early Years*

Research suggests that brief interventions for fathers in the early years of their children's lives can enhance fathers' acquisition of parenting skills and involvement in their children's lives (Doherty, et al. 2006). Research has also found that adolescent fathers were helped to engage with their children via positive parenting training within the school setting (Anthony & Smith 1994; Mazza, 2002). The Sonke Gender Justice organization has found that helping men to be involved during pregnancy, birth, and during the early months has helped men to engage with their children.

van den Berg (personal communication) suggests that the issue of paternity leave is highly relevant to the South African context and he encourages Heartlines to consider including this theme in its productions. For van den Berg, this issue is going to require intervention at the level of employment policy.

The 'Papa' schools (UNICEF) illustrate the effectiveness of early interventions into fathering. In an evaluation in the Ukraine, expectant or new fathers attended six or seven workshops that aimed to strengthen the father-mother relationship and to prevent violence against women and children. Fathers were encouraged to recognize their importance to their children, to support breastfeeding, to take paternity leave where possible and to prepare for the arrival of their babies. Fathers were helped to understand relevant aspects of child development and children's rights,

and were encouraged to create safe environments for their families. The intervention resulted in marked increase in fathers' attendance at their children's birth, a decrease in child morbidity, post-natal complications and childhood trauma rates (Al Hassan & Langford, 2011).

3. *Activity Based Programs*

World-wide, there are many activity-based programs designed to promote the father-child relationship. In Canada, research into the 'Dad and me' programs found that respondents favored peer-group support programs and parenting skill programs. Furthermore, 41% of participants reported that father-child activities are helpful and enjoyable for both men and their children (2011 Canadian Fathers Survey).

4. *Interventions targeting both parents*

As indicated above, studies suggest that it is important to address the health of the relationship between mothers and fathers. Reinks et al. (2011) evaluated a project that sought to address father involvement through educational workshops for both parents. This study of "Supporting Involvement" investigated fatherhood involvement among a group of ethnically diverse, low income men who participated in a fourteen hour educational program that addressed skills and principles such as communication, problem solving, conflict resolution and parenting skills. Parents were helped to create more stable relationships with each other and hence better environments for their children.

The Early Head Start program is a program for the US Department of Health and Human Sciences that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. Early Head Start is based on a

three pronged approach that aims: to improve economic self sufficiency and health of families, to monitor and enhance child development, and to support and build parenting skills.

In a sample of three thousand children and their parents, it was found that fathers who took part in EHS were significantly less likely to use harsh discipline, were less intrusive as parents, and were better able to engage with their children (Vogel, et al. 2011).

In an overview of the lessons learned from the design, implementation, and operation of 21 EHS programs intended to involve low-income fathers in intervention programs for young children, Burwick and Bellotti (2005) identified the following key factors:

- Help staff to engage with men and to appreciate fathers' importance to young children
- Fathers' work schedules, the reluctance of some mothers to include fathers, and the general perception that Early Head Start was for women only meant that engaging with fathers was a challenge. In order to get (and keep) fathers involved, fathers were invited to attend all aspects of the program and members of staff were encouraged to actively engage with fathers. Mothers were informed about the importance of fathers' contribution to their children and images of positive fathering were displayed in classrooms.
- Fathers responded well to father-child and family activities as well as interventions that made use of peer support. On the other hand, participation in father-only activities declined over time.

5. *Context Specific Interventions*

In a sense, all interventions would need to be context specific, given that fatherhood is a social construction, sensitive to socio-economic factors and varying ideas of what fathering 'is'. This certainly applies to post-Apartheid South Africa, and according to Schwartz (1999) effective programs must take into account ethnic and cultural differences. Other context specific interventions include fathers in prison, and efforts to promote relationships with children upon their release (Unruh, Bulls, & Yovanof, 2003; 2004), and fathers who have exposed their children to violence.

