Family Relationships and Non-resident Black South African Fathers' Contact with their Adolescent Children: A Study of Families with Infrequent Non-resident Father-Child Contact

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

Constructive paternal involvement has the potential to greatly contribute to family and child mental health. Many South African fathers, however, do not live with or close to their children and are not benefiting from regular father-child contact. The relationships between non-resident fathers and other members in the larger family system play a significant role in father-child contact in general, but especially in Black South African communities where fatherhood is understood to happen to families rather than individuals. Moreover, the quality of the parental relationship is often significantly influenced by the inputs of maternal grandparents or other extended kin. However, the non-resident father as a member of the larger family system, in which his relationships with key family members play an important role in father-child contact, has been neglected in South African family research. This study aimed to address this gap by investigating if and how the quality of relationships with biological children of Black South African non-resident fathers is influenced by the quality of his relationships with key family members.

This study was informed by family systems theory and utilised a qualitative research design in which data from multiple family members were obtained. Purposive sampling resulted in the recruitment of ten family systems with four family members participating in the study (N = 40). This included the non-residential father, his adolescent biological child, mother of the child, and extended family member. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of these members to explore the nature and quality of the father's contact with the child, mother, and extended family; and how the quality of these relationships impacted father-child contact. These interviews were transcribed and Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis method was used to identify the following five themes that shed light on infrequent non-resident father-child contact: (i) Fathers as mainly material providers: The dominance of the father as provider discourse negatively affected family relationships and limited father-child contact as mothers saw the father's provision as proof of his affection for his child. (ii) Expectations of fathers beyond provision: Family members acknowledged that fathers have roles beyond provision. They thought that fathers could contribute to children's well-being by showing interest in their children's lives and having contact with them, as well as contribute children's academic functioning. (iii) Responsibility for father-child contact: Mothers, children and extended kin put the onus of father-child contact on the father. Fathers in return awaited the mothers' contact as indication that their presence was welcome and convenient, but mothers viewed this as 'forcing' father-child contact. (iv) Extended kin as father-child contact resource:

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Extended kin supported father-child contact and could be seen as a potential resource. They often acted as intermediaries, provided a physical space for father-child contact and/or waived the payment of damages as a precondition for father-child contact. (v) Changes in families after the interviews: This theme highlights the unexpected and encouraging changes that occurred after the first interviews in terms of increased quality and frequency of father-child contact, as well as increased provision from the father. These shifts suggest that non-resident father families may be open to feedback and able to implement changes toward frequent father-child contact.

Some recommendations based on these findings are that more should be done on the macro-system level to emphasise, promote and support a range of non-resident father contributions to child well-being, providing non-resident fathers with knowledge and skills (that do not involve money) to build father-child connections, and the encouragement and provision of mediation services for non-resident families to assist family members to work together to support constructive non-resident father-child contact.

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Opsomming

Konstruktiewe paternale betrokkenheid het die potensiaal om betekenisvol by te dra tot die geestesgesondheid van families en kinders. Baie Suid Afrikaase vaders woon egter nie by of na aan hul kinders nie, en baat nie by gereelde vader-kind kontak nie. Die verhoudings tussen nie-inwonende vaders en ander lede van die familie sisteem speel ‘n sleutel rol in die algemeen, maar veral in Swart Suid Afrikaanse gemeenskappe, waar vaderskap gesien word as familie gebeurtenis. Bowendien word die kwaliteit van die ouers se verhouding baie beïnvloed deur maternale grootouers en uitgebreide familielede. Daar is egter ‘n gebrek in Suid Afrikaanse familie navorsing oor die nie-inwonende vader as lid van ‘n groter familie sisteem, waar sleutel familielede ‘n groot invloed uitoefen oor vader-kind kontak. Hierdie studie het ten doel gehad om hierdie gaping aan te spreek deur ondersoek in te stel of en hoe die kwaliteit van verhoudings tussen biologiese kinders en Swart Suid Afrikaanse nie-inwonende vaders beïnvloed word deur die kwaliteit van sy verhoudings met sleutel familielede.

Hierdie studie is gegrond in familie sisteem teorie en ‘n kwalitatiewe navorsings ontwerp is gebuik om data van veelvoudige familie lede in te win. Doelgerigte steekproeftrekking het tien familie sisteme met vier lede elk (N = 40) tot gevolg gehad. Hierdie vier lede het die nie-inwonende vader, sy biologiese adolessente kind, moeder van die kind, en uitgebreide familielid ingesluit. Individuele semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gevoer met elke familielid om die aard en kwaliteit van die vader se verhoudings met die kind, moeder, en uitgebreide familielede te verken; asook hoe die kwaliteit van hierdie verhoudings vader-kind kontak beinvloed. Die onderhoude is getranskribeer en Braun en Clarke se ses-fase tematiese analise metode is gebruik om die volgende vyf temas te identifiseer wat lig werp op seldsame of sporadiese nie-inwonende vader-kind kontak: (i) Vaders as hoofsaaklik finansiële voorsiener: Die oorheersing van die vader as voorsiener diskoers het ‘n negatiewe uitwerking op familie verhoudings en beperk vader-kind kontak aangesien moeders voorsiening sien as bewys van die vader se liefde vir die kind. (ii) Verwagtinge van vaders benewens voorsiening: Familielede herken dat vaders bydraes benewens voorsiening kan maak. Hulle was van mening dat vaders tot kinders se welstand kan bydra deur belangstelling in hul kinders se lewens te toon en om kontak met hul kinders te hê, sowel as om tot hul kinders se akademiese funksionering by te dra. (iii) Verantwoordelikheid vir vader-kind kontak: Moeders, kinders, en uitgebreide familielede het die onus vir vader-kind kontak op vaders gesit. Vaders het egter gewag vir die moeder om hom te kontak en aan te dui dat sy teenwoordigheid welkom en gerieflik is, maar moeders het dit gesien as die afdwinging van vader-kind kontak. (iv) Uitgebreide familie as

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vader-kind kontak hulpbronne: Uitgebreide familielede het vader-kind kontak ondersteun en kan gesien word as moontlike hulpbronne. Hulle het dikwels ingetree as tussenganger, fisiese areas voorsien vir vader-kind kontak, en/of het afstand gedoen van skade betaling as voorwaarde vir vader-kind kontak. (v) Verandering in families na onderhoude: Hierdie tema illustreer die onverwagse en optimale veranderinge wat plaasgevind het met betrekking tot kwaliteit en frekwensie van vader-kind kontak, sowel as toename in voorsiening van die vader, na die afhandeling van die eerste onderhoude. Hierdie verandering toon dat nie-inwonende vader families oop mag wees vir terugvoer en om veranderinge met betrekking tot vader-kind kontak te implementeer.

Enkele aanbevelings gegrond in hierdie bevindinge is dat meer op die makro-sisteemvlak gedoen moet word om die veelvoudige bydraes wat nie-inwonende vaders sou kon bied te beklemtoon, bevorder en ondersteun; vaders te voorsien met kennis en vaardighede om vader-kind konneksies te bou wat nie geld vereis nie; en om bemiddelingdienste vir nie-inwonende vaders en familielede aan te moedig en te voorsien sodat nie-inwonende families saam kan werk om konstruktiewe nie-inwonende vader-kind kontak te ondersteun.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Rationale

Research, mostly conducted in western contexts, indicates that constructive paternal involvement has the potential to greatly contribute to family and child mental health (Kurian et al., 2022; Scott, 2007; Yogman & Eppel, 2022). Children who experience themselves as mattering to their fathers show increased quality mother- and teacher-relationships, higher academic achievement, and less externalizing problems (Winter, 2009). Fatherhood also benefits men as research indicates that it has a healthy influence on men's decision-making, values, and risk behaviours, and provides them with a sense of purpose (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Hosegood et al., 2016). Research conducted in local and in non-western contexts also indicate that fathers can offer supportive and connected interpersonal relationships to children that benefit child development, general health, academic functioning, and economic well-being (Okeke & Salami, 2021; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018; Yogman & Eppel, 2022). Overall, positive father involvement in a child's life is beneficial to the father, his child, the mother of his child/ren and the community at large (Patel & Mavungu, 2016).

Many South African fathers, however, do not live with or close to their children and are not benefiting from daily or regular father-child contact – particularly in Black[1] South African communities (Madhavan et al., 2016; Chalabi, 2013). The high number of Black South African, non-resident fathers is due to a number of factors: more than half of Black children are born to unmarried parents who are often not co-habiting (Posel & Rudwick, 2011); the high divorce rate in the Black South African population at 39.1 % (Statistics, 2014); delayed marriage due to inability to pay *lobola* (bride wealth) (Posel et al., 2011; 2014); domestic violence; the effects of the AIDS epidemic; high unemployment rates at 35.3% (Statistics South Africa, 2022), and rural to urban migration resulting in fathers working away from their children's primary place of residence (Richter et al., 2012). The growing autonomy of women (Richter et al., 2012), as well as the changing family structures with a shift towards female headed households and

[1] The term "Black" was used in the apartheid era to refer to a heterogenous group of people of African descent, and is still used today to self-identify and/or to redress the impact of apartheid on oppressed groups. I want to stress here that this term is a social construct. Furthermore, the intention with the use of this term is to acknowledge the political-socio-cultural context in South Africa that still impacts fatherhood, and not to perpetuate apartheid ideology.

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extended family units further contribute to the growing number of non-resident fathers in South Africa (Eddy & Holborn, 2011). It is important, however, to differentiate between non-resident fathers who are working or living away from a child's residence but are still viewed as part of the child's household, and those non-resident fathers who are not viewed as part of the child's household. Using national representative data, Hatch and Posel's (2018) analysis shows that South African non-resident parents who are viewed as household members "are far more likely to have some contact with their children during the year than parents who are not part of the household" (p. 278). These authors found that more than 30% of Black African children with non-resident fathers in their survey who were not considered household members, did not see their father during the year. The focus of this study is on Black non-resident fathers who are not considered part of the child's household.

Although non-resident fathers may not be able to participate in-person with the daily parenting of their children, they can still make significant contributions through provision, social visits, and telephone contact (Makusha et al., 2012). In South African Black communities, these fathers can also provide a child with substantial social capital through connection to extended kin, resources, and ancestral traditions (Madhavan & Roy, 2011; Makusha & Richter, 2015; Morrell, 2006). Lack of father-child connection and contact may create cultural and social isolation as children feel excluded and unable to relate to peers with resident or regular father-child contact. Mavungu et al. (2013) in their study on Black non-resident fathers in Johannesburg also found that lack of non-resident father-child contact may contribute to child misconduct and substance abuse, as well as limited financial recourses. Studies in western contexts indicate that lack of father-child contact may maintain confusion for children around their father's role in their life, and correlates with low self-esteem and depression (McLanahan et al., 2013; Wineburgh, 2010).

Any research that engages with fatherhood should acknowledge that fatherhood and masculinity ideas are intricately intertwined, and that both of these are fluid and changeable social constructions that are shaped in specific social contexts (Richter & Morell, 2006). Black South African men's notion of fatherhood and masculinity have importantly been shaped by the country's historical and political context (Mercer et al., 2018). South African traditional fatherhood ideals where men take responsibility and provide for-, model to-, and guide-families, were systematically undermined during colonial and apartheid rule since colonial taxation and land appropriation forced many Black men into migrant labour (Lesejane, 2006;

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Mercer et al., 2018). 'Pass laws' (laws that restricted the freedom of movement to scheduled times of the day during which travel and visibility outside of the house was allowed for Black South Africans) and minimal leave for fathers to see their families limited opportunities for fathers to directly care for and model behaviour to children, which contributed to the role of the father as financial provider to assume supremacy in fatherhood ideals; fathers' frequent neglect and abandonment of their children; and caring as the exclusive role of women (Budlender & Lund, 2011; Lesejane, 2006; Mercer et al., 2018; Richter & Morrel, 2006). Furthermore, masculinity is often associated with men exercising power over women - positioning even marginalized men as oppressors of women who belong to the same marginalized demographic (Morrell et al., 2012; Richter & Morell, 2006). Although dominant discourses around fatherhood still foreground authoritarian and controlling behaviours, recent research highlights that more nurturing, involved and consultative versions of being a father are evident in the experiences of some South African men (Clowes et al., 2013). Many fathers and families, however, do not sufficiently consider or value the important parenting contributions fathers could make in terms of practical caretaking, emotional closeness and mentoring of children (Lesch & Kelapile, 2015).

The larger family system plays a significant role in father-child contact in general, but especially in Black South African communities (Clark et al., 2015; Makusha & Richter, 2016) where fatherhood is often understood to happen to families rather than individuals (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). This larger family system includes the mother, father, child, siblings, maternal and paternal families, and extended kin. The majority of Black South African households have an extended kin family structure, maintaining involvement with each other and taking care of each other's children (Madhavan et al., 2016). Subsequently these self-appointed "co-parents" all opine on the upbringing of "their" child and exercise pressure on the mother to act in accordance (Madhavan et al., 2016). In these family systems, the payment of *lobola* or *intlawulo* (Xhosa word referring to the custom of a man paying damages to the family of the woman he impregnated outside marriage) (Wilson, 2006), paternal acknowledgment, child-care and the role of the non-resident father are considered to be a cultural negotiation process between the biological parents and their respective key extended kin (Madhavan & Roy, 2012). Culturally the maternal family household is entrusted with the upbringing of the children and controls access to them (Clark et al., 2015; Gee & Rhodes, 2003; Herzog et al., 2007; Patel & Mavungu, 2016). Access to the child may thus serve as leverage for the family to punish fathers who do not act according to their preconceived notion of parenting.

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The non-resident father's relationships with family members within the larger family system are often strained if he is unwilling or unable to meet financial expectations related to fatherhood. The quality of the relationship between the biological father and mother of a child (Herzog et al., 2001; Kalil et al., 2005) is also often significantly influenced by the inputs of maternal grandparents or other extended kin (Wilson, 2006). The paternal grandfather who models father presence or absence (Makusha, 2013), and the paternal grandmother who often advises on childcare and co-parenting (Richter & Morell, 2006) also contribute to the facilitation or discouraging of paternal contact among Black South Africans. Clark et al. (2015) further state that close father and paternal grandmother relationships increase father contact with children, whereas close mother and maternal grandmother relationships reduce contact.

The non-resident father as a member of a larger family system, in which his relationships with key family members in his own household/family and that of his child (I will use the term "extended kin" to refer to these family members) may play an important role in fathers' access to children and involvement in childcare, has been neglected in South African family research (Clark et al., 2015; Makusha & Richter, 2016). For example, I could not locate any published studies that investigated the role of various family members or extended kin by utilising multiple informants from one family (rather than individual informants) as research units in non-resident father research. Furthermore, the bulk of studies on non-resident fathers and children tend to be outcome studies that utilised quantitative methods to investigate the consequences of father engagement or absence for mothers and children (i.e., Cryer-Coupet et al., 2020; Fagan, 2021; Tuchiya et al., 2020). This study therefore aimed to address this gap by using multiple family members to explore if and how non-resident father-adolescent child contact is influenced by family dynamics and the quality of his relationships with key family members or extended kin – such as grandparents and the biological mother of the child.

1.2 Lay-out of Dissertation

Chapter two entails a discussion of family systems theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1995) bio-ecological model as the two theoretical frameworks that informed this study. Chapter three presents a review of literature relevant to non-resident father-child contact. The methodology is discussed and outlined in chapter four. Chapter five entails a presentation of the themes and underpinning sub-themes that were identified through thematic analysis of the data. The thesis

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concludes with chapter six where I critically discuss the themes identified in the Results chapter. It includes strengths and limitations of the study, as well as some recommendations for future research and interventions.

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CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

2.1 Introduction

Similar to many fatherhood researchers, Schoppe-Sullivan and Fagan (2020) argue that: "More consistent adoption of systemic approaches promises to furnish a more nuanced understanding of parenting and family relationships and stronger applications of this knowledge" (p. 187). This study is, therefore, broadly informed by systems theory, and more specifically by Family systems theory and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory. Family systems theory is an umbrella name for a group of theoretical perspectives that, although diverse in some respects, share the perspective that interrelationships within the family affect the entire family system, structure, patterns, and reciprocal transactions (Kerig, 2019). It highlights how interpersonal relationships within restructured family systems (e.g., families with non-resident fathers as is the focus of this study) influence the dynamics (i.e., non-resident father-child contact) and other relationships within the same family system (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Shapiro & Stewart, 2011). Additionally, I used Bronfenbrenner's earlier iteration of the bio-ecological systems theory (1977) as a metatheoretical frame to situate my study on non-resident fathers and their infrequent contact with adolescent children in its various contextual layers. This theory postulates that an individual functions within larger systems that shape their development and the quality of their relationships. In turn, the individual also impacts on his/her environment and other individuals in that environment in a circular fashion (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2001). Both Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model and family systems theory are widely applied in research on father involvement (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2015; Clark et al., 2015).

In this chapter I will first identify and discuss the underlying theoretical foundations of family systems theory which also underpin Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model. Thereafter, I will discuss Bronfenbrenner's earlier iterations of the bio-ecological model in which he highlights the embedment of individuals in the chrono-system, macro-system, exo-system, meso-system, and micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), and how non-resident fathers and their contact with children could be influenced by these system levels.

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2.2 Theoretical Foundations underlying Family Systems Theory

2.2.1 Nonsummativity/Holism

Family systems theory states that no individual can be viewed in isolation from the system within which he/she functions (Bowen, 1978). The family system is a complex web of interactions, and nonsummativity refers to the principle that the whole is considered more than the sum of its parts due to the interaction between these parts (Flaskas, 2011). A family member's behaviour will also differ from one person to the next due to the unique combination of the specific individuals in any interaction (Vorster, 2003). This means that obtaining information from one family member does not provide a comprehensive picture of family-related phenomena. Many fatherhood studies, however, rely only on reports from mothers or children and have been critiqued for this limitation (Cabrera et al., 2018). Moreover, nonsummativity is congruous to indigenous Black communities as they value interpersonal relationships, the collective spirit of communalism (Ubuntu) which is prioritised over individual independence, and prize the connectedness of the family as a whole (Rabe, 2018). I, therefore, situated my study of infrequent non-resident Black father-adolescent child contact within its broader system and interpersonal interactions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. I incorporated the views of multiple family members about their relationships with each other to shed light on infrequent non-resident father-adolescent child contact as an interactional family system phenomenon (Hilpert & Marchand, 2018; Nichols & Everett, 1986).

2.2.2 Interdependency

A second key family systemic idea is that of interdependency: that relationships have effects on other relationships in the family system: "Thus the family is viewed as an interrelated web in which perturbations in one strand send reverberations along the threads interconnecting other parts of the system" (Kerig, 2016, p. 587). Kerig (2001) highlights that interactions that are not witnessed by all family members also have repercussions for the functioning of the family. An example of such interrelatedness of relationships occurs when there is strain in the parental relationship, leading to increased compensatory emotional closeness between parent and child, which in turn imbalances the family system and may heighten tensions and loyalty conflicts for the child (Kerig, 2005). Also, a paternal grandmother who is connected to the child may either contribute towards encouraging or discouraging non-resident father-child contact.

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Another example is that fathers' relationships with their own fathers impact on their relationship with their children. Research indicates that fathers who had a close bond with their father tend to foster close connections with their children, whilst other fathers aspire to be close to their children because they missed out on such closeness with their own fathers (Gittings et al., 2021). In non-resident father families the interrelatedness of relationships is likely more complicated as these families consist of more sub-systems and relationships than the nuclear family that affect and are affected by the other sub-systems in the family (Becvar & Becvar, 2014).

2.2.3 Recursion/Circularity

Family systems theory is concerned with recursive/circular causality that views people and events in the context of mutual interaction and influence (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Hilpert & Marchand, 2018). As opposed to reductionism where individual elements are studied in isolation from a cause-and-effect perspective (A causes and results in B), family systems theory advocates that to better understand a phenomenon like infrequent contact between a non-resident father and child, we need to explore the relationships between family member dyads and sub-systems of the non-resident father. We should look at how each of these interacts with and influences the other, and how each also elicits behaviour from the other (A is a logical complement of B, just as B's behaviour is a logical complement to the behaviour of A) in order to maintain infrequent father-child contact. In a circular fashion, members of a system are continuously shaping each other and their position within the family, as well as each other's values and beliefs.

It is, therefore, impossible to blame any one family member for infrequent father-child contact. An example is fathers who may withhold financial support as a logical complement to the maternal family hindering his contact with his child, which in turn complements the behaviour of withholding finances and so they circularly feed into one another (Lamb, 2010). This father-child contact and financial provision circularity is foregrounded in research findings (e.g., Nordien-Lagardien et al., 2019) that many Black South African mothers feel strongly that fathers who do not provide for their children do not have a right to see their children (e.g., Hunter, 2006; Nordien-Lagardien et al., 2019). In turn, many fathers experience their inability to provide due to lack of employment or low wages as intolerable which may lead to neglecting children's other needs, such as emotional support and caregiving (Hunter, 2006). It is likely

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that the circular interaction of mothers withholding contact due to limited provision from fathers and fathers avoiding mothers' anger and shaming about their limited provision, reinforces mothers' viewing fathers as irresponsible which in turn discourage both fathers and mothers from making contact to arrange father-child contact. A family systems approach to infrequent non-resident father-adolescent child contact, therefore, emphasises that fathers and family members should be viewed in a mutual interaction that creates the problematic family dynamic, and that multiple family members' perspectives should be represented, as opposed to many studies that position mother and child as victims of the vilified father (Mercer et al., 2018).

2.2.4 Homeostasis

Homeostasis is defined as the regulation processes in a system to maintain consistency and keep the family system intact, irrespective of whether this stability is to the benefit of the system or not. Homeostasis is a way in which healthy families maintain consistency and predictability in an ever-changing environment and its stresses (Kerig, 2019). Homeostasis, however, can persistently return a family system to its normative functioning in ways that do not allow for optimal adaption when faced with change (Kerig, 2019). In line with this principle, non-resident father families may be entrenched in certain ways of doing that keep infrequent non-resident father-child contact in place. Larger systemic factors that contribute towards keeping non-resident families unchanged are the already mentioned difficulties that mothers often experience in securing child maintenance from fathers that result in gatekeeping by maternal families (Guest et al., 2021), as well as gender roles where fathers are seen as secondary parenting figures and excluded from child caretaking roles (Malinga & Ratele, 2022). Furthermore, promotion of fathers' mental health and fathers' access to mental health services are significantly neglected in South Africa, which may leave many depressed non-resident fathers without support and contribute to infrequent father-child contact (Makusha & Ratele, 2021).

Conversely, what may affect change or disequilibrium of infrequent non-resident father-child contact include increasing public awareness of non-resident fathers' desire for contact with their children (Jensen, 2006), extended kin who encourage and support non-resident father-child connectedness (Dunn, 2019), and changes in policy that prioritise the fathers' presence in children's lives (i.e., increased paternity leave for South African fathers) (Labour Law

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Amendment Act, 2018). Disequilibrium in non-resident father families with infrequent father-child contact may also be triggered if one of the family members want to change infrequent father-child contact (likely children and fathers) while others prefer to maintain the limited contact (likely mothers or maternal kin). Mothers may, for instance, feel wounded or withdraw affection from an adolescent child who wishes to see their non-resident father (Harman et al., 2018). The child in this instance is the one wanting a change to the infrequent father-child contact and disequilibrium in homeostasis is present in the mother's dissatisfaction. The differences in needs and expectations for father-child contact may therefore bring discomfort between members of the family system which may instigate change in the family system.

The circumplex model of family systems posits that the health and functioning of family members are optimized when families attain balanced levels of both cohesion and flexibility (Olson, 2011). Cohesion is conceptualized as something that can vary across families and may also include activities where members have to work together which typically includes a variation and disequilibrium (e.g., to arrange visitation schedules) (Jensen & Weller, 2018). It is therefore important for non-resident fathers and their family systems to maintain flexibility in order to gradually allow change and growth and maintain a balance between stability and change. Family systems theory considers morphostasis and morphogenesis, which are discussed in the following section, as part of how systems determine their permissible margins of change.

2.2.4.1 Morphostasis/Morphogenesis

Morphostasis is a system's ability to remain in a stable state of dynamic equilibrium which is closely related to homeostasis (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Morphogenesis is the tendency towards system-enhancing behaviour permitting creativity, innovation, growth, and change, all of which are characteristics of functional systems. Optimal functioning systems necessitate a balance of both morphogenesis and morphostasis, as the extremes of either in the continuum will maintain dysfunction (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Luhmann, 2013). Family systems theory is concerned with disturbance and stability, and how the relationship between these two can be turned into order (Luhmann, 2013). The balance between change and maintaining of the status quo to provide order and growth is what is needed for healthy system functioning (Luhmann, 2013). One should therefore guard against bias towards either stability or change as prolonged or extremity of either predicts system dysfunction. In the context of non-resident father families, the family's ability to grow and change when necessary (e.g., after parental

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relationship breakdown) will be of particular relevance. During critical developmental transitions like childbirth or re-partnering, the regulatory rules must be redefined as family membership and role expectations are altered (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000). Redefinition is often implicit and unstated, especially between parents who do not co-reside, which hinders the redefinition of interpersonal roles that is needed in order to later maintain balance and homeostasis, especially with the substantial changes in the family as a whole (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000).

The question is thus how the relation between disturbance and stability can be optimised in such a manner that the system, despite being severely affected by disturbance, is still stable (Luhmann, 2013). In my current study, if the family system maintains morphostasis in the face of change (i.e., the child wants to see the father after parental separation but movement between maternal and paternal homes is blocked), it is likely that the father or child may present with psychological symptoms such as depression or rebellion. If a family system presents with too much morphogenesis (i.e., a separation of parents, the introduction of new partners, and a resident move were to occur all at the same time), the unity of the family system and maintenance of connected relationships between father and child will be threatened. In families with non-resident fathers, it is therefore important that the systems do not go into the extreme ends of the spectrum between change and stability, and that family systems monitor and are mindful of the pace of healthy change in order to maintain balance.

2.2.5 Rules and Boundaries

The family systems perspective suggests that families are complex systems, comprised of multiple interconnected sub-systems that are interdependent with individuals in various roles managing boundaries with the likelihood that different profiles of interactions might occur within a family system (Jensen & Weller, 2018). As members of a system communicate verbally and non-verbally with each other and patterns of interaction form, implicit rules and norms develop which often define the system, as well as interpersonal roles and system boundaries that regulate the interpersonal interaction (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000; Vorster, 2003). In the case of non-resident father families, there may be paternal and maternal homes which will likely have different rules and boundaries with some areas that may overlap. This family system may be at risk of miscommunication regarding expected norms, roles or behaviours that differ between the maternal and paternal family as their interactions are not

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consistent or frequent. The most pertinent overlap is the child belonging to both subgroups, who then defines the larger boundary of the larger family where the maternal and paternal families are joined.

Boundaries function as a filter/buffer of the flow of information in and out of the system, screening it for compatibility with the system's values and norms (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). This is often heard through statements such as "That is not how we do things in this family", thus rejecting the inclusion of the information. Boundaries also describe the exit for information, which may be different from the inputs of other systems. That is, incoming information is processed and transformed by the system and emitted as new information to other systems (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). For example, in the child's movement between paternal and maternal residences, a behaviour may be allowed in one sub-system but not in the other. For example, if the maternal family ensures that the child is bathed and dressed in a fresh set of clothes prior to seeing the father as a way to illustrate readiness and the child being taken care of, but the father drops the child off dirty after a day of playing outside, it may be interpreted as the father not taking care of the child effectively. Expectations around what constitutes caring behaviour may therefore differ between individuals and sub-systems. The child will discover these differences and may bring a change of clothes after playing with the father to avoid the mother's negative appraisal of the father that, in turn, may hinder father-child contact. Also, non-resident fathers may not be aware of developmentally appropriate chores for the child or aware of tasks that the child is unfamiliar with (e.g., making a fire) that the mother may view as the father putting the child at risk.

If family systems have well-established roles, optimal regulatory rules, and a mutual understanding of sharing responsibility, family relationships are more likely to be functional and satisfactory (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000). Family members may, for instance, have different expectations regarding the father's role and these may further differ depending on the child's sex or gender. Clear communication around these expectations promotes healthy negotiation and sharing of responsibilities (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Therefore, if non-resident fathers and family members overtly communicate their expectations to each other it may contribute towards father-child contact. However, rules may be mostly implicit and outside of the awareness of the family members, which may cause problems in non-resident father families as the proximal distance leaves room for miscommunication. Furthermore, in the case where the non-resident father has not been married to the mother of his child, there is no formal

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or legal procedure as in the case of legally married couples who divorce and are compelled to come to a co-parenting agreement. This may result in unmarried parents not having a discussion and agreement about co-parenting expectations and rules. Roy and Smith (2013) further highlight that non-resident fathers are required to negotiate terms of engagement with the guardian/mother of the child, with whom they often have a strained relationship. Father-child contact negotiation sabotaged by strained family relationships therefore maintains unclear norms and ambivalence in non-resident fathers on the rules of father-child contact (Roy & Smith, 2013).

2.2.6 Openness/Closedness

The permeability of boundaries refers to the degree to which a family system screens out or permits the input of new information, and the exchange relationship between the family system and environment is what defines the openness or closedness of that system (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Luhmann, 2013). A balance between the two is desirable for optimal system functioning and determined by circumstance and context (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Non-resident father families will require appropriate degrees of openness and closedness to maintain a healthy balance. Family systems will tend to close their boundaries and limit input that deviates too much from their own norms in order to maintain core beliefs or norms that define the family identity. For example, non-resident fathers may face closed maternal family boundaries if he is unable to pay *lobola* (bride wealth) or *intlawulo* (payment of damages for impregnating a woman in absence of marriage), as maternal families typically take a primary guardianship role and curb father-child contact in such cases (Madhavan et al., 2016). Another factor that influences the degree of permeability of family system boundaries and consequential father-child contact is the biological parents' ability to transition into coparenting after separation (Cabrera et al., 2009). Conflict-riddled parental relationships, lack of interest from the father in father-child contact, and disagreeing perspectives between family members regarding the father's role all contribute towards father-child disconnection and closed boundaries (Cabrera et al., 2009).

Non-resident fathers and family members are required to learn which bridges to build and which doors to close after separation to effectively negotiate father-child contact (Nordien-Lagardien et al., 2019). Appropriate areas of openness may be communication about the child's emotional, academic, and physical well-being, physical movement of location, contact

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arrangements, and financial compromises. Families who prioritise quality father-child relationship, value the benefits of father-child contact, and compromise on financial contributions are likely to have a healthy degree of open boundaries. Areas of appropriate closedness may be a parent's house rules, work context, and intimate partner relationship details. Individuals may use the legal system in an attempt to open boundaries of contact, but this is a tedious and expensive process that may discourage fathers from approaching the legal system to ensure contact with their child.

2.2.7 Feedback

The recursive process that involves self-correction is called feedback, which is a process whereby information about past behaviours and from the environment is fed back into the system in a circular manner (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Luhmann, 2013). There is *positive* and *negative* feedback, which is not to be confused with value judgment; rather, *positive feedback* acknowledges that a change has occurred and has been accepted by the system, whereas *negative feedback* indicates that the status quo is being maintained (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Shin & Konrad, 2017). Positive feedback is the amplification of deviation from the family system norm (Shin & Konrad, 2017; Vorster, 2003). Positive feedback is error activated, where the system accepts feedback regarding a deviation from a previous norm that no longer serves to benefit the system, often due to changes that occur in the system itself or in the larger context to which the system needs to adapt (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). One example of positive feedback that may be observed is adjustment to the child's developmental phase moving from dependence to independence, and the family allowing the child to take on more responsibilities. A system also requires breaking mechanisms as continuous amplification of deviation become problematic, which then forms part of negative feedback (Luhmann, 2013). Negative feedback indicates that fluctuations or disturbances to the norm are being opposed and a certain level of stability is maintained (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). The family may reject feedback that requires change, such as a mother rejecting a non-resident father's new partner and restricting contact between father and child, or the father rejecting a mother's new partner and attempting to enforce control over the child's movement and exposure to the new partner.

2.2.8 Triangulation

Haley and Minuchin emphasised the hierarchal structure of the family and focused on the triad as the unit of the family that maintains stability. Parents and at least one child is considered a

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family and it is imperative for the parents to remain in a hierarchical level separate from the children (Vorster, 2003). Triangulation is the dynamic at play when three individuals interact with a natural gravitation between two of the individuals forming a coalition, leaving the third one isolated in the interaction (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Triangles are often mobilised when power struggles occur between dyads and a third person is drawn into coalition with one and thus one-upping the other through power in numbers, which is a destructive way of dealing with conflict and has a low prognosis for compromise and resolution (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Non-resident father family systems face problems when coalitions occur (De Greeff & Platt, 2016), but is particularly destructive when the generation gap is breached by discounting the hierarchal rules of the system, such as in child-parent coalitions (Vorster, 2003).

With mothers often gaining children's primary residency in South Africa, the non-resident Black South African father is at risk of being the outgroup member of the family system, with alliances and loyalties that may form in the primary residence (Bosch-Brits et al., 2018). Parental conflict is often powered by a "guard and protect" ideology toward their children (Coleman et al., 2001) as loyalty divides and feelings of triangulation complicate restructured family formation and development (Schrodt & Afifi, 2007). The destructive impact on father-child contact when coalitions maintain parental alienation is well documented in South Africa and abroad (Bosch-Brits et al., 2018; Fidler & Bala, 2020; Harman et al., 2018). Non-resident fathers, mothers and extended kin are often in power struggles and are roped into coalitions with one another (Fidler & Bala, 2020). One of the most destructive of all the triangles will be when a parent or family member attempts to form an alliance with the child against the other parent, since the child is also in a hierarchical weaker position towards adults.

2.3 Family Systems Theory Critique

No one theory is all encompassing or without limitations and family systems theory is no different. The systemic principle of nonsummativity/holism is often critiqued for coming at the expense of the individual and his/her related characteristics, abilities, desires, and strategy towards control dynamics. Another individual variable that may play a significant role in interaction (i.e., father-child contact) may be how fathers leverage gender inequalities such as patriarchy that prioritises male control dynamics; or mothers being favoured as primary guardians of children (Yllo, 1993) and how individuals may use these structures to their advantage. Spronck and Compernolle (1997) argue that individuals are included into and form part of the family system and comprise their own interactive parts that motivate and drive their

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behaviour. Such individual variables likely play a significant role to encourage or hinder father-child contact (e.g., drive for father-child contact, resources to support father-child contact, and interpersonal skills to build quality relationships) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Relatedly, family systems theory is also critiqued for its circular views which may come at the expense of individual accountability and may be particularly harmful if applied to victims of abuse (Spronck & Compernolle, 1997). However, circularity should not be misconstrued to imply that any family member cannot be held accountable for their influences on others, but rather that each member can be held accountable for their unique contribution in the interactive circles of interaction.

Family systems theory is typically applied to nuclear family systems and has been criticised for not doing enough to acknowledge the larger systems in which individuals and families are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kerig, 2018). Furthermore, Stanton and Welsh (2012) suggest that considering the individual, interpersonal and macro-system levels of a system across time assists practitioner and researchers to see the system. It is for this reason that I added Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system levels to my theoretical framework. This theory also includes family members into the micro-system based on the frequency and depth of interpersonal contact, which allows for diverse family constellations – not only nuclear families. Furthermore, family systems theory neglects developmental processes as a consideration for family functioning (Kerig, 2019), which is also addressed by adding Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system levels that considers change over time as one of the systemic levels.

2.4 Bronfenbrenner Bio-ecological Model

Please note here that I use Bronfenbrenner's earlier reiteration of the bio-ecological systems model that focuses on the system levels in which an individual is embedded (the chrono-system, macro-system, exo-system, meso-system, and micro-system) (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) as often used in father studies (e.g., Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2015; Shapiro & Stewart, 2011). This model postulates that an individual functions within larger systems that shape their development and the quality of their relationships. In turn, the individual also impacts on the system of which he/she forms a part and on other individuals in that system in a circular fashion (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2001). It is therefore imperative to view a system within its given context, as context provides meaning for behaviour and renders scientific observation more

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accurate and reliable. Below, I will discuss each of the system levels, and reflect on the variables relevant to each systemic level that should be considered in studies of Black South African non-resident father families.

2.4.1 Supra- and Sub-systems

According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, systems function within a larger enveloping supra system and also consist of smaller sub-systems, which then form a hierarchy of systems (Becvar & Becvar, 2014), of which the enveloping system function as the context within which smaller systems operate (Hilpert & Marchand, 2018). Families are conceptualised as comprising multiple interdependent sub-systems, with individual family members belonging to multiple sub-systems, and their functioning within these sub-systems impact reciprocally on each other's wellbeing (Brock & Kochanska, 2015). Supra-systems are thus the contextual imbedding of any given system and sub-systems serve the function of carrying out a specific function of the larger system (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Therefore, in my study, I view non-resident Black South African fathers and their family members as a sub-system contextualised in larger supra systems. The members of this family are in interaction with each other and the larger supra-systems, and these interactions influence the family as a whole and impact father-child contact.

2.4.2 Chrono-System Level

In Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bio-ecological model, a chrono-system encompasses change or consistency over time on both the individual as well as the environmental level in which the individual is embedded. The chrono-system is characterised by changes in the environment (Hong, 2010), such as divorce and historical events. As detailed in the following chapter, Black South African families have undergone many changes on the chrono-systemic level considering that prior to colonialism families (typically including the extended kin) resided together and worked on their land, and fathers were responsible for moral guidance and teaching of skills (Richter & Morrell, 2006). The reign of colonialism and apartheid, however, resulted in fathers' separation from their families by working and residing in urban areas while their families lived in far-away rural areas. The end of apartheid propelled rapid change with transformation in various contexts such as the work force and roles of parents, especially the role of fathers (Malinga & Ratele, 2022). Furthermore, with increased exposure to western

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ideas, traditional African fatherhood ideas were merged or replaced with mainstream western notions of the role of the father (Malinga & Ratele, 2022).

Chrono-systemic considerations also include social conditions and individual life transitions (Hong, 2010) such as children's, parents' and grandparents' developmental phases. Fathers, for example, need to evolve as parents to facilitate a child from dependence towards independence (Dayton et al., 2015). In the context of the non-resident fathers in this study (middle aged between 42-57 years old) and adolescent children (14-18 years old), I drew from human development theory to inform me of how the developmental phases of both could contribute to their functioning in their relationship. In the following section, I engage with this theory.

2.4.3 Stages of Human Development

Erik Erikson's well-known developmental theory proposes eight stages of human development that are considered to apply universally (Erikson, 1993). Ramokgopa (2001), however, argues that it may not incorporate the complexities in developmental stages that non-western or African families consider. For example, African families may not only consider age, but also the readiness of a child to complete certain tasks as well as cultural rituals (i.e., bush initiation and circumcision for boys illustrating manhood) that mark a specific developmental stage of a child (Ramokgopa, 2001). Despite this critique, Erikson's theory is often used to study South African children and has been found to be useful in the local context (e.g., Pretorius & Van Niekerk, 2015; Robinson & Diale, 2017).

According to Erikson's theory, the adolescent child is considered to be in the 5th psychosocial stage of development, called Identity versus Confusion (Rageliene, 2016). It is centred around the formation of a personal identity as crucial for the adolescent to avoid role confusion. In this stage teens explore different behaviours, roles, and identities (Rageliene, 2016). Adolescents who secure a sense of identity feel secure, independent, and ready to engage with their future, while those who do not remain confused and may feel insecure and unsure of where they fit in the world. An adolescents' identity formation is likely to be shaped by their understanding of how they view themselves (Rageliene, 2016). Fathers' behaviour towards their children play an important role in shaping adolescents' sense of identity and self-worth (Clarke et al., 2015). If non-resident fathers do not make an effort to stay in contact with their children, the children

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may interpret this behaviour as that they do not matter to their fathers (Clarke et al., 2015). This may impact negatively on the adolescents' self-worth and move them to either close themselves off from their father, or want to know more about their fathers and to have a closer relationship with him (Lam & Yeoh, 2019).

Black South African cultures value extended kin as representation of an individual's heritage and lineage (Clarke et al., 2015). Infrequent father-child contact is known to negatively influence the identity of Black South African adolescents, since father-child contact makes a child feel connected to his/her paternal lineage (Clarke et al., 2015). Children's contact with paternal extended kin furthermore provides children with a sense of where they come from (Clarke et al., 2015). For example, if unmarried fathers do not claim or acknowledge their children born outside of marriage, the child is not given the father's surname and this may result in a diminished sense of identity (Smith et al., 2014). Moreover, boy children are often limited to a feminised environment that does not provide male role models and guides to support boys in the development of a male identity (Naynjaya & Masango, 2012). Additionally, an important rite of passage into manhood may be partially lost when fathers are not present to participate in male African rituals (Malisha & Rogan, 2008). Examples of such rites are when boy children go to initiation school (rite of passage into manhood), get circumcised, and educated by elders (typically their fathers and elders in the community) on how to be a man (De Wet et al., 2016).

The non-resident fathers in this study were between the ages of 42 and 57 and thus fell in the developmental stage called generativity versus stagnation that occurs during middle adulthood (Malone et al., 2016). The psychosocial conflict in this phase is centred on the need to create or nurture things that will outlast the individual, such as raising a family, working, and contributing to the community (Malone et al., 2016). Those who succeed develop a sense of purpose and those who fail to find ways to contribute may feel disconnected and useless. This means that midlife Black South African non-resident fathers may value a quality relationship with their child (Van den Berg et al., 2021) centred around guidance and nurturance more during this phase than earlier in his life. It is also likely that fathers who feel disconnected from their children may experience depression and questions around their life purpose (Makusha & Ratele, 2021). Additionally, research conducted in western contexts indicates that midlife fathers who have infrequent contact with their children may experience feelings of failure, guilt

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and loss; and be more inclined to regret infrequent contact and to want to be more involved in their children's lives (Minton & Pasley, 1996; Waldvogel & Ehlert, 2016).

2.4.4 Macro-System Level

The macro-system level can be seen as the cultural blueprint or the social structure that underpins the activities that occur in the immediate systems level (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This level encompasses cultural beliefs, racism, opportunity structures, and hazards (Hong, 2010) and may include state, politics, and grand trends, such as modernization and cultural change which ultimately influence particular conditions and processes that occur in the micro-system (Solvang et al., 2017). Many of these macro-system level issues impact on non-resident father families in South Africa. These issues, e.g., the lingering legacy of colonial and apartheid rule, the dire economic situation in the country, and prevailing masculinity and father ideas will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The chrono-system and macro-system differ from the upcoming ecosystems (exo-system, meso-system and micro-system) as the former focus on the changes over time in the society and culture in which the individual is developing, whilst the latter ecosystems refer to specific environments in which individuals live such as place of work or dyads within the family.

2.4.5 Exo-System Level

This level refers to the ecological setting of which the individual is not a direct part or does not participate in, but is still influenced by it. The psychological development and wellbeing of any given person in the family is affected not only by what happens in the other environments in which they spend their time but also by what occurs in the other settings in which other members of the family spend their time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Family systems are often linked to other social systems, such as the father's place of employment in which the child does not directly participate. These connected social systems impact on the father's behaviour and family relationships (Cabrera et al., 2014). A promotion at work, for example, might increase family resources but also reduce the father's time to spend with his child, which can affect family functioning. We therefore have to consider the non-resident father's employment status and his subsequent ability to provide financially for his child, as well as his ability to afford transport, airtime, or data to be able to make contact with his child (Malinga & Ratele, 2022).

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The father's involvement in other exo-systems, such as being a member of the child's school governing body, should also be considered. Fathers who form part of the school board contribute significantly towards quality father-child contact as these fathers are informed to prepare their children for school demands, activities, and events, and to discuss challenges related to these with their child (Adamson, 2018; Baker, 2018). Father involvement in children's academic context is well researched and known to be beneficial to children's academic performance and contribute towards father-child quality of relationships (i.e. Adamson, 2018; Baker, 2018; Flouri, 2007; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018).

2.4.6 Meso-System Level

A meso-system is composed of inter-relationships between two or more micro-systems in which the individual is situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Hong, 2010). According to Ebersohn (2006), Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model seems to not accommodate families where the nuclear family is restructured due to divorce and a new family structure has been formed (Bouwer & Ebersohn, 2015; Ebersohn, 2006, 2011). Bouwer and Ebersohn (2015) propose that the reconstruction of the family after parental separation means that the child's development occurs in two family micro-systems (paternal and maternal family system) instead of one. Interpersonal interaction and reciprocal influencing are therefore more complex given the distinctive functioning of the restructured family system (Ebersohn, 2011). This is also relevant for other kinds of families where parents do not share the same home as is the case in my study. Ebersohn's (2006) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model that includes the reconstructed family system, with at least two possible family micro-systems or households, is therefore incorporated in my theoretical framework and is illustrated in the figure 1 below (Bouwer & Ebershohn, 2015).

This figure shows how the child usually forms a part of a primary micro-system where he or she permanently resides with the primary guardian (usually the mother). The secondary micro-system is where the child visits periodically with another parental figure who shares parental responsibilities (usually the father) (Bouwer & Ebershohn, 2015). These micro-systems may have differing and overlapping norms that are embodied in the child. All members in the family network stand in relationship with one another, varying in quality of relationship but ultimately interdependent. Actions occurring in one micro-system can influence actions in a second (Cabrera et al., 2014). For example, if the maternal family prioritise father-child contact then

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the prognosis for frequent and quality father-child relationships may increase. If the mother or father repartner, there may be a decrease in parental contact to avoid disruption to the new partnership, which in turn may hinder father-child contact (Berger et al., 2018). Furthermore, the individuals within and between the sub-systems, may vary in their degree of emotional closeness and regularity of contact with each other. In Bouwer and Ebersohn's (2015) adapted bio-ecological model, the primary and secondary family micro-systems have dotted lines to illustrate openness to interaction at meso-systemic level, which ideally allows the child to move between them freely (Bouwer & Ebersohn, 2015).