As an example of the latter, the Caring Dads intervention (Canada) is seventeen week group intervention for men who have exposed their children to violence. The course combines information from parenting, child maltreatment, behavioural change, and domestic violence programs. Evaluation found that fathers evidenced increased knowledge of child development, were more patient with their children, and were more positively involved as co-parents. Fathers became more emotionally available to their children and the risk of child maltreatment was reduced. Fathers demonstrated greater respect for their children's boundaries, were less hostile, and were less likely to expose their children to violent interactions with their mothers (Scott & Lishak, 2012).

L*ocal and African interventions*

This section focuses on initiatives conducted by Sonke Gender Justice, the Africa Fathers Initiative and Father A Nation. The intention underlying this selection is to illustrate that interventions into fathering are based on differing socio-political and cultural beliefs that will, to some extent, be an important consideration for the Heartlines initiative.

The fatherhood Project

The Fatherhood Project (Sonke Gender Justice) aims to mobilize men to play an active role in changing traditional norms that are harmful to men, women and children. The project works with local government and civil society groups to implement and evaluate programs that increase men's involvement and capacity as fathers and caregivers, and to change negative attitudes and behaviors within these roles.

The organization places strong emphasis on the social construction of masculinity, and seeks to change harmful norms that propagate violence and coercion towards women and children. Promoting involved, 'new' fatherhood is seen as an effective way of bringing about this change. This is linked to the HIV crisis, where male involvement in care and raising children is critical as women's HIV-related mortality rates continue to increase. In addition, women caregivers need the support of men to cope with the burden of HIV related care. The strategy of Sonke Gender Justice Network is to shift individual and community expectations of men's behaviours, particularly around care giving.

The organization targets sites with relatively high levels of gender based violence. They look to educate local government officials, religious and traditional leaders about the links between negative masculinity, violence, neglect of orphans and vulnerable children, and risky behaviors. Networks are established to link government and civil society representatives and to co-ordinate activities and interventions. Local partner organizations are trained to implement the One Man Can campaign. Participants are then helped to form community action teams or OMC chapters, through which other men are encouraged to prevent violence, reduce the impact of HIV, and support orphans and vulnerable children.

Father support groups are formed to discuss issues of masculinity, gender stereotypes, the needs of wives and children, violence, HIV, and care giving. These meetings provide a forum for self reflection, the expression of personal concerns, and the identification of ways to be better husbands and fathers. Men are encouraged to attend community activities and marches to raise awareness about the importance of male participation and to share their experiences. Other men are encouraged to participate in support groups, workshops, and activities. According to van den Berg (personal communication) a key factor in the success of Sonke's initiatives is peer learning, where men are helped by other fathers to go beyond the 'father as provider' role.

The organization sees digital storytelling (using the media to give adults, youth and children the opportunity to share their experiences of violence and HIV) as a key strategy for change. Video-recordings are shared with community members, policy makers and service providers to generate dialogue on social issues, and issues of masculinity. In another media initiative, children capture their experiences through photography and writing (PhotoVoice), and this material is then shared with adults (particularly men) in order to promote awareness of their children's realities.

Jain et al. (2011) argue that the above initiatives have led to positive changes in men's attitudes and practices. Men in project communities are beginning to take up responsibilities and behaviours that have typically been seen as feminine. More of these men are taking care of children, and are less violent with women and children. The authors also argue that PhotoVoice has improved children's ability to speak out about issues affecting them.

Communities involved in the project have benefitted from increased men's involvement (Palitza, 2008) and local leaders have been helped to revise traditional justice systems to better protect women and children. In the words of Jain et al. (ibid.): "commitment from local leaders has had a

powerful impact, and many men in the community have heeded their chiefs' calls to take responsibility for their families" (p. 7). As a result of the project's reach, police are attending child forum meetings and government officials are engaging across departments and with community leaders on the issues of masculinity, fatherhood, HIV and orphans and vulnerable children.