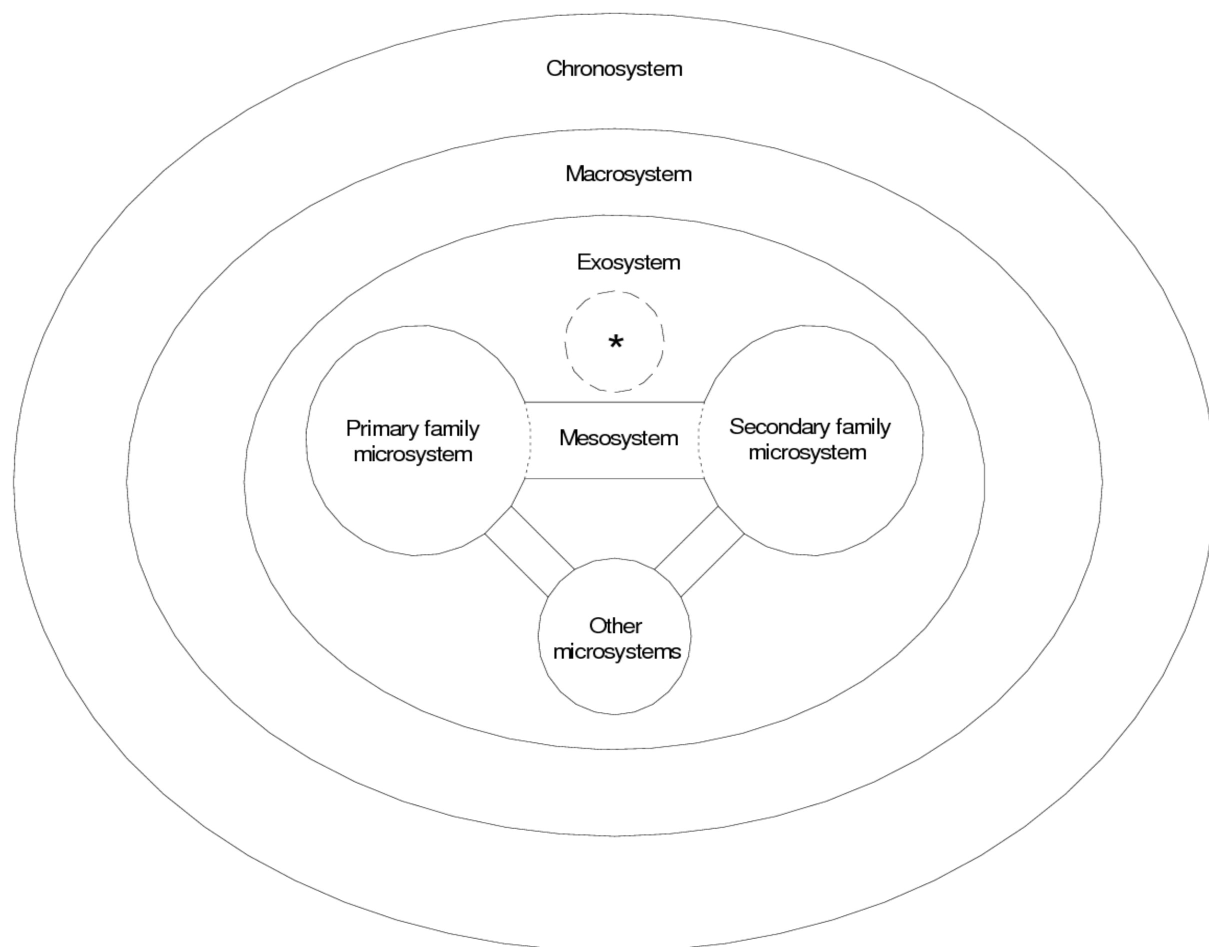

Figure 1: <u>Ebersohn's Adapted Bio-ecological System Model</u> (Ebersohn, 2006)

The meso-systemic level also refers to organisations that the parent is involved in such as churches, schools, hospitals, and professions (Solvang et al., 2017). The meso-system is concerned with children's relations among their school, peer groups, and their homes (Barnyak, 2011). The father's involvement in the child's academia, such as assisting with homework and

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his own level of education affecting his ability to participate in the child's academia, may therefore further contribute to the quality of the father-child contact (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Fathers attending parent-teacher meetings also play a role as the quality of rapport established may influence the teacher's perception and approach to the child in the classroom. The father's involvement in the child's medical wellbeing by knowing about the child's medical conditions and being in contact with treating physicians greatly contribute towards children's health and the father's ability to partake in effective home treatment of conditions or injuries (Zvara et al., 2013).

2.4.7 Micro-System Level

Bronfenbrenner defined the micro-system as the most proximal setting in which a person is situated, such as the home/family, childcare, playground, and place of work, and in which the developing person can interact face-to-face way with others (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Hong, 2010). The bio-ecological model considers families as micro-systems in which interpersonal roles and relations are engaged in over time, and where the quality of these relationships influences the quality of the individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Gray & Anderson 2016; Salami & Chinedu, 2018). Family systems theory essentially also views families as micro-systems and this level has therefore already been discussed in prior sections. I will thus not reiterate this discussion here to avoid unnecessary repetition.

It should be noted that many Black South African families live together in a multigenerational household where extended kin just as readily opine and influence child development as biological parents do (Madhavan et al., 2016). Furthermore, many children's primary guardian may be a grandparent, aunt, or uncle (Clark et al., 2015; Madhavan et al., 2016). Therefore, such extended family members are considered part of the particular family/household micro-system.

2.5 Summary

By adopting family systems theory as the primary theoretical framework for this study, I approached infrequent contact between non-resident father and child as a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon. Through this lens I viewed non-resident family systems as complex webs of interaction between parts where the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The system functions interdependently in that every relationship has an impact on every other relationship

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in the same family, and change in the one part of the family system brings about change in the entire system. Each family member depends on every other family member to sustain the family system, necessitating trust amongst members. The individuals within the non-resident father family system feed into each other circularly where the one's behaviour is viewed as a logical complement to the other and vice versa. Non-resident father families undergo a multitude of changes over time that require the family to maintain homeostasis as a balance between stability and change. Family systems, furthermore, create their own unique signature as continuous interactions shape the rules/norms and boundaries of the family. The permeability of these boundaries determines the openness or closedness of the family which greatly influences the ease of father-child contact. Triangulation in the family as power struggles may also lead to destructive coalitions with other family members, especially if an adult and child form a coalition with one another against another adult. The parts of each system, through their interaction, define the rules, boundaries, permeability of these boundaries, and maintenance of homeostasis and change, and all of this form patterns of interaction that occur in the here and now.

Family systems theory's neglect of broader systems levels are addressed by adding Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system levels to my theoretical approach to this study. This model situates family functioning within its larger contextual supra-systems, comprising of smaller sub-systems that interact and impact each other. On the chrono-system level, I considered the changing influence of the rise and fall of colonialism and apartheid on the Black South African father, and the subsequent impact on parental roles, the work force and modernisations of the fatherhood. The macro-system level acknowledges factors such as the continuing disadvantaging of Black people and how these aspects impact the expectations of fathers. Relatedly, the exo-system foreground that variables such as the father's employment situation and his subsequent ability to provide financially for his child influence relationships between the father and family members. The meso-system level as presented by Ebersohn (2006) foregrounds that the paternal and maternal micro-systems are in interaction with each other. Each individual family member's relationships with others outside the micro-system (e.g., a child's relationship with peers or a father's relationship with a teacher) impact on father-child contact and the quality of relationship. I will also use these systems levels to organise the first part of the following literature review chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decades fatherhood has become an interest in the field of mental health that has resulted in a relatively large body of literature on the topic. Non-resident fathers have also been the focus of a number of studies. Most of these earlier studies, however, have been conducted in the United States and Europe, and often involved White middle-class divorced non-resident fathers (i.e., Amato & Gilberth, 1999; Karberg et al., 2017). More recently, American studies have been published that focus on unmarried non-resident fathers and rely on data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study that include a racially diverse sample (i.e., James et al., 2021). Literature on non-resident fathers in the South African context is scarce and has relied mostly on reports of mothers and children (Madhavan et al., 2016; Madhavan et al., 2008; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013; Padi et al., 2014). The purpose of this literature review is to review literature relevant to non-resident fathers, their family relationships, and their contact with non-resident children. In order to understand non-resident fathers and their family relationships, and in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1994) chrono- and macro-system levels, I first provide an overview of fatherhood conceptions over time, the impact of colonialism and apartheid on Black South African fathers, as well as the influence of cultural and gendered views about fathers and manhood.

Second, I present an overview of the existing literature on non-resident fathers. The method I followed to search and identify this literature was as follows: I identified 3668 records of non-resident father-child involvement through searching three databases (EBSCOHost, Web of Science, and verified Google Scholar articles) using the keywords: "non-resident fathers" OR "divorced fathers" OR "separated fathers" AND "adolescents" OR "teenagers" OR "youth" OR "young adults" AND "involvement" OR "contact" OR "family involvement" OR "father-child" and NOT stepfathers. Unrelated and duplicate records were excluded, and the remaining 359 records were found relevant to the research question of this study and its inclusion criteria. I screened the titles and abstracts and identified related themes to be the subject matter of discussion for the second section of my literature review (See Appendix A). These themes are: (i) Influence of non-resident father involvement/contact on child wellbeing (i.e., risk taking behaviour, academia, and self-esteem) with an emphasis on non-resident father involvement

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influences on sons and daughters respectively; (ii) Influence of non-resident father involvement/contact on mothers; (iii) Influence of father involvement/contact on non-resident fathers; (iv) Co-parental relationship; (v) Family relationships; (vi). Determinants of non-resident father-child contact/involvement; and (vii) Non-resident father provision/payment of maintenance. All of these themes are discussed with the exception of provision to avoid repetitive information as the issue of provision interlaces with most of the other themes discussed in the first and second section of the literature review.

3.1 Fatherhood Roles, Functions and Practices over Time

The term "father" is typically associated with a biological sexual moment that results in a child, whilst the term "fatherhood" is a role that is understood and exercised in different ways and constructed by milieu, culture, and context (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Richter and Morrell (2006) argue that fatherhood is not limited to the biological father, but also contains a social role that is not universal, but rather dynamic and interactive and needs to be understood in its social context (Mkhize, 2004; Richter et al., 2012). Sociological and historical studies globally and locally on fatherhood clearly show that beyond impregnation, fathering is primarily a social construction, with each cohort shaping its own understanding of fatherhood (Doherty et al., 1998; Morell & Richter, 2006). Saracho and Spodek (2008) highlight that the term "father" refers to a multifaceted and diverse group of men in families as they assume many different roles which have been taken for granted and were insufficiently conceptualised. Fatherhood appears to have multiple dimensions which are informed by historical, cultural, and familial ideologies, and shape the quality of father-child relationship (Lamb, 2010). Discernments, experiences, and expectations of fatherhood, therefore, change in a similar fashion as norms and practices do (Doherty et al., 1998). The most prominent roles and functions of fathers over the past few centuries, mostly based on literature generated in North American and European contexts, are identified and briefly discussed in this section.

3.1.1 Family Head and Moral Leader

Fathers were historically viewed as the leader of their family who exerted enormous power and provided moral leadership (Lamb, 2010). In western contexts this involved ensuring that children were raised with appropriate values as derived from a study of the Bible (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). In non-western contexts, other templates or principles were used to provide this spiritual leadership (Makusha & Richter, 2014). For instance, Xhosa fathers in the Eastern

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Cape did - and continue to - harness ancestors in order to facilitate children towards spiritual correctness, as well as respectful and appropriate rituals (Ainslie, 2014). The modern western translation of this role expects fathers to guide their children through environmental demands, by encouraging autonomy and assisting with academia and peer relationships (i.e., homework, making friends, or peer conflict resolution) (Rosenberg, 2006). Fathers also play a significant role by giving advice, with the teaching of consequences in instances where autonomy is abused (Pickhardt, 2007).

3.1.2 Protector and Provider

The moral leadership and disciplinarian role shifted to that of breadwinner and economic support for the family during the industrialisation period in the western world (Lamb, 2010). The father's primary role effectively became that of provider. The ability to provide financially and to protect became so foregrounded in men's identities that it has been found to correlate positively with male psychological wellbeing (Salami & Chinedu, 2018). In contrast, fathers who are underemployed or unemployed often experience a sense of inadequacy and anger (Rosenberg, 2006). The role as protector goes hand in hand with fathers providing a safe home and social environment for their children, which becomes a complex matter in communities with high rates of violence and crime (Rosenberg, 2006). The father's protector role is exemplified in the father-daughter relationship, as the father protects his daughter against potential sexual predators or male peers who wish to engage her in sexual exploration (Rosenberg, 2006).

3.1.3 Role Model

Within poverty-stricken communities during the Great Depression, fathers arose as the sex role model in social science literature, where men were often critiqued for failing to model appropriate masculine behaviour to their sons (Lamb, 2010). In South Africa, underpinned by heteronormative beliefs, fathers are often seen as uniquely able to model and teach their sons to be men. This often entails guiding sons regarding male sexuality issues and typical or appropriate gender-normative activities (Petersen & Lesch, 2022; Spjeldnaes et al., 2011). However, fathers have also been found to model alternative forms of masculinity to their sons that include emotional caretaking of women and children (Enderstein & Boonzaaier, 2015). According to Ratele et al. (2012), Black South African fathers who model caretaking and calm assertive conflict resolution as alternative ways of being a man, have a significant impact on

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boy children's resilience towards peer pressure and feeling compelled to "proving themselves" through violence, substance use, and sex (Ratele et al., 2012). In western contexts daughters stand to benefit from effective male-female relationship modelling from their fathers (Rosenberg, 2006). Daughters, however, often feel deprioritised by fathers and want their fathers to spend active time with them (Rosenberg, 2006). More recently fathers are considered important role models in terms of impulse control, problem solving and taking of responsibility for both sons and daughters (Franklin & Davis, 2018).

3.1.4 Roles in Different Child Development Phases

Fathers have been found to play important roles in the various child developmental phases. For example, Fagan and Palm (2004) mention that fathers fill various roles during toddlerhood such as playmates who sometimes take the lead and make suggestions to teach and guide, and other times serve as cooperative play partners or following observers. Primary school children are in the process of developing greater individual autonomy by decreasing their dependence on their parents and increasing their activities and friendships outside the home (Pexton et al., 2018). The father's role during this phase often entails that he encourages and assist academic performance by being involved with homework, implementing and teaching consequences of behaviour, and assisting in peer relationship negotiations (Flouri, 2008; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2015). During adolescence the father can play an important role in keeping the child involved in constructive activities in the face of disengagement, to supervise and wear down resistance from rebellion, and to facilitate the child to take responsibility during experimentation and testing of limits (Pickhardt, 2007; Shullman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2015). Fathers can also contribute by addressing core challenges such as assisting in dealing with peer pressure, building of friendships, conflict resolution and facilitating healthy sexual education (mostly for sons) and sexual boundaries (typically for daughters) (Rosenberg, 2006; Shullman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2015). The role of disciplinarian is particularly important when children reach adolescence (Hakoyama, 2020). Research indicates that fathers make parenting easier for mothers if they discipline their children, which unburdens mothers from what is often a difficult parental task (Rosenberg, 2006). Boys are more responsive to discipline by a man, which means fathers seem to be uniquely successful in disciplining sons, provided that the father maintains control of his emotions, body language, and hands when he disciplines. Effective discipline techniques contribute greatly towards children learning about boundaries and consequences of

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behaviour, facilitating a well-adjusted member of a larger society (Hakoyama, 2020; Rosenberg, 2006).

3.1.5 New Integrated Nurturer

Scholarly discussions of fatherhood have long dwelled on static and narrow descriptions of fatherhood, promoting father involvement often defined as breadwinning (Lamb, 2010). However, researchers and practitioners have been moving towards viewing the father in a multidimensional contextualised role to their families and children (Lamb, 2010). The role of provider now encompasses a wider definition that includes the important provision of financial support for a child's wellbeing such as providing for food, clothing, housing, and education; and extends to include other resources such as attentive time together, care work, and educational and emotional support (Richter & Morrell, 2018; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Father involvement goes beyond mere direct and practical duties and includes activities such as planning for the children's future, worrying about them, protecting them, always thinking about them, and direct involvement in their leisure activities (Meah & Jackson, 2016). The 'new' fatherhood is thus a varied and multifaceted concept that includes a plethora of roles that fathers may assume.

The importance of these multiple father roles differs across subcultural groups (Lamb, 2010). Fathers can thus only be evaluated on their performance of these roles within their relative importance and respective socioecological contexts. Furthermore, it needs to be noted that "new" fatherhood roles do not necessarily unseat the "old", but co-exist with the "old" (Pini & Conway, 2017). For example, even though research indicates that contemporary fathers tend to be more involved in the daily rearing of their children, mothers still do most of the childrearing work. It was found that for every eight hours of unpaid care work done by a woman in South Africa, only one hour is done by a man (van den Berg & Makusha, 2018).

3.2 The Impact of Colonialism and Apartheid on Black Fathers in South Africa

In South African literature, colonialism and apartheid have consistently been highlighted as having negatively impacted South African Black fathers. In the pre-colonial and early colonial era, Black men's success was measured by the quantity of agricultural labour they controlled (Makusha & Richter, 2015). Further, men gained respect by having and supporting many children, as a large family contributed by increasing agricultural output (Makusha & Richter,

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2015). Fatherhood was based on men's ability to get married and build a homestead, having children, and continuing the patrilineal lineage through a male successor (Makusha & Richter, 2015). Men entered into the marriage practice of *lobola* (monies paid to the family of the bride to marry) which gave the paternal family rights to all children born to his wife and solidified his status as father (Rabe, 2018). The man's biological father status positioned him as an authoritative family representative in public matters, and he needed to be consulted on important household decisions (Makusha & Richter, 2015). He was a leader, provider, source of moral guidance and emotional support, and protector of children and women from predatory behaviour of men from outside the household. In contrast, women's primary roles were to gratify their husbands sexually, cook for them, bear children, and work the fields (Makusha & Richter, 2015).

Colonialism in South Africa and the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand signalled an era of economic, social, and political transformation (Seepamore, 2015). Growth in the mining sector, in combination with hut taxes, and the land tenure system where Black South Africans were renounced to "bantustans" (typically undeveloped rural areas limited in opportunities and resources) changed Black South African families significantly (Rabe, 2018; Seepamore, 2016). Black South African men left their family homes in order to earn a living in urban areas to support their vulnerable families and to pay *lobola* (Rabe, 2018; Seepamore, 2016). Industrial capitalism, severing men from their family home, marginalized fathers from domestic life, and reinforced their role as provider (Makusha & Richter, 2015). Furthermore, women's increasing labour/employment outside the home further restructured the organisation of domestic life and solidified men's contribution to childcare as merely financial (Makusha et al., 2013).

Colonialism that progressed into apartheid in South Africa strengthened the economic and political power of the ruling White minority (Makusha et al., 2013). Apartheid enforced racial segregation through oppressive laws, migrant labour, rural isolation, and urban poverty, and continued to influence Black fathers and patterns of fatherhood. The economic divide between the Black majority and White minority became and still is disproportionately wide (Chatterjee, 2019). Black South Africans being away from their families and residing near their places of work in urban areas after the discovery of more gold in the Witwatersrand and diamonds in Kimberly were perpetuated by the Urban Areas Act (1923) that controlled the movement of Black people in cities, and the Native Laws Amendment Act (1973) that prevented Black people from owning land in urban areas (Letsoalo & Thupana, 2013). It was difficult for fathers

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to live with, provide for and parent their biological offspring due to economic and land dispossession, the introduction of government taxes on Black people, and labour migration (Makusha & Richter, 2015). Not only did men migrate to urban areas of employment, but women did so as well. They dominated the domestic work sector as wet-nurses, seamstresses, and housekeepers, and they still often work as domestic workers and send money back to their families (Bennett et al., 2014).

These socio-political changes resulted in Black men's success as a father to be based on their financial provision, often making Black men absent breadwinners, and women children's primary caregivers and nurturers (Makusha & Richter, 2015). Labour migration became the main cause of the low rate of co-residence between Black fathers and their children in South Africa and still is today as many Black men continue to work as migrants, visiting their rural homesteads intermittently (Rabe, 2018). Furthermore, most post-apartheid Black South African families are still faced with dire socio-economic realities that include a shortage of affordable housing in urban areas and job insecurity as growing modernization and apartheid policies over the years resulted in an oversupply of labour. Rural homesteads were and are often still needed as a safety net, besides the emotional and kin affiliation with specific rural areas they do not want to give up. Male labour migrancy, and resultant non-resident fathers, became an entrenched feature of many Black families in South Africa based on economic necessity, practical reasons, and personal choices (Rabe, 2018).

3.3 Fatherhood and Gender

Richter and Morrell (2006) argue that research on fatherhood should acknowledge the intertwined and interdependent relationship between fatherhood and gender notions that are shaped in specific social contexts. In its simplest form, gender refers to what it is to be masculine or feminine at any given time in particular social and cultural contexts (Miller, 2011). According to Miller (2011), theorising gender gives greater recognition to how societies are organised in gendered ways and the power inequalities which underpin these, resulting in a focus on women's lives, patriarchy and questions regarding equality and differences. There has also been an increasing awareness of how stereotypical gendering often exclude the other from certain behaviour. For example, men are often excluded as caring competent nurturers, and women from rational decision making and credit for financial contributions (Miller, 2011). Consequently, mainstream assumptions about gender have been challenged as critical

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approaches to understandings of masculinities and femininities contend that these are social classifications premised on male dominance and not mere configurations of biology. The shift away from affixed and immutable categories of gender with an increased rejection of dichotomous thinking brought about the concept of gender as something we do in traditional or different integrated ways, as opposed to what we are.

Even though there is no single mode of being a man or woman and there is sensitivity towards multiple ways of being masculine or feminine, there are still culturally dominant stereotypes of femininities and masculinities that powerfully reinforce ideas of how we ought to be (Ellemers, 2018; Miller, 2011). For example, fathers are assumed to be biological men who ascribe to heteronormative notions, and men are often socialised according to these stereotypical notions of masculinity in their specific context (Ellemers, 2018). Men are traditionally depicted as emotionally stoic protectors and providers and their performances as breadwinners and leader of the family have been shown to be a key marker of masculinity in many empirical studies on boys and men (Ratele et al., 2012; Swartz & Bhana, 2009; Morrell, 2007). Although there has been a shift towards personal quality of life and personal career benefits for some men, long work hours and competing for work still leave them with little time left for parenting (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Thus, fathers may incorporate breadwinning into a discourse of care and involvement so that, despite a more expansive definition of fatherhood, past ideologies of masculinity remain intact (Pini & Conway, 2017).

Kord and Kimmer (2011) argue that all the conflicting demands of traditional masculinities and the current requirement to also be involved and loving fathers brought about a crisis of masculinity. According to these authors, it is really a crisis of fatherhood which compels men to expend substantial effort to portray themselves as successful fathers. As mentioned previously, the new type of fatherhood, that includes multiple care and nurture roles, and a "new" type of masculinity, are not necessarily supplanting the old, but co-existing with the traditional. Conventional masculinities have become more complex when considering that there are various ways of being a father within specific social contexts (Pini & Conway, 2017). Manhood and fatherhood in Black South African men are closely linked to the ability to provide, produce a family, and create a homestead. Black fathers' financial contribution became the primary measure of "good" fathers and men but is hampered in an economically struggling country with an unemployment rate of 35.3% (Statistics South Africa, 2021). It is argued that these high rates of unemployment have contributed to declining rates of marriage

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amongst Black men as they are unable to pay *lobola* and therefore cannot meet the traditional expectations of a man who intends to marry (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Furthermore, fathers' inability to provide money, food, accommodation, school fees and health care challenges their sense of themselves as fathers and men and condemns them to the disagreeable status of "failed fathers" (Mkhize, 2006; Sikweyiya, 2017). This is exacerbated by wives and children who are antagonistic towards fathers who are not able or willing to provide for the family's economic needs, which often maintain family disputes and hold the potential to increase spousal or child abuse (Makusha & Richter, 2015). There has been much international commentary concerning the alleged "crisis in masculinity and fatherhood" as reflected in the declining number of men entering fatherhood and an increase in those leaving it (Meah & Jackson, 2016).

Research conducted in Black communities in South Africa to shed light on the high rates of HIV transmission and violence against women have highlighted the prevalence of masculinity notions that are heterosexist, patriarchal, implicitly violent, and that glorify male sexual entitlement such as polygamy, and conspicuous sexual success with women (Morrell et al., 2012). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity is often associated with men exercising power over women - positioning even marginalized men as oppressors of women who belong to the same marginalized demographic (Morrell et al., 2012; Richter & Morell, 2006). The father presiding as sovereign over the household (Clowes et al., 2013) solidifies the patriarchal position of men (Richter & Morell, 2006). Helman and Ratele (2016) also illuminate the continuation of hegemonic masculinity ideas with men constructing their masculinity as defined by domineering and entitled behaviour, female oppression, and violence against women. Contesting these hegemonic or traditional masculinity notions amongst Black men in South Africa may be complicated by political and racial tension that poses egalitarian masculinity ideas as western constructs imposed to undermine traditional cultural notions of men (Morrell et al., 2012).

The gender of a child has also been suggested to play a role in how a father parents a child (Mammen, 2020). Bornstein (2013) argues that parents must overcome barriers such as peer and media influences to rear children in a gender-neutral manner. Even similar parenting behaviours may affect daughters and sons differently due to gender-related differences in the child's prior socialization and consequential disposition (Bornstein, 2013). A behavioural and neurological mapping study of fathers in the United States found that fathers sing more to daughters and are more responsive to their feelings by using analytical language (Mascaro et

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al., 2017). In contrast, fathers tend to play more aggressively with sons, and are more likely to use words suggesting achievement (Mascaro et al., 2017). Fathers in Italy, as in South Africa, show more confidence in care taking tasks with sons, compared to experiencing more ambivalence with their daughters' care taking (i.e., changing a nappy or hair care) (Mercuri, 2017; Miller, 2010). Fathers, however, anticipate that they will be able to build a deeper emotional bond with a daughter than with a son, but that they will be able to educate their sons by making use of gendered referencing (i.e., cars or sports) (Mercuri, 2017). Both fathers and mothers tend to have a higher tolerance for boys' aggressive behaviour than daughters and tend to have lower tolerance for daughters who deviate from social behaviour (Martin & Ross, 2005). A meta-analysis of global literature mostly conducted in western societies, indicates that both mothers and fathers tended to be slightly more controlling with boys than with girls (Endendijk et al., 2016).

Although I could not find studies that focus on how the gender of children influence South African parents' parenting behaviour, studies suggest that South African parents tend to conform to mainstream gender ideas. For example, a study on South African low-income resident fathers of colour found that fathers expect their daughters to be compliant and obedient (Lesch & Scheffler, 2016). In contrast, Black South African fathers model dominant male behaviours to their sons and emphasise their father role as teacher and disciplinarian (Ratele et al., 2012). International parenting trends, however, show that whilst studies published in the 1970s and 1980s report more autonomy-supportive strategies with boys than toward girls, from 1990 onwards parents show somewhat more autonomy-supportive strategies with girls than toward boys (Endendijk et al., 2016). It therefore appears that in contemporary western contexts the differences between parenting of boys versus girls are minimal (Endendijk et al., 2016; Mammen, 2020).

In post-apartheid South Africa some progress has been made in challenging mainstream masculinity and fatherhood ideas to include men as caring and involved partners and fathers. The introduction of father-friendly policies in the Constitution provides for modest paternity and family responsibility leave (three days a year) and acknowledges the importance of men's greater involvement in their children's lives (Makusha & Richter, 2014). Research on the topic of fatherhood in South Africa has also expanded and propelled changes in the legal sphere reinforcing father involvement by more father friendly child support grants and increased family responsibility leave, including ten dedicated paid paternal leave days (Labour Law

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Amendment Act, 2018; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). In other areas we see growing politically informed campaigns by non-governmental organisations to promote fatherhood and father involvement (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Research also indicates that some South African men are embracing new fatherhood ideas, in part due to increased opportunity for formal and informal paid employment for women (Makusha & Richter, 2014). Women are now more likely to be in control of the family's finances and men are beginning to share household chores with their employed female partners. They are providing care for children through spending more quality time with their children, attending their children's school functions, attending health centres with children who require immunizations, and walking and driving children to and from school (Makusha & Richter, 2014). However, although some men are supporting father involvement that goes beyond financial provision (Sikweyiya et al., 2017), this tends to be more prevalent in middle-class Black families. This broader kind of involvement is often not possible for many poor Black fathers who live far away from their children to be close to their place of employment, in order to provide for children (Makusha & Richter, 2014).

3.4 The Diversity of Non-resident Fathers

The term "non-resident father" includes a diversity of fathers in terms of the reasons why fathers do not co-reside with their children. In affluent Western countries non-resident fatherhood is often related to the mother and father's relationship and is mostly a consequence of increased romantic relationship dissolution and subsequent remarriage and re-partnering, as well as non-resident couple fertility (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010). In addition to these factors, especially in less affluent countries, non-resident fatherhood may also occur due to fathers immigrating to find work in other countries to send remittances home (Bryceson, 2019). Research on migrant or transnational fathers has gained momentum as millions of economic migrants from poor sending-nations to seek employment in economically wealthier receiving-nations (Bryceson, 2019). Poole et al. (2016) further highlights the heterogeneity of non-resident fathers in terms of their engagement with children by identifying four distinct groups of non-resident fathers in the UK: (i) Engaged fathers who are most likely to have father-child contact, have regular overnight visitation, and provide child maintenance. These fathers tend to be single and reside in close physical proximity to their child. (ii) Less engaged fathers who have less regular father-child contact and overnight visits, and are likely to reside more than 15 minutes and less than an hour away

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from their child's primary residence. (iii) Disengaged fathers are the least involved group with the majority having no contact with their child and defaulting on child maintenance. These fathers tended to be most likely living with a new partner. (iv) Distance fathers who reside over an hour away from their child's primary residence, have rare father-child contact, and a minority have overnight visits. The majority of these fathers, however, pay towards child-maintenance.

Despite declining divorce rates in the United States, many couples never marry and, among those who do, divorce rates still remain high (Raley & Sweeney, 2020), resulting in many non-resident fathers. A 2011 study on fatherhood in the United States found that fathers spend more time with children compared to fathers in the 1960s, but fewer co-reside with children (Taylor et al., 2011). The United States Census (2016) indicates that 31% of children under 18 years do not live with both of their biological parents. The statistics further show that American fathers' co-residence with children is strongly associated with race, income, and educational levels. In comparison with 21% White non-resident fathers, 44% Black and 35% Hispanic fathers do not co-reside with children. Only 7% of college graduate fathers live away from children compared to 40% of fathers who did not complete secondary school education (Livingston & Parker, 2011).

Posel and Devey (2006) highlight that South Africa has one of the highest rates of father absence in Africa, after Namibia, due to violence, abandonment, AIDS-related deaths, and poverty (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2010). Statistics South Africa (2020) indicates that 42% of South African children live with their mothers not including their father, 33% live with both their parents, 21% do not live with either parent, and only 4% of children reside with their fathers alone. Meintjes et al. (2015) show that less than a third (29%) Black children live with both parents in comparison to the vast majority of Indian (84%) and White (77%) children resident with both biological parents. As already mentioned, factors such as migration becoming entrenched in combination with high unemployment amongst Black South Africans also maintain the phenomenon of non-resident fathers (Seepamore, 2016).

Non-resident fathers in South Africa are defined by being away from home for four or more days per week yet may still be involved in a child's life (Richter & Morrell, 2018; Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). Hatch and Posel (2018) distinguish between absent and non-resident fathers in that the father's non-residence does not necessarily mean that he is no longer part of

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the family. In some instances, the father is not living with his partner/wife and children because he is living elsewhere to earn money for the family. Similarly, Makusha et al. (2012) argue that relational distance between father and child, and physical location and father involvement are two separate logical levels. Non-resident fathers can still contribute substantially through remittances, social visits, and telephone contact (Makusha et al., 2012). Makusha (2013) illuminates how a substantial proportion of non-resident fathers have a range of ways in which they are involved in their children's lives, concluding that fatherly practical care, guidance, and emotional support are also currencies that can contribute and benefit children. Madhavan et al. (2016) found that non-resident fathers in Soweto, a predominantly Black neighbourhood in South Africa, attempt to "be there" for their children by making an effort to see them, or to make indirect contact and provide emotional support and spiritual guidance (Madhavan et al., 2016). Louw and Enderstein (2016) found that Coloured[2] fathers in the Eastern Cape make contact with their children as they view it as their fatherly role to encourage their children to perform academically and assist with homework. The spatial dislocation of non-resident fathers, however, often alienates fathers from the temporal patterns of routine care, leading to loss on the part of parents and children alike (Meah & Jackson, 2016). Those activities which reinforce a father's role prior to separation – such as putting the child to bed at night or helping with homework – frequently become limited or eliminated altogether, particularly since a father's time with children is confined (Meah & Jackson, 2016).

Non-resident South African fathers often endure extreme hardship in work and through separation in order to be able to provide financial support as they value their status and duty as father (Rabe, 2007). In a country with a high unemployment rate such as South Africa, providing maintenance is often difficult and although amendments to the Children's Act of 2007 have made it easier to be recognised as a father and have rights, in practice it is still a time consuming, emotionally and financially demanding experience (Ratele, 2018). Cases for fathers' rights to access and custody are usually heard in the high courts, which is expensive, whereas fathers' financial responsibilities are reserved for maintenance court (Ratele, 2018). The administrative separation between maintenance and the rights of fathers to access and custody maintains further contestation of the maintenance system and perpetuates gendering

[2] The term "Coloured" was used in the apartheid era to refer to a heterogeneous group of people of mixed European and African descent, and is still used today to self-identify and/or to redress the impact of apartheid on oppressed groups. Similar to any racial terms, I want to stress that this term is a social construct. Furthermore, the intention with the use of this term is to acknowledge the political-socio-cultural context in South Africa that still impacts fatherhood, and not to perpetuate apartheid ideology.

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of parenting in narrow roles (Ratele, 2018). A further hindrance for unmarried non-resident fathers is the lack of formal processes for non-married parents to come to a parental agreement regarding child contact and care (Nordien-Lagardien, 2019). Therefore, if unmarried parents are unable to informally reach a satisfactory parental agreement, the onus is on them to seek out mediation services to set such parental agreements (Nordien-Langardien, 2019).

Swartz and Bhana (2009) also highlight the tension between fathers who desire to be involved with their children versus the resistance and gatekeeping (controlling and limiting access to the child) from mothers and maternal kin of the children, especially when the non-resident father fails to provide financial support. Fatherhood is, therefore, also shaped by the structure of the larger family system because co-residing and emotionally close extended kin may either support or discourage fathers' involvement (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009; Richter et al., 2011). Most of South Africa's children (64%) live in extended household structures (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The non-resident fathers' relationships with various family members are therefore an important factor that influences this father involvement and is addressed in a later section.

3.5 Non-resident Fathers and Family Wellbeing

It should be noted here that most data collected in fatherhood research, and especially non-resident fathers, have been gathered from mothers and children (Cabrera et al., 2018). This may be due to mothers and children being easier to recruit but could result in bias and skewing the data towards vilifying the father (Coley & Morris, 2002). Research shows that father and mother reports of father involvement often disagree (Charles et al., 2018). Several researchers, therefore, address the importance of including and recruiting fathers in fatherhood studies (e.g., Mitchell, 2007; Yaremych & Persky, 2022). These studies, however, are often outcome studies that investigate consequences of father engagement or absence for mothers and children and are mostly quantitative studies that utilise questionnaires (i.e., Cryer-Coupet et al., 2020; Fagan, 2021; Tuchiya et al., 2020). Furthermore, it needs to be kept in mind that a father merely being present in his child's life is not by default advantageous to children (Henriksson, 2019). In fact, fathers who are emotionally distant, critical, unempathic, and incongruent (when verbal and non-verbal behaviour does not match) can be psychologically damaging and feed into psychopathology or maladjustment of the child and the family system at large (Lavi et al., 2019; Vorster, 2003). International and South African research, however, indicates that

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constructive non-resident father involvement is linked to children's emotional wellbeing, healthy peer and adult relationships, academic achievement and high self-esteem (Bastaits et al., 2014; Carlson, 2006; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Jethwani et al., 2014; Ratele, 2018; Richter et al., 2011). In the section below, I identify and discuss the contributions of non-resident father involvement to primarily adolescent child well-being, but also mother and father well-being. Furthermore, I highlight the potential impact of absent or uninvolved fathers. I have elected to mainly focus on the role of non-resident father involvement in adolescent child well-being as I included adolescent children in my study and a review of the literature of father involvement across the lifespan of children is too vast to include here.

3.5.1 Non-resident Father Involvement and Child Well-being

Parent-youth relationship quality has been shown to affect adolescent mental health, yet less is known regarding the mechanisms by which father-youth relationships affect adolescent health (O'Gara et al., 2019; Trahan et al., 2020). Previous research primarily focused on parenting of married parents or divorced mothers as related to children's well-being, neglecting non-resident father parenting and its influence on child well-being (Bastaits, 2014). Father involvement in general appears to benefit children and relates to greater long-term well-being, satisfaction, positive mental health (O'Gara et al., 2019; Trahan et al., 2020; Yogman & Eppel, 2022), and decreased potential for adolescent sexual risk-taking and addiction (Cryer-Coupet, 2020; Rostad et al., 2014), future adult intimate relationship stability (Hosley et al., 2008), and optimal health outcomes, such as reduced risk of obesity (Allport et al., 2018; Coleman et al., 2019). When adolescents perceive their relationship with their non-resident father as close, it moderates the transgenerational process of mood related symptoms from fathers to adolescents (Reeb & Conger, 2009) and internalizing and externalizing behaviours (Bastaits et al., 2014; Steele & McKinney, 2019). Warmth in non-resident father-child relationships has been found to also maintain a healthy self-esteem for children (Bastaits et al., 2014; Keizer et al., 2019). Factors associated with father-child emotional closeness are fathers who display warmth, have parent knowledge (i.e., how to talk to an adolescent or to the child in various developmental phases), and cooperative co-parenting, while stress and depression in fathers have a distancing effect (Trahan et al., 2020). Researchers emphasise that it is the quality of the father-child relationship, rather than the quantity of time spent with a child, that has significant implications for the social, financial, and psychological functioning of the child as well the family system in general (Cabrera et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2014).

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Non-resident father involvement in the United Kingdom, for instance, proved to be positively correlated to child psychological adjustment, well-being, successful personal relationships later in life, and protected against psychological distress in adulthood and maladjustment in adolescents (Flouri, 2005). Supportive non-resident fathers in the United States have been found to buffer children against neglectful parenting by a distant, demoralized, or overburdened mother (Martin et al., 2010; Schneider, 2017). Aside from the general impact that father involvement has on children's mental health, it is also interesting to note that research shows that father involvement often influences boys and girls differently (Mammen, 2020).

It has been argued that the lack of optimal male role models contributes to a "crisis" in masculine development for many young boys (Richter & Morrell, 2006). The father's role in their sons' development is often to encourage sons to assert sufficient individuality and assisting in gender identity formation (Pickhardt, 2007). In addition, fathers also have an important role in their sons' sexual education, as sons often see sex as a rite of passage to manhood and they need to be prepared for the risks and responsibilities that go along with being sexually active (Burns & Cadwell, 2016; Pickhardt, 2007). Sons who talk to their fathers about sexual health show higher rates of sexual abstinence, condom use, and delayed initiation of sexual intercourse (Harris et al., 2013; Pickhardt, 2007). Locally, research finds that Black South African adolescent boys with absent fathers experience deep levels of emotional turmoil, loss, envy of friends who speak about their fathers and shame for not knowing their fathers (Langa, 2010). Black boys who grow up without father figures are also more vulnerable to drug abuse, violence, and gang activities (Ramphele, 2002).

Although scholars have emphasised the impacts of father involvement on the outcomes of sons, less attention has been paid to fathers' involvement with adolescent daughters (Lesch & Scheffler, 2015), especially Black adolescent females (Cryer-Coupet, 2020). The limited literature that does investigate father-daughter relationships includes mostly participants living in affluent western populations, and shows that fathers greatly impact their daughters' education, career, romantic relationships, mental resilience, and psychological well-being (Kelly, 2017; Nielsen, 2014). For instance, father involvement in daughters' vocational development greatly contributes to the completion and furthering of education, which assists them with occupational opportunities in future (Cooper, 2009; Lesch & Scheffler, 2015). As mentioned previously, fathers often serve as protectors of their daughters from men and early

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sexual encounters (Freeman & Almond, 2010; Lesch & Scheffler, 2015; Mastro & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015). Further, a father contributes in shaping his daughter's perception of the role that a man assumes towards a female, for example, by showing respectful behaviour towards her and in so doing facilitating her self-respect (Pickhardt, 2007). Fathers are therefore able to assist girls to be more secure and assertive in relationships with men and male partners (Carlson, 2006; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Ratele, 2018; Richter et al., 2011). In contrast, fathers who display disinterest, distance, devaluation, and rejection have significant consequences for their daughters' self-esteem which may present in seeking approval from men in unhealthy ways (Madhavan & Roy, 2012). A study on 342 undergraduate students in Southern USA shows that girls who are unable to resolve the unfinished business with absent or uninvolved fathers and mourn the loss of the father are more likely to have an inability to interact appropriately with males during adolescence (Guardia et al., 2014). Fatherless girls in North America also tend to idealize the absent father, which maintains unrealistic expectations in relationships with males and subsequent disappointment (Schwartz, 2020).

Paternal accessibility characterised by emotional and financial support may offer children a sense of belonging, assist with identity formation and access to social networks (Cabrera et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2014). For instance, in Black South African communities biological fathers provide their children with the family or clan name that link to other people and a wide extended family. Such group membership represents a significant source of social capital and status for their children and provides them with access to necessary social and financial resources for survival and growth and, therefore, safety and security. A study that focused on the changing construction of fatherhood in Botswana found that biological fathers stand to fulfil various significant roles in their children's lives irrespective of their residential status (Datta, 2007). Biological fathers are deemed important in a child's socialization, teachings on how to be a man for adolescent males, and negotiation of marriage between families (Datta, 2007). Biological fathers are admired and viewed as a source of inspiration and a resource that can contribute towards ease of living (Datta, 2007). Biological fatherhood also transmits cultural values and promotes development of identity, even if the father is not physically in the household (Madhavan & Roy, 2011). In contrast, a Black South African child who is not recognised by his or her father can be left without connections to clan and family which can adversely affect identity formation and social development (Madhavan & Roy, 2011; Morrell & Richter, 2006). In a patrilineal context such a child will not inherit from the father, rendering him or her financially vulnerable and undermining the security of the child further (Madhavan

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& Roy, 2011; Richter & Morrell, 2006). Children may also engage in wishful thinking regarding what recourses (i.e., physical, financial, emotional, and social) they would have been able to enjoy if their father was more readily involved (Madhavan & Roy, 2011). Therefore, even though many South African children grow up in the care of multiple adults, biological fatherhood remains very significant as it has cultural as well as social and personal significance (Madhavan & Roy, 2011).

With regards to financial vulnerabilities, children and families who do not benefit from the financial contribution of men are worse off than where fathers do make financial contributions (Richter et al., 2010). For instance, families in North American and European contexts with absent fathers typically have lower income levels and a lower standard of living than two-parent families. Subsequently, they tend to live in neighbourhoods that are more disrupted and dangerous, with higher rates of unemployment and crime, and with fewer available resources for families (Pougnet et al., 2012). Mirroring these socioeconomic effects of father absence in North American and other contexts (Robertson, 2022), Black children in South Africa have also been found more likely to drop out of high school, marry, or become parents at a young age, and have lower status jobs and incomes than children with involved fathers who contribute financially towards their children (Pougnet et al., 2012; Ratele, 2018).

3.5.2 Impact of Non-resident Father Involvement on Mothers

Children do not function in a vacuum within the family system and, as such, the mother of the child is also impacted by the father's involvement or lack thereof. Research on families with non-resident fathers has predominantly focused on the mother–child dyad and the perceived deficits in such families (i.e., Elliot et al., 2015; Riley et al., 2022). Following on this, absent fathers are often seen as associated with adolescent risk-taking behaviours and delinquency, implying that the remaining parent, the mother, is failing in her task in some way (Langa, 2010). As the family is dealing with parental separation, emotional trauma and financial challenges may ensue with mothers having to return to work/increase work hours, and relocate to more affordable accommodation (Wineburgh, 2000). Subsequently, older siblings are often required to fulfil caretaker roles and children are often left with a break in trust regarding their security, fearing the loss of the other parent as well (Wineburgh, 2000). Wineburgh (2000) further indicates in his analysis of case studies with pre- and adolescent children in his practice in the United States that some children tend to idealize the absent father and blame the mother

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for his absence which often manifests as anger, aggression, and disappointment in the mother-child relationship. The management of aggression in the household is a common role for the father, and his absence may, for example, render the mother overwhelmed to deal with an adolescent boy who is bigger and stronger than she is (Wineburgh, 2000).