According to Jain et al. (ibid.) the above results illustrate the importance of addressing masculinity norms, and that fatherhood is an entry point for working with men. The authors argue that their success to date rests on the following:

- Helping to raise men's awareness of children's perspectives galvanizes men towards new behavior.
- Providing men with safe and supportive forums where they can discuss the manifestations and effects of negative masculinity, supportive forums are required. In this case, peer influence can be used to promote more pro-social behavior.
- Developing sustainable programs
- Engagement at multiple levels (individual, community, institutions, government agencies)

Despite the above successes, Jain et al. (ibid.) point out that change is gradual. The organization continues to come up against issues of social shame and the notion that gender equality is not an African idea.

The African Fathers' Initiative

Based in Zimbabwe, The Africa Fathers' Initiative is a continent-wide initiative that aims to generate, collect and disseminate knowledge and skills about fatherhood in Africa. The organization seeks to use the media to promote the values of responsible fatherhood, and to:

- Feature the positive aspects of fatherhood and encourage men to care for children
- Highlight the benefits of responsible fathering for men themselves, such as decreased harmful behavior towards self and others as a result of longer term commitments to one or more children.

The initiative uses social marketing to influence the voluntary behavior of fathers and potential fathers, with specific messages, materials, interventions and services designed to meet the needs and wants of these men. The Africa Fathers Initiative, in conjunction with Sonke Gender justice, Instituto Promundo (Brazil), Men Engage, and the SA National Department of Social Development, launched the 'Men Care' project (as described above).

Father a Nation

This initiative intends to restore and equip men to become excellent fathers and positive role models, and to father the fatherless in the community. The FAN programme provides mentors and surrogate fathers to over 80 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC's), sourced from 3 high schools in Bophelong (Gauteng). Critical elements to the ptogramme include the following:

- Selection of the right candidates
- An effective programme to restore and equip men
- The establishment of relationships between FANs and OVCs
- A monitoring and evaluation structure to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the process

- Ongoing development and support of FANs
- Provision of effective programmes for OVCs in the areas of personal development, sport, art, and culture.

Wilkinson, founder of this organization, indicates that historically men have been excluded from the process of fathering because of cultural assumptions that mothers are more important to their children (personal communication). The organization helps men to realize their importance to their children and emphasizes the ways children benefit from the combination of masculinity and femininity that mothers and fathers bring.

Wilkinson emphasizes that men can only give from a place of wholeness – and that "it's from a place of wholeness that we can contribute". Therefore there is a need for men to have access to forums where they can be helped to reflect, change, and grow. This process is based in Christian principles, and shares similarities with other men's Christian –based men's movements across the world (e.g. Eldridge's 'Ransomed Heart' programmess). FAN encourages men to take 'The Real Man Pledge' that emphasizes links between fatherhood and masculinity and how fathers can contribute to their children as *men*.

As one might imagine, feminist scholars and social scientists tend to be critical of Christian-based programs because they are thought to preserve neo-conservative notions of patriarchy and the nuclear family. For example, according the Morrell (2005) 'inward focused' initiatives tend to be the preserve of middle-class men and "do not always result in more equitable gender arrangements". However, Morrell (ibid.) goes on to say that "there is no reason… why men inspired by … work on the self should not become more open to gender equity" (p. 86).

Summary and Conclusions

The phenomenon of father absence has emerged out of a complex amalgam of socio-political, economic and historical features. With this in mind it becomes important not to make hasty judgements about 'bad' men who don't care for others. Indeed, the above research shows that many men want to enjoy good relationships with their children, but that they may feel constrained by a host of circumstances and beliefs.

South African research suggests that men may carry an unspoken but distinct sense of responsibility towards their children, but feel hopeless regarding their ability to meet these responsibilities (Richter, 2011). Williams (2008) found that men don't always feel that they have choices regarding their roles as fathers but feel instead that they have needed to make decisions based on circumstances. Local research suggests that many men highly value their status as fathers, express a deep affection for their children, and are prepared to work in remote areas, and do difficult work, in order to provide for their families (Rabe, 2007).