Mothers are also often faced with negotiating the contact process between child and father, to protect children from potentially distressing father-child contact (i.e., substance dependent or violent fathers), or to help children understand if they are disappointed with limited contact from the father (Arditti et al., 2019). The compounded negative impact that an absent father can therefore have on his child's mother to effectively manage a family system independently should not be taken lightly. Conversely, research shows that Black South African and African American women who are supported by fathers experience lower levels of family strain, are less prone to mental health problems, and derive greater satisfaction from their roles as mothers (Ray et al., 2021; Richter et al., 2011). Non-resident father involvement is associated with mothers' reduced economic hardship and its consequential emotional stress, which in turn decreases levels of harsh parenting (Jackson, 2019). Cross and Zhang's (2022) study uniquely considers the benefits that single mothers may gain when they build strong emotional ties with other male figures (i.e., grandfathers, uncles, and partners) who act as social fathers who provide an array of social, emotional, and financial support.

3.5.3 Impact of Father Involvement on Non-resident Fathers

Most research on non-resident fatherhood involvement focusses on influences and outcomes for children to the neglect of consequences for fathers (Maslauskaitė & Steinbach, 2020). Some studies, however, do engage with the impact on fathers. These studies indicate that fatherhood and the father-child relationship play a significant role in men's emotional well-being as father happiness seem to correlate with frequent father-child contact (Maslauskaitė, & Steinbach, 2020; Waldvogel & Ehlert, 2016). According to Waldvogel and Ehlert (2016), the maintenance of regular father-child contact and sharing a household with children at least part-time buffer the negative effect of loss of daily father-child direct contact.

Absence or lack of involvement in the lives of their children has been found to negatively affect fathers. Non-resident fathers in western and central Europe who had limited father-child contact presented with lower life satisfaction, higher rates of depression and anxiety,

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psychological distress, and feelings of guilt and shame (Maslauskaitė & Steinbach, 2020; Waldvogel & Ehlert, 2016). A non-resident father may fear that his relationship with his child is tenuous, ultimately maintaining a superficial relationship with his children that is likely to fizzle out into progressively less contact over the long term (Lamb, 2010). Non-resident fathers also often face challenges maintaining their father identity in terms of self-concept, importance, cross-situational awareness, and commitment; specifically, as they miss family events, such as birthdays and certain holidays (Johnson et al., 2018). As sources of social relationships and support diminish, non-resident fathers experience lack of father-child contact as loss of-moment-to-moment positive emotions from childcare activities, and fulfilment of fundamental psychological needs such sense of meaning or affiliation (Waldvogel & Ehlert, 2016). Additionally, as already mentioned, Black South African fathers often experience their inability to provide as an intolerable burden (Langa, 2010; Richter & Morrell, 2006; Sigle-Rushton, 2005). Many men therefore see abandonment of their children as the only way out of the poverty cycle (Hunter, 2006). Neglect of the socio-historical context of South Africa often results in these men being blamed as irresponsible for not supporting their children (Langa, 2010).

3.6 Non-resident Fathers and Family Relationships

All the adults in the larger non-resident family system face their own challenges, especially given the many potential triangular relationships such as the partners and ex-partner/s; partners and the stepchild/partner's child with the child; among the children, non-resident parent, and stepparent/parent's new partner; and the residential parent, biological child, and stepchild/partner's child (De Greeff & Platt, 2016). In this section, I will provide an overview of the literature on various relationships in the larger non-resident family system.

3.6.1 Relationship between Biological Parents

Non-resident father research has done well to represent the parental relationship post separation, but, as mentioned earlier, many studies are from mother perspectives. This is evident in the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being study that shows a significant underrepresentation of non-resident father data (Reichman et al., 2001). A study on Australian parents (resident and non-resident) shows that harmonious parental relationships promote quality involvement between father and child, consistent and frequent contact with his child, and psychologically healthy children (Rosenberg, 2006). The degree to which non-resident

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fathers experience cooperation, support, and communication with the child's mother has consistently shown to have an impact on both father involvement and on the quality of father-child and father-biological mother relationships (Arditti & Bickley, 1996; Madhavan et al., 2016; Palkovitz et al., 2013; Stone, 2006; Whiteside & Becker, 2000).

The factors that influence partner dissolution play a significant role in parents' prognosis to effectively and respectfully co-parent (Makusha & Richter, 2016). Effective co-parenting requires the very skills that couples may not have and which likely lead to couple dissolution (i.e., negotiation of time schedules, finances, discipline, and schoolwork). The prognosis for cooperative co-parenting is higher when the mother and father can separate their relational quarrels from their responsibility towards the well-being of their children (Lamb, 2010). Unfinished emotional business, however, often blurs one's ability to step back, take a meta-perspective, and unhook oneself from a power struggle. Another element that is often difficult for co-parents is that in any other dissolved relationship individuals are able to abstain from having contact and heal from the relationship. However, when children are involved partners have to distance and heal while having contact with the previous partner, which often delays the healing process and ex-partners may come to resent the experience of having an ex-partner ever present (Schrodt, 2011).

Studies conducted in the United States illustrate that mother-non-resident father conflict can be so distressing to children that it outweighs the benefits of father-child contact, since contact with the child is often the context where this conflict ignites (Lamb, 2010). Children exposed to unhealthy turbulent mother-father relationships characterised by anger, contempt, and evasion, are more likely to be anxious, withdrawn, or antisocial (Rosenberg, 2006). South Korean children were found to experience loyalty conflicts and subsequent psychological distress if parents do not monitor what they disclose about the other parent (Kang et al., 2017). It was found harmful to children's psychological well-being if parents blame the other parent for infidelity or separation, commenting on a child's behaviour as associated with the other parent, putting the child in the middle, discussing the other parent's sex life, and talking critically about the other parent (Kang et al., 2017).

Makusha and Richter (2016) point out in their study on gatekeeping and its impact on father involvement among Black South Africans in rural KwaZulu Natal that non-resident fathers may withhold financial support to their children when they are in a hostile relationship with

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the mother of their child. Mothers, however, may also restrict father-child involvement motivated by harbouring ill feelings towards the father. The link between child maintenance and father-child contact is echoed in international studies as well (Garasky & Stewart, 2007; Hofferth et al., 2010). Mothers who hold restricted views of the role of the non-resident father as that of provider may also limit father-child involvement as they do not see any benefit from father-child contact (Hofferth et al., 2010). Mothers may restrict father-child contact especially if the father is not paying maintenance, as is often the case with low-income South African non-resident fathers. Some South African mothers view non-resident fathers who do not provide as evidence of the father being less capable of emotional support and unwilling to be a part of their children's life. The motivation for restricting father-child contact may, therefore, be that the mother wants to protect her child from potential hurt and disappointment by the father. However, there is evidence that some women facilitate father-child involvement by allowing brief periods of father-child contact (Makusha & Richter, 2016).

3.6.2 Relationships with Partners of Biological Parents

With limited South African research on non-resident father-partner relationships, I rely mostly on literature generated within North American contexts. This research indicates that biological parents may feel caught in a loyalty conflict between their partner and children's conflicting demands (Dupuis, 2010). The history of the parent-child relationship often predates the new-partner relationship, which may maintain friction or alliances between parent and child once a new partner comes along as well as strain the couple's relationship that is then at risk to perish should it be deprioritized (Jensen & Weller, 2018; Kumar, 2017; Dupuis, 2010). Nurturing the couple relationship, couple formation and relationship satisfaction is hindered by lack of privacy and time, stress due to the ex-partner relationship differences, rivalry between new- and ex-partners, lack of support from the parent to the new partner, and unclear roles (Cartwright & Gibson, 2013; Shalay & Brownlee, 2007).

New partners may fulfil the role of a social parent for their partner's children, but it is quite common for new partners to be uncertain regarding their role and feel excluded since he/she is introduced to a preexisting parent-child relationship with already shaped norms (Shalay & Brownlee, 2007). Even spending time with each other's children may invoke feelings of loss and guilt for not spending that with their own children, especially for the non-resident father (Ridden, 2002). A natural parental instinct to blindly protect one's own children may arise

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between the new couple when they are negotiating a new family life and new household norms (Ridden, 2002). This conflict may then hinder new norms and encumber the ability to reach compromises and define new roles (Ridden, 2002).

Some female partners also report conflict when they are emotionally disconnected from their partner's children, that they are deprioritized and unsupported by their partner, excluded from family decisions that affect them, blamed for problems in the family, and when wanting their partner but not the children (Craig et al., 2012). Female partners, however, experience rewards when they have co-constructed their role and built closeness with their partner's child/ren and when they are supported by their partner as a valued member of the family (Gallardo & Mellon-Gallardo, 2007).

The non-resident father and new partner of the mother relationship is very complex, as non-resident fathers may feel threatened that the new partner will take his place as father with his children and may even become jealous of the time the new partner may have with his children (Ridden, 2002). Non-resident fathers may feel the need to compete to maintain his position as primary father (Ridden, 2002). Some non-resident fathers may experience relief due to a new partner to the mother of his children's financial contribution; however, this has consequences for his identity as provider (Blyaert et al., 2016). New male partners are also challenged to build rapport with his partner's children in order to secure the longevity of his partner relationship, but often this goes hand in hand with attempting to respect that the children have only one biological father (Blyaert et al., 2016). The rapport between new partner and child is crucial to the prognosis of a successful restructured family, rendering the structuring of the partner's role as friend/financial contributor and acceptance as a family member by children significant (Dupuis, 2010; Jensen & Weller, 2019; Kellas et al., 2014).

Step-parents may disengage from step-children who resist their positive attempts to engage with them (Fisher et al., 2003; Hetherington et al., 1992). Adolescents may be especially resistant to accepting authority from a step-parent (Coleman et al., 2001; Hetherington, 1989). It should be noted, however, that most of this research has been conducted with families containing children whose primary residence is with their biological mothers and step-fathers in western societies (i.e., Jensen & Weller, 2019). This response from children may differ in the South African context due to the norm that many adults who are not biological parents may assume caregiving and parental roles towards children. Multiple adults in Black South African

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communities often raise each other's young children (Madhavan et al., 2013) which may integrate partners of biological parents with more ease into the role of secondary guardian of their children. This may also mean that children may accept other adults in the family as caretaker with more ease, with the exception of one biological parent rejecting the other biological parent's partner.

3.6.3 Relationships with Extended Kin

Most research in western societies that considers extended kin and non-resident fathers focuses on the potential break in grandparent-child contact and the consequential undesirable outcomes for children (i.e., Albertini & Tosi, 2018; Attar-Schwartz, 2017; Ferguson, 2004; Jappens & Van Bavel, 2016). There are, however, studies in the United States that illustrate that the child benefits that grandparents offer may also occur via their relationship with the child's parent (Kirby, 2015). Grandparents are an asset towards effective connection, guidance and discipline that benefit their grandchildren directly or indirectly via the parent (Kirby, 2015). Grandparents have parenting experience that stands to benefit parents as they have retrospective knowledge on how to allow child independence (Mason et al., 2007). Mason et al. (2007) state that grandparent-parent relationships are often complex as grandparents are caught between "being there for parents" and "not interfering". The grandparent role is therefore characterised by ambivalence that can lead to confusion, frustration, and tension in the grandparent-parent team (Mason et al., 2007). The role of a grandparent becomes even more complex if their offspring divorce. The grandparent's geographical distance from the parent, financial capacity, pre- and post-separation relationships, moral judgements of right and wrong, commitment to the parenting and grand-parenting role, and the capacity to see the separation from the perspective of all parties in the family, all have been shown to contribute to post-separation relationships with the parent and grandchild (Deblaquiere et al., 2012). Cohesive grandparent-parent relations reduce depressive symptoms of adolescents which illustrate the long reach of grandparents as compensatory resources for grandchildren of separated parents (Jappens & Van Bavel, 2020; Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007).

Paternal grandparents in Ireland whose sons divorced often endeavour to support and remain involved in the lives of their grandchildren (Doyle et al., 2010). They often do this by compensating for the perceived parenting limitations of the non-resident father, affirming their grandchild's position in the paternal kin network, and acting as a mediator between the

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separated couple to ensure continued contact with grandchildren and contact between father and child (Doyle et al., 2010). The actions of paternal grandparents have important future implications for the grandparent-grandchild relationship, as well as the relationship trajectories of the non-resident father and child in the post-separation family.

Despite South African research that emphasise the importance of the biological father and the significant influence of family systems in non-resident father involvement, most studies include appointed social father figures, rely on mother and child reports, and do not include extended kin (Makusha, 2013; Makusha & Richter, 2016). In many Black South African communities there is an emphasis on community where adults have a collective responsibility for the raising of children, hence the saying "every child is my child" (Langa, 2010). South African Black families are often characterised by strong emotional ties that promote sharing and interdependence. Most Black children live in extended family households (Statistics South Africa, 2020) and family is not restricted to immediate biological family of origin, but includes extended family that may include cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, related kin, and related clan members (Makusha, 2013). This ideal does not, however, guarantee optimal health and sufficient care for children (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Black South African fathers' contact and interaction with their children is often linked to family support and encouragement (Stone & McKenry, 1998; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). In a study on South African non-resident fathers, Clark et al. (2015) state that paternal grandparents, especially paternal grandmothers, play a significant role in encouraging father-child contact and also assisting the father with advice on practical caretaking skills which serve as empowerment. Yet, there is very little literature on these significant figures' roles within non-resident father families.

Paternal grandparents in Black South African families are also considered an important part of negotiations that are expected to be made between families when babies are conceived outside of marriage (Madhavan et al., 2013). Grandparents and other extended kin (i.e., uncles and aunts) assist in the negotiation and payment of *intlawulo*, which is expected in many South African cultures if the father does not intend to marry the child's mother but wishes to acknowledge his paternity (Clark et al., 2015). Maternal kin play an essential role in decision making about how children are raised and by whom (Clark et al., 2015). Maternal grandmothers are significant members of South African society who frequently help to raise young children and assume the primary guardian role (Madhavan et al., 2013). Maternal grandmothers often build closer ties with children than their biological parents, in particular if their daughters are

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unmarried (Madhavan et al., 2013). Maternal kin also often act as important gatekeepers, denying paternal acknowledgement or fathers' access to their children if *intlawulo* has not been paid (Swartz et al., 2013). These cultural traditions are often the main barrier for non-resident fathers and the paternal family to overcome in order to gain access to their biological offspring (Ratele, 2018). However, Makusha et al. (2012) found that most fathers in their study attempted to have some kind of relationship with their children, in spite of these barriers. Moreover, in some cases maternal families allow a father access in the absence of *intlawulo* being made (Ratele, 2018). Non-resident fathers who experience support from grandparents, friends and extended kin may be more likely to engage in an optimal father-child relationship (Stone, 2006).

Amongst different cultural groups in South Africa there are subtle differences in approach to non-marital childbearing. A study conducted in Mpumlanga on a Tsonga speaking community shows that the formal processes of legitimising non-marital pregnancies (through damage payments or *lobola*), although ideal, have been mostly abandoned. Establishing connections with the child's father and his extended kin as a means of social and financial support for the child are prioritised, with a focus on securing support and paternal recognition, as opposed to cementing the couple's union (Madhavan et al., 2013). Zulu speaking participants in KwaZulu-Natal, however, demonstrated that official processes for legitimising non-marital childbirth through union recognition are still in place, but followed to different degrees. The function of these processes is to make the pregnancy respectable, which may entail sustaining the relationship with the child's father or accepting damages and legitimately having the child raised within the mother's family. Even though these routes are desirable and preferred, in many instances neither is followed, and young women's families take responsibility for the child (Madhavan et al., 2013).

3.7 Non-resident Father-Child Contact

Although the quality of the father-child relationship rather than the frequency of father-child contact determines fathers' impact on children (Cabrera et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2014), research conducted in North America indicates that regular and stable contact provides a critical foundation for the fostering and maintenance of good quality father-child relationships that benefit child well-being (Amato et al., 2009; Pruett & DiFonzo, 2014). Furthermore, fathers' involvement in Chinese societies indicates that it is not a father's presence per se, but

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the frequency of father-child contact that is associated with an influence on children's academic, social, and psychological functioning (Li, 2020). Although non-resident fathers may not be able to participate in person with the daily parenting of their children, they can still make significant contributions through provision, social visits and telephone contact (Makusha et al., 2012). Conversely, Mavungu et al. (2013) in their study on Black non-resident fathers in Johannesburg found that lack of non-resident father-child contact may contribute to child misconduct and substance abuse, as well as limited financial recourses. Studies in western contexts indicate that lack of father-child contact may maintain confusion for children around their father's role in their life; and correlates with low self-esteem and depression (McLanahan et al., 2013; Wineburgh, 2000).

The United States Census (2016) indicates that 25% of non-resident American fathers have father-child visitation more than once a week, and 29% see their children at least once a month. Based on their analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), Taylor et al. (2011) show that 21% of American non-resident fathers see their children several times a year, and for 27% there are no visits at all (Taylor et al., 2011). Low-income non-resident fathers are more likely to report less contact and involvement with children, often due to having fewer resources. This trend has been found across cultural contexts (Gray & Brown, 2015; Mincy et al., 2015). Various studies conducted in the United States indicate that father-child contact often decreases in frequency after biological parents separate and form new families (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007; Hofferth et al., 2010; Juby et al., 2007). Reasons offered for this are that, following a separation, fathers tend to experience physiological and psychological stressors in the form of loss and depression which may reduce their motivation for contact with their children (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007). Specifically, non-resident fathers suffer the strain of separation, change of residence, financial stress and loss of friends and social relationships in the post-separation period which adversely affect their psychological well-being (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007). These radical changes in life patterns typically do not foster consistent and frequent father-child contact and fathers' psychological distress has been found to correlate negatively with frequency of father-child contact (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007; Yuan, 2016). Furthermore, non-resident fathers in Canada have been shown to reduce visits to their children when they re-partner too closely after parental separation and prior to establishing the new father-child contact routine (Juby et al., 2007). In both the USA and Canada, it is thought that increased time and money demands placed on non-resident fathers by new children and spouses may lead to a decline in the fathers' voluntary emotional involvement and financial investments in their

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own children (Hofferth et al., 2010; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). Also, non-resident fathers have been found to reduce frequency of contact with their child when the biological mother of their child re-partners and another male figure enters the child's primary residence (Juby et al., 2007).

The potential financial restrictions that residential relocation and child support payments impose on non-resident fathers' post-separation may also reduce the father's ability to pay for transport to visit his child or to bring his child to visit him (Seltzer et al., 1998; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). Studies in Canada and Germany show that non-resident fathers' inability to pay for transport is especially prevalent in low-income fathers, thereby resulting in increased distance and decline of contact with their children over time (Hofferth et al., 2010; Köppen et al., 2018). Proximal distance between father and child residences in the USA and Europe (England, Germany, Netherlands, and Sweden) has also been shown to affect frequency of father-child contact, as greater distances can distinctly limit the number of days a child spends with his or her father (Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Kalmijn, 2015).

Frequency of non-resident father-child contact in the USA is also linked to the age of the child when the parents separated whereby, the older the child at the time of separation, the more frequently fathers tend to visit (Struss, 2001). Additionally, the age of non-resident fathers has been found to play a role in non-resident fathers' involvement with children. A study on fathers in the USA found that older non-resident fathers spend more time with their children as a result of emotional maturity that enables fathers to better identify and understand their roles and responsibilities as fathers (Castillo et al., 2011). In contrast, the study indicates that younger non-resident fathers were more stressed and that their stress may be especially detrimental to their family relationships, education, employment, health, housing, transportation, and income (Castillo et al., 2011).

Legal parental agreements in Canada that outline father-child contact arrangements greatly influence the frequency of father-child contact, especially for high conflict parental dissolution, as the absence of such a contract correlates with reduced father-child contact (Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). More recent research, however, suggests that formal child maintenance payment may negatively influence father involvement (Skinner & Davidson, 2009). For example, a recent South African study by Mercer et al. (2018) has also found that, compared to formal child maintenance payment, informal and in-kind contributions to childcare are more

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strongly correlated with increased non-resident father-child contact and closer emotional father-child relationships.

As indicated earlier, the parents' ability to share in parenting responsibilities and co-parent is of utmost importance if father-child relationships are to be maintained as found in studies in the USA, Brazil, and Canada (Flood, 2012; Lamela & Figueiredo, 2016; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). Difficulties in this relationship can be detrimental to frequency and quality of non-resident father-child contact. For instance, it has been found that non-resident fathers in the USA experience a break in trust with their children when the child rejects or resists him based on the actions or verbal criticisms of the mother (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007). When this occurs, fathers perceive their children as having aligned against them and/or as having been brainwashed by their mothers which lead to increased distance in their relationships with their children (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007).

When the non-resident father and the mother of the child are not able to meaningfully share parental responsibilities, unilateral parenting is typical (Flood, 2012). This can result in non-resident fathers feeling marginalised and disenfranchised with little input in parenting decisions regarding their child's post-separation living arrangements, the amount of child maintenance they paid, how the maintenance is spent, and restricted participation in their children's schools (Flood, 2012; Hawthorne & Lennings, 2008). Consequently, non-resident fathers may be viewed as incompetent, unaware, emotionally distant, and oppressive which adversely impact on their self-esteem and creates insecurity to take care of their children (Appleby & Palkovitz, 2007). This diminished parental role linked to co-parental conflict ultimately serves as a hindrance for non-resident fathers to have frequent and meaningful contact with their children (Hawthorne & Lennings, 2008). Conversely, fatherhood role salience may also serve to fan parental conflict and disengagement between non-resident fathers and their children because fathers who are more involved with their children are more likely to argue with mothers regarding decisions about their child (Hofferth et al., 2010; Yuan, 2016).

On the other hand, a study in the UK indicates that emotionally close and connected father-child relationships positively correlate with more frequent and quality parental contact which circularly complements increased father-child contact (Dunn et al., 2004). Based on the importance of effective co-parenting on the child's life, it is therefore in the child's best interests that fathers learn how to prioritise the child and to co-parent in-spite of previous

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partnership power struggles. Research in both the USA and Canada shows that in order to do so non-resident fathers may require assistance to heal from the loss of the partnership and the restructuring of the family system, whilst also re-establishing a residence, working out a routine for father-child contact and effectively handling legal processes that may be involved with the separation (Flood, 2012; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). Fathers who are assisted towards effective co-parenting and quality father-child contact show increased frequency in father-child contact, more satisfaction in the father-child connection, and emotionally close relationships with their child (Flood, 2012; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, other factors which influence non-resident father-child contact are the non-resident father's attitude toward fatherhood, marital status, duration of marriage at the time of the child's birth, pre-separation father involvement, proof of paternity at birth, as well as the age of the child at the time of separation (Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Flood, 2012; Heers & Szalma, 2022; Hofferth et al., 2010; Mincy et al., 2005; Struss, 2001; Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). For instance, more egalitarian gender role attitudes in Eastern and Western Europe that support involved father practices are linked to increased probability of non-resident father-child contact (Heers & Szalma, 2022). Also, fathers who value being a parent and are satisfied with the time with their children are prone to spend more frequent quality time with them (Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009).