Richter et al (2011) argue that, if the resources were available, it would be possible to help young fathers to engage with their children. To support their claim, the authors cite findings from the Bt20 study, which found:

- That young fathers carry a strong, albeit unexpressed sense of responsibility for their children
- That young fathers are able to share stories of emotional engagement with their children
- That young fathers personal experiences of absent fathering served as a potent prompt to do things differently with their own children
- That young fathers are able to describe qualities of good fathering

- That many young fathers have been able to draw on the strength and support of their mothers
- That young fathers are motivated when they are welcomed by the mothers of their children
- That young fathers have aspirations to be more involved and supportive of their children
- That young fathers recognise their need for help
- That young fathers are willing to move towards more responsible sexual practices

On the basis of the above findings, Richter et al. (ibid.), argue for the importance of structural and policy interventions such as employment and educational opportunities for young men.

In their analysis of the reasons behind the perplexing issue of father absence, Holborn & Eddy (2011) identify poverty, legacies of Apartheid and the migratory labour system, and HIV/AIDS as leading contributors. These factors have been covered above. However, the authors also suggest that "difficult issues such as attitudes to parental responsibility and attitudes to parental monogamy and commitment to relationships need to be publically discussed and addressed by broader society" (p. 6).

Whilst it seems important for Heartlines to generate such public discussion, on balance it may be important for Heartlines to consciously divert away from attempts to shame men towards change. Indeed, men may already feel like failures when they are unable to provide for their children and be 'good fathers' (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). Perhaps what will be more effective will be stories and discussions that open up new possibilities and pathways to connection even within adverse socio-economic conditions. This does not mean that harmful practices and attitudes are ignored – indeed they remain unacceptable - but that what is retained

in any process of exposure is a sense of who men could be or indeed would prefer to be, when all is said and done.

At a global level, social changes are contributing to a revision of the boundaries between femininity and masculinity and, in turn, motherhood and fatherhood (Williams, 2008). It is important for Heartlines to appreciate that the concept of fatherhood taps into current and often very heated debates. This is because to speak about fatherhood is to make statements about what family 'is' or 'should be'. Claims about fatherhood also tap into beliefs about differences between men and women, and what the role or function of fathers and mothers should be. This is also likely to flow towards talk of sexuality and sexual differences, which then implicates beliefs about gay rights and/or gay marriage. As indicated above, feminist thought has tended to link fatherhood with patriarchy. Some feminist scholars argue that, because men are so deeply invested in patriarchy, and its dividends of power and privilege, men will always resist change, often through the use of violence. According to Silverstein and Auerbach (1999), the argument that fathers are essential is not so much about the welfare of children as it is "an attempt to reinstate male dominance by restoring the dominance of the traditional nuclear family with its contrasting masculine and feminine gender roles" (p. 406).

Messner (1997) suggests that men's initiatives tend to fall into four types – essentialist, men's rights, pro-feminist, and racial and sexual identity groups. Sonke Gender Justice seems to be an example of a pro-feminist group, whereas the FAN initiative appears founded on essentialist notions of male and female differences.

To some extent, Heartlines will need to decide what it wants to say about fatherhood in the midst of the above debates. One approach could be to emphasise that, across contexts, Heartlines is

looking to promote relationships between men and their children. When one sidesteps endless debates on whether mothers or fathers are 'more important', and focuses instead on the needs of the child, one finds that researchers agree: a child benefits from an active, caring father in his or her life (Barker et al. 2004). On another note, concerns regarding the links between fatherhood and patriarchy centre on the issue of power, and of course the Christian perspective has some very particular things to say about power.

Regarding the notion of mother and father difference, one could argue that, while it is possible to distinguish between maternal and paternal functions (Samuels, 1995), it is important to transcend rigid and binary notions regarding what mothers and fathers 'do'. Key to this transcending seems to be to move away from versions of masculinity that disparage and disrespect what mothers do for their children. These may be considered *defensive* versions of masculinity that are based on a denial of vulnerability and relational needs. If, however, men can be moved away from defensiveness towards genuinely appreciating, admiring, and respecting what mothers in their communities do, then it becomes possible for men to take up these maternal functions as valued attributes of the self. What is wrong with being 'like the mother' if one sincerely admires what mothers do? For example, in his transition towards fathering, a man might access, or be brought to new realisations regarding a mother's strength, self-sacrifice, compassion or endurance, and begin to assimilate these qualities into his own parenting. Obviously this is unlikely to transpire if a man is performing a version of masculinity that is contemptuous of caring. It could be argued that this defensive contempt is key to the unacceptable levels of intimate partner violence in South Africa. However, by recognising and respecting what it is that mothers do, men can be helped to take up more flexible and generative expressions of masculinity that *include*

identifications with the maternal (Benjamin, 1995). There is a bit of the mother in all of us, and men, women and children benefit when fathers are able to access and express these attributes.

The importance of the quality of the relationship between father and child has been emphasized above. From a relational perspective, it can be argued that the quality of parent-child relationships hinge on the parent's ability to recognise his child as an individual – a unique 'other' with his/her own mind, feelings, thoughts and intentions (Benjamin, 1999). Put another way, the parent's ability to tune in to his child's experiences is vital for healthy attachment (Stern, 1985). With this in mind one realises that attachment is based on being aware of and open to the inner experiences of the child – a dance of connection where the caregiver watches and reads what the infant or child wants or needs. This implies that attachment requires containing one's own needs so that one can focus on the needs of the child. This means that elevating one's own needs, or taking up positions of status and dominance, will work against one's ability to recognise the reality of the child (Benjamin, 1995). From here it could be argued that promoting men's ability to appreciate the realities of women and children in their lives can help men to move towards generative models of fatherhood (where the well-being of the *other* becomes the focus). To the extent that Heartlines is able to capture and convey the lived realities of women and children (the 'other'), it seems that Heartlines has the potential to foster generative perspectives in men.

One may argue that the success of the Heartlines initiative largely hinges on its ability to help fathers become more aware of (or recognize and appreciate) the experiences of women and children. In this respect, quality media productions that capture the voices/realities of men, women and children around the realities of father absence seem to be very promising. This seems to be evidenced in the sample of interventions listed above, which show that men do change their

fathering practices when they learn more about their children and what it is they (and the children's mothers) need. In addition, it seems that men benefit from peer- group forums where they are able to discuss their hurts, insecurities, and stresses as fathers. Again, Heartlines material could provide very effective focus points and prompts for such discussions.

When one holds to a relational perspective, the link between father absence, child trafficking, and rhino poaching becomes plausible because rhino poaching, child trafficking, and (negative) hegemonic masculinity all have to do with status and masculine prowess. Pride and status constrain one's ability to tune into the needs of others (Benjamin, 1995). It is men who perpetuate, fund, and carry out rhino poaching, with no consideration for the generations that follow. It is this implacable indifference to the needs of others, together with an overriding sense of one's own importance that characterizes the worst versions of masculinity. It seems possible to make similar claims about child trafficking, where the narcissistic needs of men are indulged, whilst the realities of the other (the child) are callously ignored.

There has been considerable research into fatherhood over the past few decades together with increased recognition that fathers are often very important to their children (Hakoame & Ready, 2011). In recent years, primacy has been given to the quality of relationship between father and child. In their poignant analysis of children's views of fathers, Richter and Smith (2006) point out that, over and above material provisions, it is the father's attention and affection that children want. There is clear evidence that, in turning to their children in these ways, men are also nourished in significant ways. In the words of Morrell (2005), "When fatherhood is woven as a desirable feature into the fabric of masculinity, everybody benefits" (p. 86).

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