Further, studies conducted in the USA indicate that children born to married parents are more likely to have more frequent contact with their non-resident fathers than non-married parents, whilst the longer the father resided with his child pre-separation, the more likely he is to be involved with his child post-separation (Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Hofferth et al., 2010). It is noted that pre-separation commitment to fathering is a good predictor of post-separation commitment, whilst proof of paternity at the child's birth tends to result in more regular quality father-child contact and adherence to payment of child maintenance (Flood, 2012; Mincy et al., 2005). In South Africa, acknowledgement of paternity by other family members is directly correlated with increased father-child contact (Makusha, 2013) and promotes the quality of the father-child relationship and a sense of responsibility toward the child (Hosegood et al., 2009).

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3.8 Conclusion

In this section, I highlighted that fatherhood is a complex and multi-faceted construct, and that fatherhood ideas and practices are fluid, and change in accordance with historic and economic contexts. Locally, colonial and apartheid rule changed South African Black families through its residual consequences that split families and marginalised Black South African fathers economically. Non-resident fathers are common in South Africa due to factors such as labour migration that compels them to live close to work but away from their children, and the high number of children conceived by unmarried and non-cohabiting parents. Proximal distance between fathers and children often prohibits fathers' participation in the routine and daily caretaking of their child. Mainstream gender roles and hegemonic masculinity notions also contributed to the marginalisation of non-resident fathers by foregrounding fathers' role as provider and limiting other fatherhood currencies men may have to offer. However, all the various contributions that non-resident fathers can offer have the potential to benefit not only children, but also fathers themselves and the mothers of their children. Father absence, in contrast, could be harmful as children may lack a sense of identity that comes with father acknowledgement and involvement, as well as financial and emotional recourses that come with an involved father. It also often negatively impacts mothers and non-residential fathers.
Fatherhood in many Black communities are shaped by a multigenerational family structure, and co-residing family members may influence father-child contact. Fathers' relationships with various family members are significant, since the quality of these relationships may play an important role in father involvement and the quality of the father-child relationship. The relationship between the mother and father is particularly critical in either fostering or hindering non-resident father involvement. Cultural traditions such as *lobola* and *intlawulo* may encourage the father-child relationship but may also lead to maternal gatekeeping and lack of father involvement. Non-resident father-child contact is further dependent on the father's post separation adjustment, father-child closeness prior to separation, proximal distance post-separation, the age of the child and the father, and the father and child's motivation to continue to invest in their relationship.

The literature on non-resident father-child contact and involvement is limited in that most studies focus on White middle-class families in the northern hemisphere and especially in affluent western contexts. These studies are often quantitative outcome studies that investigate consequences of father engagement or absence for mothers and children. Furthermore, the majority of studies are from mother and child participant perspectives that tend to vilify the

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non-resident father and may provide a skewed picture of the non-resident father and his family. Also, despite evidence that fathers' relationships with various family members influence father-child contact and involvement, few studies include family members from the same family system as participants - possibly due to the difficulty in recruiting non-resident fathers and their family members (Mitchell et al., 2007). My study therefore aimed to address this gap by adopting a family systems approach to explore if and how non-resident father family relationships influence his contact with his adolescent child. Furthermore, I utilised a qualitative research design and recruited four members from each non-resident father family to obtain various family members' views and experiences.

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CHAPTER 4

METHOD

4.1 Introduction

In the next section I first state my primary and secondary research objectives, followed by a discussion of the selected research design. In the research method section, I elaborate on sampling, participants, method of data collection, as well as the recruitment and data collection procedures that were implemented. I then discuss the data analysis method, the mechanisms that were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, and the ethical issues that were considered.

4.2 Primary Research Objective

The primary research objective was to explore if and how Black South African non-resident fathers' relationships with key family members (e.g., mother of his child, the mother's partner, the grandparents of his child, aunts and uncles of the child, with the child, and the father's partner) influence contact and involvement with their children.

Specific research objectives were to explore:

- the frequency and nature of contact between the non-resident father and child, as well as between the various other family members;
- the various family members' views and perspectives about non-resident fatherhood and father-child contact;
- the quality of the non-resident father's relationships with the following family members: his child, mother of his child, the mother's partner, the grandparents of his child, aunts and uncles of the child, and the father's partner; and
- if and how the quality of these relationships influenced the non-resident father's contact and involvement with his child/ren.

4.3 Research approach and Research Design

I used an explorative qualitative research approach as I aimed to investigate a social phenomenon on which little or no previous research has been done without explicit expectations about the outcome of the research (Brown, 2006). Furthermore, an explorative

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research approach was selected because it is often used in studies with smaller sample sizes where data is difficult to collect (Schutt, 2018), as was evident in this study. Explorative research is often the initial research which forms the basis of more conclusive future research that could lay the foundation for generalisable studies. Furthermore, an exploratory research approach provided me with flexibility to address diverse research questions around how non-resident father family relationships influence father-child contact (Babbie, 2007).

Furthermore, a qualitative design was deemed appropriate because, as previously mentioned, existing research on non-resident fathers is mostly quantitative, focusing on outcomes and relying on individual participants (i.e., Cryer-Coupet et al., 2020; Fagan, 2021; Tuchiya et al., 2020). However, qualitative research is argued to be uniquely fitting for family dynamics research as it (i) obtains family members' meanings about family interpersonal relationships; (ii) acquires family members' views about relationship processes and family interactions from an insiders' perspective; (iii) investigates families within contexts; and (iv) illuminates marginalized families and family members' perspectives (Ganong & Coleman, 2014; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Similarly, Gilgun (2012) states that qualitative research ensures understanding participant experiences on their own terms and in various contexts. The immersion of the researcher in families' worlds facilitates understanding of culturally based practices, and the meanings that family members attribute to them (Gilgun, 2012; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015), which is especially applicable in family research conducted in the culturally rich and diverse South Africa.

Qualitative research designs assist researchers to understand the complexities of challenging and strained family situations (Gilgun, 2012; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015), as is often the case in the context of non-resident fathers who have limited father-child contact. Qualitative methods enable the identification of values and views of different members of a system, whilst exploring and analysing key themes of these values and views (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). It also offers rich and compelling insights into the worlds, perspectives, and experiences of participants and makes it possible to capture the intricacies of social phenomena like families (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Gilgun, 2012; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Weisner (2014) further states that qualitative methods are essential for family research as they offer depth, breadth, holism, and understanding of the meanings and experiences of daily family life within its social contexts. These principles are also in line with the systemic perspectives as discussed in chapter two.

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In terms of research design, it must also be reiterated that, although a number of local studies have been conducted on the reasons for, and experiences of, absent or infrequent father-child contact, these studies relied on the individual perspectives of either the mother (e.g., Makofane, 2015), father (e.g., Mavungu, 2013) or child (e.g., Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015). Roy et al. (2015) argue, however, that the integrity of qualitative research on families could be enhanced via sampling richness, and that one way to ensure sampling richness is by utilising multiple informants from the same family. Clark et al. (2015) also highlight that much family and fatherhood research has focused on the individual as the unit of analysis and not enough has elicited linked family unit members' perspectives. Furthermore, in line with family systems' theory principles, it is well documented that the father-child relationship quality is embedded in the context of the family system and the interpersonal relationships therein (father-child, mother-child, father-mother) (Palkovitz, 2019). It is argued that family members develop a "group life" that influences each individual from the same family, and accounts from each family member's perspective provide a more accurate and comprehensive representation of family dynamics (Handel, 1997).

Similarly, Reczek (2014) argues that there exist different views or 'realities' within a family group, and therefore, on an individual level, family members may experience and understand the same situations differently. The inclusion of only one family member's perspective may, therefore, be insufficient in family research that focuses on interpersonal relationships and the use of multiple participants are advised (Burton & Hardaway, 2012; Carr & Springer, 2010; Palkovitz, 2019; Vogl et al., 2018). The inclusion of fathers, mothers, children, and extended kin, as opposed to individual participants, is likely to meaningfully expand our understanding of the quality of father-child relationships. (Brotherson et al., 2003; Palkovitz, 2019). Schoppe-Sullivan and Fagan (2020) also argue that the inclusion of multiple family members enables the application of family systemic ideas. The qualitative method in the current research therefore involved conducting semi-structured interviews with multiple family members (non-resident fathers, mothers, children, and extended kin) to explore their views and experiences regarding infrequent father-child contact. Braun and Clark's (2006; 2013) thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data.

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4.4 Method

4.4.1 Sampling and Participants

This study utilised multiple informants by including four members of each family: non-resident fathers, mothers, adolescent children, and involved/key extended family members. Given that non-resident fathers are reported to be more prevalent in Black South African families (Madhaven et al., 2016), the research participants in this study were Black South African families. I elected to include adolescent children rather than younger children because adolescents have more independent contact with their non-resident father (De Wit et al., 2014), are cognitively more able to consent to research (Fisher et al., 2020), and have more developed vocabulary to express quality data about their fathers and families (Nippold, 1998). Since the researcher lived in Tshwane East, participants were recruited in this area for access purposes.

Purposive sampling is used where membership of the sample is based on the goals of the research (Whitley, 2012). Purposive sampling was indicated for the current study as it is used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to a phenomenon of interest that fits a specific set of criteria (i.e., Black South African non-resident father families) (Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria were: Black South African participants; the adolescent child must have contact with his/her father once a month or less; the father and mother/other primary parent must both be South African citizens; the adolescent children must be 14 years or older; and the grandparents, aunts and uncles/other included extended kin are viewed from the guardian and father's perspective as members who play an important influential role in family decision making and subsequent father-child contact. The latter family members were listed for each family unit as they were ranked by the two parental figures. The researcher started at the top of the list and contacted these figures until she had recruited a member who was accessible and willing to participate in the study.

The recruitment process resulted in a final group of ten families with four members each (N=40) who were included in the study. Please note that I am aware that a table with an overview of the families' demographic characteristics is standard in good quality research. Such a table has been included for the purposes of the examination of this dissertation but has been removed in this final copy to enhance the confidentiality of participant information.

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The families were diverse in terms of socio-economic status variables. With regards to the level of education, five of the fathers achieved tertiary education, two achieved a matric certificate, two did not matriculate and one remained undisclosed. Four of the mothers achieved tertiary education, four attained their matric certificate, and two did not matriculate. Seven fathers were employed with three of the fathers unwilling to disclose their income, fearing that disclosing may result in child maintenance claims. The mean income of employed fathers who disclosed their income was R20 000 per month after tax. Eight mothers were employed, with two mothers unemployed. The mean income of employed mothers was R10 612.50 per month after tax, which is significantly less than that of employed fathers. Out of the five fathers who paid child maintenance, three paid consistently every month, and the other two provided intermittently as they were able to or when the child or mother asked them to. Furthermore, five fathers reported having two other children, two fathers had one other child, one father had three other children, and one father had no other children.

The participating adolescent children included eight girls and two boys. Four children were 14 years old, two were 15 years old, three were 16 years old, and one was 18 years old. The mean age among the children was 15 years and two months. Fathers' ages ranged between 42 and 57.

The relationship status of the biological parents was diverse. Two out of the ten parent pairs were married and then divorced, five had a love/romantic relationship and co-resided, two had a love/romantic relationship but lived separately, and one had an extramarital love relationship where the father was married and did not reside with the mother of the child. In six out of the ten families, the father and child co-resided for periods stretching from a few months until 14 years. All of the fathers had some contact with children during infancy. In most cases, father-child contact was disrupted upon parental separation in the child's early childhood years and father-child contact was non-existent from then on until the children received a cell phone (usually by puberty) and were able to make independent contact with the father. Two sets of parents separated during adolescence and father-child contact was intermittent and mostly via cell phone once a month or less. At the time of the interviews, most father-child contact (six out of ten) took place via cell phone once a month or less, and the rest once every six months or less.

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Five fathers resided less than 50 minutes away from their child and had the possibility of seeing their child frequently, depending on money and time. The remaining five fathers resided more than 50 minutes away from their child and seeing their child would require more planning and expense – either travelling to their child or the child travelling to them.

4.4.2 Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data because they provided a guided context within which the participants were free to present their experiences and elaborate in whichever way they chose (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). Semi-structured interviews also provided participants with the opportunity to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, and which the researcher had not anticipated (Braun & Clarke, 2013). An interview guide (See Appendix B) was used to guide interviews in a conversational manner. The following topics were included: the frequency of contact between child and non-resident father; non-resident father and other key family member; views about non-resident fatherhood; factors that facilitate father-child contact; factors that complicate father-child contact; and decision-making regarding visitation/contact between father and child.

As detailed in 4.4.4 Data Collection Procedure, I conducted most of the interviews. I believe that my training and practice as a clinical psychologist enabled me to foster safe spaces in which the participants could relate their ideas and experiences. However, in 4.6 Researcher Reflexivity, I discuss how my personal characteristics and socio-cultural positioning may have influenced the research process and the data I generated. I also recruited and trained three interviewers/research assistants to conduct interviews with participants who indicated that they were more comfortable with or able to better express themselves in one of the South African Black indigenous languages. These interviewers consisted of one Black South African, male 22-year-old student who studied business management, and two Black South African women, 22- and 23-years-old who both studied psychology. The research assistants were warm individuals who were able to foster comfortable and safe relationships. All were able to speak various African languages.

I trained the research assistants to enhance their effectiveness as interviewers. They all read through the research proposal and I had a conversation with each to ensure that they had a good understanding of the study and its objective. They were trained on how to introduce the

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research, conduct semi-structured interviews via the interview schedule, and ask targeted probing questions. I emphasised that the interviews were to be conducted in such a way that participants were able to tell their own stories (Braun & Clarke, 2013) in their own words (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). I utilised role-playing in the training and provided them with feedback after these role-plays. They, furthermore, debriefed with me after each interview to gain insights into their experience of impressions about the interviews, and for me to provide feedback to them on enhancing their interview techniques, as well as to resolve any residual emotional impact they personally may have had after the interviews. I provide further discussion in 4.6 Researcher Reflexivity on how the personal characteristics of the interviewers may have influenced the data collection process.

4.4.3 Recruitment Procedure

I was granted ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University in June 2018. I utilised two recruitment strategies. The first one entailed that I utilised English-medium secondary schools in Pretoria with predominantly Black South African learners in the Pretoria area to access non-resident fathers via their secondary school attending children. I applied and obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research, and they supplied me with a list of ten schools that fit my research sample. I contacted each of these schools to ascertain their availability to participate in the research. An appointment with the principal of each school was scheduled to explain the objectives of the research and obtain her/his support of the research. The context within which the research was introduced to the learners was subject to what the school principal allowed in terms of the location and time. At some schools the research was introduced in a large group setting, for instance during weekly assembly, and at other schools the research was introduced in classrooms.

Learners of 14 years and older were introduced to the study and invited to participate in it. In my introduction, I first explained that there are different family types; some live with their fathers and others do not, and that this study has a specific focus on the latter. The rest of the study and its motivation was then explained in language that is easily understood and void of academic jargon (Horn, 2016). Learners were encouraged to participate by offering incentives in the form of a R100 data voucher upon completion of the data collection process. R100 was also offered to each other family member participant for his/her participation upon completion

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of the data collection process. Interested learners were requested to take with them a i) Child Assent and Parent/Guardian Consent for the Child to Participate form (See Appendix C), and ii) an Adult Consent/Screening form (See Appendix D) home with them to complete with their guardian. Learners were requested to return the completed consent forms within the next week. The consent/screening form that the parent/guardian had to complete also served as a screening form to establish if they, their child, and their family qualified as potential participants.

This screening aimed to (i) identify fathers who had limited contact with their children. The latter was defined as fathers who see their children or had indirect contact with them once or less per month (Swiss & Le Bourdais, 2009). (ii) A further screening aim was to identify families/research units who had extended kin who exercised influence over when, how or where child-father contact occurred and who could participate in the study. The consent form that the parent/guardian filled in (See Appendix C) contained questions regarding the frequency of father-child contact; and the adolescent child, and respective parents' contact information. I made a total of 30 visits to schools and introduced the study to an estimated total of 5650 learners.

Boxes containing the Child Assent and Parent/Guardian Consent for Child, and Adult Consent forms were placed by the doors of the introduction venue/s so that learners could take it on exit. I arranged with each specific school to place a sealed box at the school reception under supervision of the admin clerk/receptionist where learners can post completed expression of interest forms. This was also a less public or observable location for those learners who may want to keep their expressions of interest in participation in the study more private (Horn, 2016). The school administrators were requested to send out an intercom announcement during the week, reminding interested students to submit their forms. In total, only 38 expressed an interest in participation.

On attainment of these relevant consent forms, contact was made regarding possible participation of available and present key extended kin, such as partners/step-parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles who exercise influence over father-child contact. The key extended kin's contact information was gathered from the mother/primary guardian and father as filled in on the consent/screening form and they were sent a SMS/WhatsApp asking permission to contact them. Upon contact they were briefed telephonically about the nature of the study and invited to participate. Electronic consent forms (See Appendix E) were sent via

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email/SMS/WhatsApp and kin were requested to sign and email it back to the researcher, or reply 'Yes' to give consent via SMS/WhatsApp -without screening questions- and interviews were scheduled. On occasions where participants did not have data to reply 'Yes' or email the signed consent, they were requested to give verbal consent during the recorded interview after having read the consent form sent prior to the interview. The participant was also given the choice to fill in the consent form at the interview venue on the day of the interview.

Once informed consent was obtained from key extended family members, the parents and learners of these family units were contacted, and interviews were scheduled. If participants required reimbursement of travel costs, they received the normal taxi or bus rate for the distance they had to travel – not exceeding R50. Ideally, I would have liked to involve family members who were accessible for face-to-face interviews. However, this was not possible in eight cases due to family members living far away. Such willing participants were accommodated by doing recorded telephonic interviews at a time suitable to them, prior to which the candidate completed an electronic consent form (Appendix E). In the cases where a participant did not have access to the internet and I could not send the consent form prior to the interview, the consent form was read out to them during the recorded telephone conversation and verbal consent was obtained. Alternatively, the consent form was sent via text for the participant to reply 'Yes' as consent. Of the 38 learners who expressed an interest in participation, only eight families met the inclusion criteria and/or all the required family members agreed to participate.

The second recruitment strategy targeted and assisted me in accessing potential non-resident fathers directly. This approach was to address an issue that came up when we contacted fathers in the first recruitment strategy. It became apparent that some of the fathers were unwilling to participate because they suspected that they were contacted as a ploy to gain child maintenance from them. I thought it may help to limit suspicion if I recruited fathers directly (rather than through their adolescent child) and they themselves could decide to participate (rather than responding to their child's request to participate). This strategy involved recruiting participants via male dominated places and areas of work, such as construction, mining, petroleum stations, unemployed male hostels, and steelwork. I approached ten companies/institutions to support the study of which two allowed me to access their male employees. Once I gained approval to access their male personnel, I scheduled a date whereby a ten-minute introduction of my research was presented. Employees who were non-resident fathers with adolescent children aged 14 - 18 were invited to take the consent/screening form to be filled in and returned to the

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sealed research box at their HR department's administration office. After a week, I collected the box and contacted the respective family members to arrange for interviews at my private practice or their home. Five fathers expressed interest in participation, of which only two families met the inclusion criteria and/or all the required family members agreed to participate.

In conclusion, recruitment for this study proved to be very challenging and took many, many hours of my time. I contacted 20 institutions (ten secondary schools, and ten companies identified as male dominated places of employment) via call or email for a total of 203 times. Seven secondary school principals and three CEOs/unions allowed me access to the premises to present my research. I had to return to some institutions multiple times to meet personally with the head of the institution and present to them and/or their union prior to presenting to school children or staff. I made a total of 32 visits and presented to an estimated total of 5820 (5650 participants at schools and 170 at companies) potential participants. Only 38 school going children and five fathers showed interest in participating in the research. Of these potential 43 family units, only ten met the inclusion criteria and all four required family members agreed and consented to participate. Eight of the ten families (families 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10) were successfully recruited via secondary school children who showed interest in the study and two families (family 3 and 8) were recruited via the father's place of employment.

4.4.4 Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interview schedule

The purpose of the interview schedule (See Appendix B) was to ask each family member (i.e., non-resident father, mother/guardian, child, and extended kin) about the frequency and nature of contact between the non-resident father and his child, how they perceived the role of the non-resident father, and if and how they viewed the quality of their relationship to influence father-child contact. I also explored if there were areas of conflict between non-resident fathers and family members and, if so, how they have attempted to resolve such differences. Furthermore, I inquired about factors that each family member perceived to either facilitate or hinder non-resident father-child contact, and what changes they may require to allow increased father-child contact. Mothers/guardians, children, and extended kin were asked about their own relationship with the father, and their thoughts and feelings about the non-resident father-child relationship. Fathers were asked about the nature and quality of his relationship with the other

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participating family members (i.e., mother/guardian and extended kin) in addition to inquiries about his relationship with the child.

Procedure

The semi-structured digitally recorded interviews were conducted with each participant separately in a private space. I conducted the interviews myself in cases where participants felt comfortable with and were able to adequately express themselves in English or Afrikaans. I recruited and trained three interviewers/research assistants to conduct interviews with participants who indicated that they were more comfortable with, or were able to better express themselves in Zulu, Setswana, Sesotho, Ndebele, Swati, and Sepedi. The required confidentiality agreement (See Appendix F) was signed by myself and the interviewers/research assistants. I conducted 24 interviews in English and the research assistants interviewed the remaining 16 in the language that those participants preferred (e.g., four Sesotho, nine Setswana, one Zulu, one Ndebele, and one Swati). Face-to-face interviews were the first and ideal data collection method and were possible for 32 participants. For privacy and accessibility reasons, each of these participants was interviewed separately at their homes, at my private practice or in my car at a location preferred by the participant. Written informed consent was obtained and biographical data acquired before participants were interviewed. Eight interviews were conducted telephonically in cases where participants were not able to meet face-to-face.

Interviewers used the semi-structured interview schedule flexibly, and prompted for more information when necessary (Griffiths, 2009). They also used the technique of summarising to clarify what the participants were saying and to reflect it back to them. In doing so, both the interviewee and the interviewer jointly contributed to the generation of meaning. The interviews started by asking participants about their experience of their relationship with the non-resident father and his role as non-resident father. In the case of the non-resident fathers, the interviewer started by asking him about his experience of his relationship with his child and relevant key family members, and how he sees his role as non-resident father. Forty (40) first interviews were conducted with the non-resident father, mother/guardian, child and extended kin of each family, as well as 29 follow-up interviews to clarify answers provided in the first interview with the non-resident father, mother/guardian, and child of each family (excluding the mother from family eight who was unreachable). Follow-up interviews were not needed for any of the extended kin family members. Interviews with each participant (including follow-

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ups) were between 90 minutes and 180 minutes in duration. Upon successful completion of the interviews, each participant received R100 as a gesture of appreciation for the participant's willingness to participate. The adult participants received the gratuity as a R100 cash payment into their back accounts, and a R100 data voucher were deposited to the preferred cell phone number of all child participants. At the end of the interviews, participants responded positively, stating that they have had the opportunity to talk about their family to someone who was interested in hearing their story and who was not judgmental. Some felt relieved and others felt that the interview helped them to gain deeper insight into their family.

4.4.5 Analysis of Data

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) procedure was applied to this voluminous amount of transcribed interview data, namely 1176 pages (Braun & Clarke, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2013). I want to note here that I am aware that Braun and Clarke published an updated version of their method in December 2021. However, my analysis process was started prior to release of this latest version and was, therefore, not utilised here. Furthermore, I want to emphasise that I analysed the data on the family unit level to capture relational dynamics in the families that influenced father-child contact.

TA is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterned themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2012, 2013). Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases entail that patterns are identified through a rigorous process of: (i) data familiarisation by reading through the content multiple times and becoming immersed in the data; (ii) coding through identifying succinct labels identifying important features relevant to answering the research question; (iii) theme development where codes are collated to identify broader patterns of meaning; (iv) revision through checking candidate themes against the dataset and research question and refining, splitting, combining or discarding themes; (v) defining and naming themes where each theme is developed, refined and expanded to work out the scope and focus of each; and (vi) writing up by weaving the analytic narrative and data extracts together and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) provide guidelines about the decisions a researcher should consider and necessitate the researcher to make these decisions explicit in the research report. Below I detail my implementation of the six steps of the Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, and explicate the guidelines I selected for each step.

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4.4.5.1 Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with your Data

According to Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013), this first phase is about immersing oneself in the data. The first phase of immersion included the transcription of the interview data, reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate that even though the process of transcription may be exasperating, time-consuming, and sometimes tedious, it serves the pertinent purpose to familiarise the researcher with the data. In accordance, I transcribed the 24 interviews which were conducted by myself in English. The interviews conducted in African languages (i.e., Sotho, Setswana or Zulu) by my research assistants were translated and transcribed by a registered translator. In order to save time, the research assistants translated some of their interviews they had in African languages, but these interviews were double checked by the translator for accuracy and amended where required. I also checked all interview transcriptions for precision while reading the transcriptions, and where necessary I made corrections and double checked the meaning of translations to include specific meaning of word usage as it translated into English. I was satisfied with the quality of the transcriptions.

Braun and Clarke (2006) also propose that the researcher rereads data "actively, analytically and critically" by searching for meanings and patterns, by asking questions such as: How does the participant make sense of their experience of fatherhood, family relationships and father-child contact, what kind of family experience and fatherhood experience is revealed through their accounts of their family? (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 205). In line with this suggestion, I read through the interviews in each family unit, looking out for meanings and patterns, and noting down thought-provoking aspects of the data on individual level and family unit level (Braun & Clarke, 2017). I immersed myself in the interviews of one family at a time to note meanings and patterns within each unit. As meanings and patterns emerged, I noted these in the transcribed interviews and discussed it with my supervisor.

4.4.5.2 Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Following familiarisation, comments and field notes were written and included in the transcribed documents, and the latter were subjected to the coding process (Appendix G). The coding process involved coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In line with family systems theory principles, I adopted a systemic and interactional perspective whilst

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reading the data, and remained sensitised to look for data that related to how family members impacted on and influenced each other within each family unit. Although I adopted this specific theoretical lens in the coding, I used an inductive or 'bottom-up' approach rather than a deductive 'top-down way' (p. 83). Inductive analysis is a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame. The inductive approach means the codes are derived from the data. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) caution that researchers cannot completely free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological allegiances, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum.

Codes refer to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). A code can be any word, phrase or sentence that captures the essence of "why the researcher thinks a particular bit of data may be useful" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207). I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guideline to work systematically through the entire data set, giving maximum and equal attention to each data item to identify interesting and meaningful aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set. I also coded for as many possible themes/patterns to incorporate codes that might be useful or interesting at a later stage, and to avoid content and context from being lost (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ultimately, the aim of coding was to "identify anything and everything" that I thought was of importance, relevance, and interest to answer my research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 206): If and how do South African non-resident Black fathers' relationships with key family members influence father-child contact? A total of 130 initial codes were identified.

Coding can be done manually or with a computerised software programme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although I initially annotated each individual's transcript in track changes to note codes (i.e., a manual approach), I proceeded to use ATLAS.ti. 8 to code each individual transcript in detail. Thereafter, I combined each family's data in one data set and coded each set in order to produce codes for families rather than individual family members. ATLAS.ti. 8 is a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). This programme is widely used and allows researchers to code data and then to retrieve all coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2017). ATLAS.ti. 8 is not an automated computer programme that does the analysis for the researcher; rather, it provides an organisational system through which the researcher can code, define codes and keep track of these codes within a specific transcription, between transcriptions, data sets and across the entire corpus of data and participants, enabling a critical, analytical, and flexible

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way through which I could enhance the outcome of my qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2017). ATLAS.ti. 8 assisted me to look out for data related to family members' impacts on each other within their family units and note if these impacts reoccurred across family units. A CAQDAS programme like ATLAS.ti. 8 makes qualitative analysis easier, more accurate, more transparent and more reliable (Gibb, 2007). Coding with ATLAS.ti. 8 allowed for each line of transcribed data to be analysed, coded, and defined. Using this computer software programme, key ideas and words were coded within the transcripts in order to highlight thought-provoking or significant experiences, events and happenings. ATLAS.ti. 8 ensured including all important phrases, meanings or patterns, something Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) strongly advise researchers to be conscientious of, as they see coding of these important phrases and meanings as an important process that provides the foundation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) or building blocks (Braun & Clarke, 2017) for the rest of the analysis. ATLAS.ti. 8 as an organising programme assisted me in keeping track of all the codes and definitions.

4.4.5.3 Phase 3: Searching for Themes

A theme should capture something significant about the data in relation to the research question and present a level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2013; 2014). Developing themes is about clustering codes to identify what Braun et al. (2016) refer to as "higher level" patterns (p 10). These higher level patterns entail the identification of broader meanings which capture multiple ideas and consist of layers. It, therefore, goes beyond summarizing themes (Braun et al., 2016). Relatedly, in their earlier iteration of TA, Braun and Clarke (2006) differentiated between identifying themes on a semantic and an explicit level, and on a latent or interpretative level. In the semantic approach, themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data. The researcher is therefore not searching for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written in the transcription. In contrast, the latent level of analysis goes beyond the semantic content and surface meaning of the data, and "starts to identify and examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations /and ideologies /that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

In latent thematic analysis, the development of the themes themselves involves interpretation, and the analysis that is produced goes beyond description, but is also theorised. Ideally, the analytic process should entail a progress from description, where data have been organised and summarised to show patterns in semantic content, towards interpretation, where the researcher

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theorises the consequence of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications, often in relation to previous literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Successful analysis on the latent level requires the researcher to ask: 'What does this mean?' 'What are the assumptions underpinning it?' 'What are the implications of this?' 'What conditions are likely to have given rise to it?' 'Why do people talk about this thing in this particular way?' and 'What is the overall story the different themes reveal about the topic?' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94). These sorts of questions are used as a guide for the more latent or interpretative analysis.

I used the 130 codes that were identified in phase two of the analysis as follows to identify candidate themes: Once the relevance of these initial 130 codes were measured against the research question, some codes were extracted to provide contextual information about the families (i.e., frequency/duration of father-child contact) (See Appendices G & H). I then used ATLAS.ti. 8 to write up and elaborate on descriptions of each of the remaining codes. Subsequently, I began the process of grouping these codes into sub-themes and these sub-themes were grouped into 11 candidate themes, of which some turned into main themes and others remained as subthemes in the final organisation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013). In order to do this grouping, I considered codes and themes as they emerged within each family unit and across family units to identify patterns of interaction between members within each family system and if these were reflected in other family units. A master document listing all codes under a long list of candidate themes were continuously modified by moving codes between groupings, creating new themes, splitting themes, making subgroupings of codes that evolved into subthemes, and splitting and amalgamating subthemes and main themes. Codes that did not fit or were not prominent across the families were discarded (See Appendix H for list of discarded codes). This organising process was a continuously evolving, back and forth movement as ideas and interpretations evolved throughout the data analysis and finally resulted in five main themes, sub-themes, and supporting codes (See Appendix G). This process of analysis involved a close and lengthy interaction between me and the text, with complete immersion in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.4.5.4 Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

In this phase, in consultation with my supervisor, I checked if the themes identified in the previous phase worked in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure that the identified themes and subthemes were congruent with the data set, I fine-tooth combed through

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all data again. I then worked on refining the themes which was an extremely tedious process as descriptive ideas developed slowly over a period of weeks. In this process, however, I was able to get an idea of how the themes were related, and which themes needed to be further collapsed or broken down into separate smaller sub-themes, through the use of ATLAS.ti. 8 (Braun & Clarke, 2006), further modifying the master document. The different networks within the themes were also investigated, became apparent, and I considered how data meaningfully cohered within themes and sub-themes. Names of themes and sub-themes continuously evolved and were changed as splitting, amalgamating and moving of subthemes changed throughout in an attempt to capture the essence and complexity of the story being told about interpersonal relationships within and across individuals and family units. At the end of this phase, I had a fairly good idea of my different themes, how they were linked, and the overall account these themes projected about the data.

4.4.5.5 Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

During this phase there is an ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase five starts when the researcher has a satisfactory thematic outline of the data. I defined and refined the themes by identifying the central point of each theme, and was now in a position to write a detailed analysis for each individual theme. Themes that were related to the research question were consistently weighted as I focussed on themes that were prevalent within each family unit as well as in terms of frequency across all the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I considered how each theme fitted into the broader overall account that I was communicating about my data in relation to my research question. Each theme was also considered in relation to the others and how they influenced each other. As part of the refinement process, I identified whether or not a theme contained any sub-themes. My sub-themes reflected the different meanings within the data. During this process it became crucial to start thinking about the names for the themes and sub-themes in my final analysis in a concise manner to immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I identified the following five themes: (i) Fathers as mainly material providers; (ii) Expectations of fathers beyond providers; (iii) Responsibility of father-child contact; (iv) Extended kin as father-child resource; and (v) Changes in father-child contact since interviews.

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4.4.5.6 Phase 6: Producing the Report

This phase included the final opportunity for analysis and a selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that phase six begins when the researcher has a set of fully worked out themes, and this involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. Each stage of the analysis was reviewed by and discussed with my supervisor who provided suggestions for possible directions for the subsequent analyses and write-up. Themes were reviewed and recommendations were made as to which themes appeared to be most meaningful within the analysis. The final model was generated in collaboration with my supervisor to ensure that the final analysis represented the most significant themes, and that it was well reasoned within the write-up. The aim was to provide a rich in-depth presentation of the data regarding the lived reality of my participants, including their experience of non-resident fatherhood, family relationships and father-child contact, and to convince the reader of the merit and validity of my analysis in a concise, coherent, and logical way. I aimed to deliver an interesting account of the story the data told within and across themes, providing detailed evidence of the themes within the data through examples or extracts from participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.5 Trustworthiness of the Study

To guide the analytical research process and to increase the trustworthiness of data, the following thematic analysis guidelines were adhered to:

- The questions utilised in the semi-structured interview questionnaire were constructed in such a way that participants were able to tell their own stories open-endedly (Braun & Clarke, 2013) in their own words and to allow me to ask further probing questions (Larkin & Thompson, 2012);
- Repeated reading, and listening to the audio material allowed me to immerse myself into the data to the extent that I was familiar with the depth and breadth of the transcript content (Braun & Clarke, 2006);
- The interpretation of ambivalent data was checked with the relevant participants (Merriam & Tisdel, 2016).
- To ensure credibility and trustworthiness Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2013) six-phase thematic analysis was followed rigorously.

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- I applied a rigorous coding system using a computer assisted qualitative analysis software programme (ATLAS.ti. 8) to conduct coding of meaningful words, phrases, sentences and semantic and latent meanings;
- This allowed themes to emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using ATLAS.ti. 8 ensured that the choice of themes was as far as possible buffered against being influenced by my subjective understandings, but that it represented the data adequately;
- Data items were given equal weight, through inclusive and comprehensive coding, as opposed to anecdotal coding through a few vivid examples (Braun & Clarke, 2017). I ensured that themes were internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive; that analysis and data matched; and that the language and concepts that I used were consistent with my selected theoretical approach.
- During the data analysis process, I aimed to produce rich descriptions, and the data were organised according to themes and sub-themes that expressed the participants' stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The relationships between themes were constantly considered and investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2013);
- The final report was generated in collaboration with my supervisor to ensure that the final descriptive, sematic, sometimes latent, and social constructionist analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was well-represented in the write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- I also aimed to remain reflective about my own subjectivity, as well as cognisant of the possibility of imposing my own perspectives on the data (Ramalho et al., 2015). I specifically attempted to be mindful of the influence of potential differences between my participants and I in terms of socio-economic, race, gender, and socio-cultural background. I expand on this component in the following section.

4.6 Researcher reflexivity

Thematic analysis acknowledges that no analysis takes place within a vacuum and that the researcher's background, histories, assumptions, values, mannerisms, and epistemology perspectives may all influence the data collection and analysis process. The researcher's analysis and interpretations therefore include aspects such as her understanding of theories, her knowledge, perceptions and/or reference systems (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2017; Griffiths, 2009). Although a complete elimination of researcher influences is never possible nor desirable, the researcher is encouraged to make a conscious attempt to become aware of their biases and previous knowledge (Griffiths, 2009; Ramalho et al., 2015). This type of awareness

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is called reflexivity. Braun and Clarke (2017) postulate that reflexivity is a significant aspect of optimal and effective qualitative research.

Braun and Clarke (2013) distinguish two forms of reflexivity - functional and personal reflexivity. Functional reflexivity refers to the awareness of the researcher concerning how the data collection tools may have influenced the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In the case of my study, functional and personal reflexivity are intertwined as I used semi-structured interviews in which the personal characteristics and skills of the interviewers play an important role in shaping the data. In the following paragraph, I therefore firstly engage with the characteristics of the interviewers and how they may have impacted on the data collection process. Thereafter, I present my reflections about myself as both researcher and interviewer.

4.6.1 The research assistants/interviewers

The interviewers and participants sharing some socio-cultural similarities as Black South Africans may have contributed towards a sense of familiarity that allowed participants to share more vulnerably than with an outsider researcher (van den Eynde & Veno, 2013). Conversely, it may have had the disadvantage of participants assuming that the assistants had inherent cultural understandings which the participants, subsequently, may not have elaborated on. It is also possible that the Black middle-aged participants may have perceived them as too young to understand or relate to the challenges of family life with adolescent children. There is limited literature on the specific influence of the interviewer's age on participants (Underwood et al., 2010). It is, however, possible that it may have influenced older participants to share on a more superficial level if they perceived the interviewers as naive and unable to relate to (Li, 2008; Underwood et al., 2010). The quality of the interviews generated by the interviewers, however, indicated that the participants related well to them and many of their older participants expressed appreciation for having had the opportunity to unburden themselves through the interviews.

My review of their work also indicated that the interviewers did well in showing sensitivity and empathy, whilst thoroughly working through the interview guide and deepening data through probing questions. Furthermore, they were enthusiastic about conducting the interviews and felt that they were "doing important work". There was only one instance where one of the interviewers reported that they were quite impacted by an angry paternal

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grandmother who assumed they called to get money for the mother of the children. The interviewer, however, managed to remain calm and validated the participant's concerns. They then continued to clarify the purpose of the research, which resulted in a successful interview. The interviewer took pride in being able to negotiate this initial challenging interaction successfully. Due to interview inexperience, one of the interviewers at times did not sufficiently explore some of the participants' responses to questions that could have benefited from further probing. Follow-up questions were required in these cases and second interviews were scheduled with these participants to obtain more detailed and rich responses.

4.6.2 The researcher

Personal reflexivity involves acknowledging who we are as researchers and taking into account that our subjectivity and positionings influence the knowledge we produce within research, and our assumptions may influence knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Adeagbo (2021) highlights that the researcher's reflection on the possible influence of his/her emotions, ideology, and personal experience on the process serve as a measure that promotes research reliability, credibility, and self-awareness in qualitative research. The researcher, therefore, needs to make his/her position in the analytical process explicit, and this transparency has the potential to enhance the reader's ability to make sense of this process, as well as the trustworthiness and validity of the analysis. Understanding the importance of personal reflexivity, as described above, I have considered how my social positionings and background may have influenced the research process, and my subsequent analysis and findings:

I am a 36-year-old White, middle class, Afrikaans-speaking, married, childless, cisgender woman. I am therefore different from the current study participants across many social identity levels which positioned me as an "outsider" researcher. Bucerius (2013) argues that being an outsider may hold advantages and should not be perceived as a liability. Instead, being an outsider who is trusted with "inside knowledge" can offer meaningful research contributions. A trusted outsider (researcher) may prompt participants to share accounts of implicit complex detail within the topic of investigation that may be overlooked by an "insider" because participants may assume that an "insider" is already aware of such details (Burcerius, 2013). However, potential disadvantages of my "outsider" status include a lack of understanding of the complex nuances of the participants, their culture, and meanings in relationships (Burcerius, 2013). Being unreflective about the life world from my participants' perspectives could lead to

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misrepresentation or misunderstanding the experiences of the participants (Bucerius, 2013; Hayfield & Huxley, 2014). Wigginton and Stechell (2016) warn that there is risk that researchers who are subjectively unfamiliar with topics may contribute to overly simplistic, narrow, and de-politicized representations of particular "groups" or experiences. Outsider researchers are also encouraged to remain reflective to avoid narrow stereotypes based on subjective biases and ideologies (Hayfield & Huxley, 2014). I tried to challenge negative representations and stereotypes related to non-resident father families by being mindful of existing stereotyping discourses and notions. For example, I remained open to non-resident fathers' side of the story and not to reinforce stereotypes of these fathers as uncaring and "irresponsible", and mothers and children as victims of neglectful non-resident fathers.

Bilotta (2021) argues that White privileged researchers face dilemmas related to their privileged racial and gender status, such as power imbalances between researchers, and conducting research in the face of human suffering (Bilotta, 2021). To minimize these power imbalances, I strove towards dignity and connectedness between myself and the participants (Vervliet et al., 2015), and adopting culturally sensitive definitions of "respect" and "reciprocity" as suggested by Bilotta (2021). For example, I used culturally appropriate greetings and took the lead from my participants as to where and how they were comfortable meeting, despite some risks to myself. I also deliberately aimed to minimise my power position by assuming an epistemological stance of empathy, active listening, and validating the participants' perspectives – especially validation of stigmas they may have experienced (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Wigginton & Setchell, 2016). An example was when one father commented that other fathers may be scared to speak to me because a White woman may be seen as an authoritative figure who persecute fathers for defaulting on child maintenance. I validated both the imbalanced perception of control that my race may hold, as well as the stigma around "irresponsible fathers" imposed by women who are experienced as threatening by fathers. Another factor to consider regarding control dynamics is the setting where interviews are conducted that hold an implied territorial control (Wigginton & Setchell, 2016). Consequentially, I allowed participants to choose their preferred setting (i.e., their house, parking lots, my practice, etc.) as context for the interviews to address this issue.

Furthermore, the structure of interviews may also influence control in the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I therefore strove to share control with the participants by conducting semi-structured interviews that contained open-ended questions and by following participants'

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accounts in an effort to make the interview process more collaborative and free-flowing (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Corbin & Morse 2003). There were also no time limits placed on interviews, allowing participants to elaborate for as long as they wished (Wigginton & Setchell, 2016). All interviews were concluded by asking participants if there was anything they found important that they would like to add, which ensured inclusion of content that participants may have considered significant from their own perspective and that was not directed by the researcher or interviewer. Control dynamics in the data analysis process is also a factor that requires consideration as analysis involves interpreting and attributing meaning to the data by the researcher (Watts, 2006). To address the possibility of more obvious incorrect interpretations, I contacted participants to clarify unclear points as I read and coded the interview transcripts.

In line with Le Gallais (2008), I examined my own past and present histories, beliefs, and values, particularly with issues related to fatherhood, to be mindful of ideas and assumptions that I may impose on the study: I grew up with a resident father in a middle class, White, Afrikaans-speaking community in Polokwane. In this community nuclear families are the norm and patriarchy is imbedded in these families with the father as the leader of the household, and mothers valued and supported as nurturers and caretakers of children, and supporting fathers' career. I was socialized to view and respect fathers as providers, leaders, and protectors. This may have contributed to my feeling deeply touched by some of the fathers in my study who also longed for these roles and status, but did not have the financial means to obtain them. An example was a father feeling depressed and suicidal at times, relying on alcohol as an escape from his "useless life" and feeling guilty for spending money on beer. He was stuck in a hostile work environment with a low income that he could not afford to leave as he wanted to be able to provide some financial support for his children. He longed for contact with his child and to provide guidance and protection but was not able to find work close to where his child lived. He, subsequently, felt a diminished sense of identity as a father due his inability to provide and guide his child sufficiently. I appreciated anew how closely provision was linked to men's sense of self-respect and dignity. I would like to believe that this resonance enabled me to portray and acknowledge the struggles of the fathers in my study.

Another impact that I noted was that I struggled to empathise with mothers who were not more proactive to facilitate and ensure their child's well-being, specifically regarding the child's distress due to infrequent father-child contact. Relatedly, I empathised with the frustration of the adolescent children about their mothers' lack of action about facilitating father-child

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contact. This may be due to my own socialization in which mothers, rather than fathers, are viewed as the primary child caretakers who are responsible to address children's emotional distress. I was also deeply affected by some of the interviews where the children relayed their experiences of helplessness and fantasising about their father coming to rescue them, and longing for fathers to show affection and wanting to spend time with children. This emotional impact may have influenced my coding to turn a more or less empathic lens on mothers' and children's accounts. However, my awareness and discussion of these influences with my supervisor enabled me to be mindful of how these may affect my coding and interpretation and thus the need to strive to present all the participants' views and experiences as even-handedly as possible.

Trust is a significant aspect of outsider research, particularly when participants may feel at risk of being exposed or ousted by participating (Tang, 2007). Against the backdrop of the government's drive to hold fathers responsible to provide child maintenance, it is conceivable that non-resident fathers would be distrustful of any efforts from strangers to talk to them about non-resident fatherhood. As already referred to, the father respondents may have thought that my recruitment efforts were actually a ploy to obtain financial information about them and/or enforce child maintenance payments. This was demonstrated by two of the fathers in this study who agreed to be interviewed but did not want to disclose their income. Despite reassuring potential participants that it was not the purpose of my research project, distrust of my motivations may have added to the difficulty in recruiting fathers as was evident when approximately twenty potential father participants defaulted on the day of the interview. I began to feel rejected and despaired that I would not be able to complete my research as I waited at taxi ranks, petrol stations, and parking lots for yet another father who did not show up. These men may have known right from the start that they were not going to participate but found it difficult or impolite to directly reject the invitation to participate - similar to the strategy of promise and default that some of them employed with the requests from non-resident children and their mothers.

I was, however, bolstered in my resolve by my positive experiences of the interviews that I conducted with fathers who were willing to participate in the interviews, even though some of these involved conducting interviews in challenging circumstances such as meeting in a parking lot in a township at night with Gift (research assistant) as my guide and bodyguard. I would like to think that my sensitivity towards fathers' possible feelings of shame and fear of

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prosecution aided in the achievement of quality interviews with fathers sharing vulnerably. An example was one father whom I quietly sat with as he cried about feeling like a failure because he was unable to see his child due to inability to pay for transport. He did not say anything afterwards, but his non-verbals communicated a connection with me as he moved closer and leaned into questions. In general, my impressions were that the father participants shared openly during interviews with me, albeit after initial scepticism. I, however, made very sure that I reassured them about the objectives of the interviews. Also, as recommended by Wigginton and Stechell (2016), I made every effort to accommodate their circumstances and challenges to ensure successful interviews. Examples of this include picking up father 8 close to his place of work and driving to a secluded parking lot as he did not have transport to meet me and was wary of giving me his address. I met fathers 5 and 6 at their houses in townships during times when other family members were not around. I met with father 2 at 11pm at night in a parking lot and for father 10 I drove approximately six hours to meet him at his place of work. I had to conduct telephone interviews with father 4 over the course of several nights when he was able to go for a walk and be away from his wife, whom he did not want to know about his participation. Some fathers noted that they were pleasantly surprised that the interviews were "really" about getting their point of view.

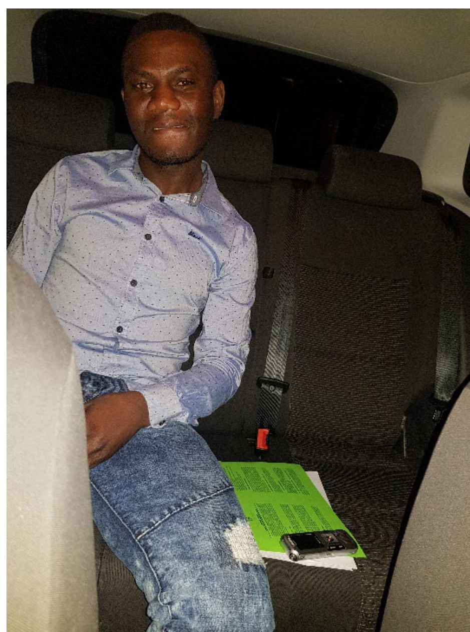

Photo 1: Research Assistant accompanying me whilst I interviewed a father in a dark parking lot

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The privilege of my middle-class socioeconomic status was exemplified especially when I conducted interviews in informal settlements where participants rarely own a vehicle and live in shacks (houses built out of corrugated iron). An example was when I interviewed a father in a remote settlement next to a hill in his shack which was approximately 2 x 1.5 meters with no electricity. We conducted the interview with him on his bed and me on a chair, our knees touching. He offered me water that was in a plastic container next to my chair and fixed himself lunch from a can which was under his bed. This man was hardly able to feed himself, let alone provide for others, which made me acutely aware of his inability to fulfil the father as provider ideal, and how this impacts on his masculinity. He was a proud man who worked hard every day. I had difficulty sleeping that evening, wondering how he was keeping warm since it was winter. I became keenly aware that hard work was by no means the only measure of success, but that my race and the family that I was born to provided me with privilege to a much greater extent than most would be comfortable admitting. This privilege underpinned all that I had accomplished. It is possible that my compassion for, and also “White guilt” about fathers’ poverty favoured fathers in my data analysis. My awareness of these emotional impacts, however, assisted me to not only see such fathers as disempowered and powerless, but also take note of what they could still control and take responsibility for. The latter is illustrated in my highlighting in Theme One in the findings that fathers’ unfulfilled promises contributed to family mistrust, and in Theme Three that fathers did not initiate contact with mothers or children, thereby contributing to the circular miscommunication.

My socioeconomic status in lower socio-economic settings also had the consequence of making me a potential target for crime in the areas where I attempted to recruit participants and conduct interviews. One example of this was when I went to the male hostels where unemployed men seeking work in the city can obtain free accommodation. My visit to the hostels was on recommendation of one of the union leaders from the previous male dominated places of work where I recruited father participants. The loud gangster rap, strewn beer bottles, graffiti, broken windows, and scent of cannabis made me feel quite unsafe when I drove in with my SUV. I felt protective of my research assistants, did a brief presentation of the research in the front courtyard, and left as quickly as possible as our presence seemed to draw a lot of attention. Progressively more hostel residents came out onto their balconies, shouting to neighbours to come and see us, and coming down to join the growing group who were drinking in the courtyard downstairs. Subsequently, I came to learn from a police official that the hostels are

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known for crime syndicates and was dangerous. I was horrified at the potential harm that I inadvertently exposed us to.

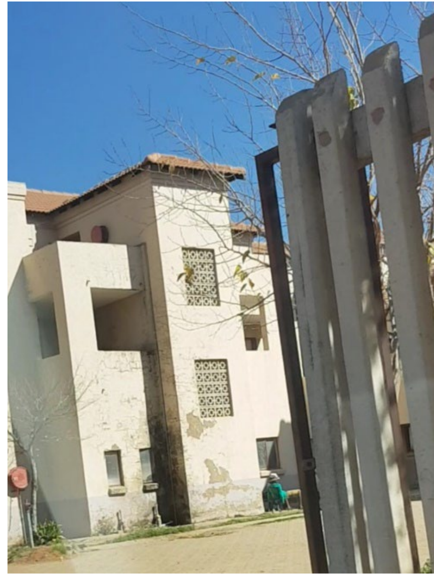

Photo 2: Hostel where unemployed men seeking employment reside

In order to explore the possible negative influences of my outsider status on the collected data, I compared the quality of the data of the interviews that I conducted with those conducted by the Black research assistants who shared a socio-cultural context with the participants and interviewed those participants preferring their mother tongue. The data generated by them was similar to mine, suggesting that it may not have been such a critical data influencer. I think that my training and experience of working as a Clinical Psychologist assisted me in establishing a comfortable relationship and building rapport with participants. For most parts of the interview, I experienced the participants as speaking openly and with ease. They also shared their emotional pain, loss, anger, and anguish regarding the relationships that were the focus in the interviews. Most participants seemed to appreciate my genuine interest and inquiry into their perspectives and reported to have felt understood. This was demonstrated by one grandmother stating that she was relieved to “get it all off her chest” and another aunt who was grateful for the interview and “could finally cough it all out”.

The recruitment contexts are a further consideration that require reflection as these may have influenced the number of recruited participants. Recruitment at schools was challenging as many principals forgot about the meeting we had set, often resulting in me waiting for hours before they were available. The pressure that government schools were under given their limited resources meant that principals and teachers were overworked and that my research

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may have been lower on the list of priorities, which could have exacerbated the difficulty in recruiting. Furthermore, recruiting fathers from their male dominated places meant that I had to overcome structural and political challenges in order to obtain permission from employers and the labour union alike. The union was especially politicised. It did, however, work in my favour to meet with the union that represented their members because their approval enhanced my credibility with potential father participants. In the case of obtaining the unions' support, I relied on my male research assistant Gift who is able to speak various African languages and understood the cultural customs that were relevant in putting my research request to the unions for their consideration. I was present at the meetings but only engaged with the audience when questions were posed that Gift could not answer. Evidently it was successful as we gained their permission to present the research to the employees of that particular union.

Photo 3: Research assistant and I readying to meet a panel of union members

It seemed that many gatekeepers at schools and fathers' places of work assumed that my presence there was to provide interventions, which may have influenced potential participants' expectations. I made sure, therefore, that I explained the purpose of my visit and study in jargon free language to manage such expectations. During the interviews, however, I experienced guilt for being privy to accounts from all family members that provided me with a clear picture of where family members were miscommunicating in a way that maintained relationship strain. This macro perspective was unavailable to the family members and I was aware that it could bring great relief to the family members if these miscommunications where revealed. I consequentially felt complicit in the miscommunication and resulting psychological distress in the family. As a Clinical Psychologist and psychotherapist, I often found myself thinking about the interventions that would be helpful to the families, and I had to remind myself that I was occupying a different role in the research context. I did, however, bring counselling resources to the attention of the participants and hoped that they would make use of it. Furthermore, I

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tried to keep in mind that not only would my research add important knowledge about infrequent non-resident father-child contact, but that I also offered the family members a non-judgmental space to reflect on infrequent father-child contact which in itself may bring insight and change. This latter was borne out in the positive changes that some participants reported in the follow-up interviews.

Lastly, I want to mention that there were moments that my White outgroup status made me feel a sense of loss and I desired to be considered a part of the 'African' culture. An example is one evening after interviews when the township seemed to come to life with lights, laughter, and music when the community members gather in the streets to socialise and the women line up to get their hair done. I deeply desired to join the queue and hear everyone's stories, but I thought that my presence would disrupt the congruence and ease of the conversational flow. I would like to believe that my desire to be 'a part of' assisted in showing acceptance and curiosity during interviews, hopefully resulting in participants feeling that their input was valued.

My reflexivity throughout the research involved acknowledging the influence of the tools I used, who I am, and taking into account that my subjectivity and positionings influence the knowledge I produce. I considered the benefits and challenges regarding my "outsider" status. I also acknowledged and reflected on the influence of my family socialisation, racial, socio-economic and gender as a White, Afrikaans speaking, middle-class, female South African. Sensitivity to these impacts, reflection, supervision, and training as a psychotherapist all contributed towards being respectful, empathic, maintaining the dignity of all participants, and representing the research transparently and ethically.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

It is important for research to be governed by certain principles and processes to protect participants and to ensure that researchers do not abuse the powers with which they have been entrusted (Laher et al., 2019). Before I commenced with the study, I obtained ethical clearance from the Stellenbosch University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Humanities), as well as permission to conduct the research from the Gauteng Department of Education.

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Ethical considerations are important when working with individuals and their interpersonal relationships, especially adolescents. Furthermore, these minors were dealt with particularly sensitively as they could be considered to be a vulnerable population (Horn, 2016). In order to have enhanced the capacity to assent to participate in the study, learners of 14 years and older were targeted in this study as this age group is thought to have a more developed capacity to make informed decisions (Horn, 2016). I approached the learners first to give them a choice of their own with regards to study participation and interest (Horn, 2016). Where children were sourced via a gatekeeper of a community or via their father, child assent and parental consent were worked through with the child individually and his/her parent/guardian prior to commencing with the interview. Furthermore, the study was explained in language that was easily understood to ensure that learners understood the research purpose and process (Horn, 2016). Child Assent and Parental/Guardian Consent forms served as an additional protection mechanism for minors in that parents'/guardians' role is considered to be that of protector and to act in the best interests of the child (Horn, 2016).

Informed consent (see Appendix C & D) was obtained from all the participants in which the following were highlighted: goal of the research; participants' involvement; degree of confidentiality; right to withdraw from the study; and availability of support should any psychological discomfort be experienced due to the research. According to the requirements of Stellenbosch University's Research Committee, participants had a right to the written biographical questionnaire and the semi-structured interview being conducted in a language in which the participants were sufficiently proficient. This option was made available to all participants, and where the participant preferred their mother tongue as an easier way of expressing themselves, the consent form and the questionnaire was presented in their mother tongue by one of the research assistants.

Confidentiality is central to developing a trusting relationship with participants (Griffiths, 2009). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of family relationships and fatherhood, participants were assured that the information they would share would be kept confidential and that a pseudonym will be used when referring to them in research documents. Interviews and biographical data were labelled with general headings including pseudonyms, for example Takani Child Family 1, instead of with participants' names or surnames to ensure anonymity (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Electronic copies of the audio recorded interviews and transcripts were stored on a password protected USB drive and together with any hard copies or material,

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securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private practice. Given that I utilised family systems as research units which may make it possible for family members to identify each other should they read the dissertation, I employed the following measures to further protect the participants' identities:

- The table with the participant demographics which presents the possibility for family members to identify each other, should they read the dissertation, was included for examination purposes but was removed from the final document.
- The family relationship status of the external kin member (e.g., grandmother and maternal aunt) and gender/sex designation of the children are not indicated in the Results chapter, except where such information is required to clearly explicate a specific family relationship dynamic (i.e., where I illustrate that extended kin act as resource to father-child contact). I refer to "the child" and changed the pronouns to "his/her". The initial consideration was to use the pronouns "they/them/their", but these obscured and confused the meaning as it may imply plurality (more than one person/dyads). Subsequently the pronouns "he/she" was applied to all child participants to indicate that it could be either gender in order to protect participants' identities
- Identifying information and potential sensitive information were edited out of excerpts.

In this study, participants were informed, prior to giving informed consent, that they had the right to refrain from answering questions if sensitive or painful memories and feelings were evoked. My credentials and contact information were readily available to all participants. Limits of confidentiality pertaining to my responsibility to report child abuse in cases where such information becomes known was also emphasised. Interviews were conducted in venues that were convenient or accessible to the participants and provided a confidential space, such as the private practice of the researcher or at the house or location of the participant's choice. As indicated in the Reflection section, I had to make compromises regarding my own safety to accommodate the realities of the participants' lived lives.

The topic of the study was of a potentially sensitive nature for the participants. Participants may have thus experienced some psychological discomfort during or after the interviews. This was indeed the case with some participants expressing sadness, disappointment, and anger in their relationships with the father and other family members. An example was a father who expressed that he had "no meaning to his life", a child who was bullied at school and longed for his/her father to protect him/her, and a mother who expressed significant resentment

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towards the father. I empathised and debriefed all participants who expressed distress in the interviews and advised and encouraged them to seek professional support. In the case of the child, I first obtained permission from the child to divulge the information about the bullying to the guardian as I believed that the child was at risk of physical injury at school. The guardian was supportive and motivated to work with the child towards a solution, and the child expressed relief. These participants were then encouraged to seek professional counselling support services and referred to psychological support services in their area. All participants were provided with the contact details for free, as well as paid counselling services. Free counselling services that are provided by the Department of Health could have been obtained at Mamelodi East (071)6098635, Mamelodi West (012)8052119, and Pretoria Central (012)3541654 (See Appendix I). Paid counselling services were available from Clinical Psychologist Michael Oosthuizen 0825844331, Clinical Psychologist Antoinette Nicolaou 0827460479/antoinette@anpsyche.co.za, and Clinical Psychologist Lebo Mhambi 0844881209/lebomhambi@gmail.com. All registered psychologists are considered trained to manage psychological presenting complaints and all psychologists in the public sector are required to see members of the public for therapy. Private psychologists sometimes choose which clients they will undertake in their practices, and therefore all referring private psychologists were contacted and informed about the study and chose to be listed as informed and willing paid services. It should be kept in mind that even where the research process highlighted problematic family or personal issues for the participants, it renders such issues overt and prompted participants to address these issues with the help of professional assistance. Additionally, there is the benefit gained from a greater understanding of the impact of key extended kin on the non-resident father's involvement with his children.

Finally, participants were notified of the opportunity to schedule a feedback session with me after the completion of the study, at which the results of the research would be discussed with participants and any questions answered. None of the participants requested a feedback session.

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CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in the methodology chapter (4.4.5.2), I situated the study within a family systems perspective and conducted an inductive thematic analysis to explore if and how the quality of family relationships influences infrequent contact between non-resident fathers and their adolescent children. In this chapter I present five themes that I identified that best represent my participants' experiences of fathers, fatherhood relationships and father-child contact. An overview of the themes and sub-themes is provided in the following table.

Table 1

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Fathers as mainly material providers	1.1 Mothers and fathers disagree about the adequacy of the father's provision 1.2 Fathers' failure to deliver on promises reinforce family members' distrust
2. Expectations of fathers beyond provision	2.1 Fathers should show interest in children's daily lives 2.2 Fathers should want contact with their children 2.3 Fathers contribute towards their children's academic success
3. Responsibility for father-child contact	3.1 The onus of father-child contact is on the father 3.2 Fathers awaited mothers' contact, but mothers viewed this as "forcing" father-child contact

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	3.3 Parents expected older children to independently initiate father-child contact
4. Extended kin as father-child resource	4.1 Extended kin as link between father and child 4.2 Payment of damages not demanded as prerequisite for father-child contact
5. Changes in families after the interviews	

I analysed the data on a family unit level and these themes therefore capture the most prominent issues that occurred across families. Consequently, as far as possible, I cluster excerpts of members of the same family (such as father, mother/guardian, child, and key extended kin) together to substantiate themes and sub-themes. I do this also to remain congruent to family systems theory that prioritises the relationships and interactions between individuals in a family system, and how these influence father-child contact. By clustering family members' views and experiences, I aim to give a snapshot of relationships and interactions in each family system regarding a specific theme or sub-theme. As indicated in the previous chapter, I do not indicate the gender of the child nor the specific relationship status of the extended family member (e.g., grandmother) to protect the identities of the families and the various family members. I want to note here that, although the literature indicates that the gender of the child may be an important factor in fatherhood, it was not identified as a prominent factor or theme in the analysis of the data.

The letters I (Interviewer) and P (Participant) will be used to differentiate between the interviewer's questions and participants' responses in longer quotations. The individual participants will be identified by a pseudonym, their position in the family (i.e. Father (F), Mother (M), Guardian (G) in the case where the mother is not the primary guardian, Child (C), Extended family member (EK), and the number of family they belong to, e.g., Takani (C1) and 1 indicating Family 1. As noted under the heading Ethical Considerations in the previous

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chapter, the participants' responses were minimally edited to remove identifying information and expressions.

5.1.1 Theme 1: Fathers as Mainly Material Providers

Provision as a topic dominated as a theme in the interviews of all participants, indicating that the subject of fatherhood is still very much viewed through the lens of material provision. The macro-systemic socio-cultural fatherhood constructions that fathers are mainly providers thus prevails. The father's contribution of material capital was used as a measuring stick of effective fatherhood, largely negating other interpersonal capital and value he can contribute towards the child. The father as provider discourse therefore informed family members' attitudes towards fathers, affecting the quality of the family relationships with the father and as a result father-child contact. Two sub-themes were identified. Sub-theme 1 highlights that the most prominent issue of disagreement between mothers and fathers was the adequacy of fathers' provision. Sub-theme 2 illustrates that fathers who were unable to provide tended to make promises which they failed to uphold, and this exacerbated family mistrust and closed maternal family system boundaries.

5.1.1.1 Mothers and Fathers Disagree about the Adequacy of the Father's Provision

Five of the ten fathers were unemployed and could not contribute financially to their children's care. Of the five employed fathers, two had a low income and reported that they were unable to make consistent material contributions to their children's living costs. This left only three of the employed fathers who reported to have a sufficient income to contribute consistently.

Fathers, mothers, and children were asked about the monthly amount of provision from the father that they would consider adequate. Many fathers mentioned that their child's expenses were impossible to predict as child expenses varied from month to months depending on needs. Some mothers and children mentioned practical things they wished the father would pay for, and others had no expectation of provision anymore. There was often a vast difference between the amounts that fathers and mothers indicated, as illustrated in the table below.

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Table 2

Expected Amount of Monthly Provision

	Father	**Mother**	**Child**
Family 1	Father viewed monthly child expenses impossible to predict	R2000	R1250
Family 2	R0 (Unemployed)	Electricity and groceries	As possible
Family 3	R175	As possible	R1250
Family 4	Participant opted not to comment	Participant said she was uncertain	Participant said he/she was uncertain
Family 5	Father view monthly child expenses impossible to predict	R2000	School fees
Family 6	R500	R1750	R3300
Family 7	R0	No expectation	No expectation
Family 8	R1500	Participant opted not to comment	R1250
Family 9	Father view monthly child expenses impossible to predict	R1250	R1000
Family 10	Father view monthly child expenses impossible to predict	R1000	R1000
Average	R435	R1600	R1508

Therefore, it is not surprising that, in all ten families, there was discord between fathers and mothers regarding the father's provision. Implicit family system rules regarding provision remained unclear as agreement regarding child expenses was not communicated directly. For example, Kabello (F1), an employed father who adhered to the maintenance agreement,

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proudly shared how he provided maintenance every month for his child: *"Ah, like any father. I want to provide for him/her, I pay maintenance…!"* Annie (M1), however, felt that he could and should do more:

> *Now he doesn't give anything to the child except for the money from the court. When I did call him to ask for money* [referring to asking for money for school material and support for the child], *he asked me where is the money from the court, because he does not give me any more money than he needs to.*

This was also the case in family 4. Bongani (F4) presented himself as a good provider who provided housing for his child and his/her mother when the latter was unemployed: "*I provide for them. I do for my kids. I go all out for them… Ya, I am so proud, I am so proud of myself."* The mother, Nati (M4), acknowledged the father's contribution during her unemployment: "*So the challenge was that I'm not working, his/her father is paying the school fees, he is paying for transport".* She, however, was angry that he provided housing but not utilities:

> *He said I should meet him at some place, he sent me the direction and took me to some place, he said it was his place, if I want to stay there with the child we can, but only if we like the place. I viewed it and saw it was okay, we moved in in February. When we moved in there was no electricity and no water!!!* [outraged at the father not having paid for utilities].

Similar to the above instances, it was a consistent thread in mothers and fathers' accounts that the fathers reported that they contributed as best they could, whilst mothers believed that they should be more aware of, and responsive to the costs of raising a child. For example, in family 5, Miriam (M5) said: *"Has he ever thought about increasing the money? Because I mean things are expensive, uhm we talk about buying clothes, buying clothes for the child."* Petrus (F5), who was employed and provided consistently, however, reckoned that he was indeed responsive to his child's needs and prioritised those needs readily and immediately*:*

> *I check on them, I check on them, I call them and see… Even yesterday, he/she wanted something, and I had to leave whatever I was doing to drive to get it… And then, cause at some stage, I remember something happened to the child's phone and I had to go and buy them a phone, the child needs to have a phone.*

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In family 3, the father reported that his income was only sufficient to cover his own food and transport for the month. Despite his precarious financial position, Thabo (F3), said that he viewed it a priority to provide for his child Nitaya and that he did so when he had the resources:

> *I'm supposed to help him/her if I can, pay maintenance for the child and take care of him/her.... Sometimes in December when I get something* [referring to an end of year bonus]*, I am able to give him/her money then so he/she can buy clothes but I'm unable to give the child anything during the year.*

Zee (EK3), felt that Thabo should do more to provide for the child's needs as they arose. Zee described the following example to illustrate what she meant by this:

> *I remember this other month... the child wanted a phone because his/her phone fell and broke by mistake but his/her father decided that he is no longer going to buy the child phones because he/she ruin them. But the phone got destroyed for a reason. He just leaves him/her without a phone. So if he buys something it has to always be there, it won't get worn out it should always be it will remain the way it was?* [Annoyed]

She also mentioned that Nitaya told her that he/she experienced his/her father as providing on his terms: "*...my father sends me money when he wants to, so this means I should bath and smell good or bath and be beautiful only when he feels like it".*

Most of the fathers who were struggling to meet their financial obligations said that they were doing the best they could and wished that the mothers could understand and not hold them responsible for periods that they were unable to provide, as illustrated by Toby (F2):

> *It's difficult now because I am unemployed and can't provide anything the child needs. There is nothing I can afford for him/her...That is why there should be an arrangement that's made between the parents...In my case I am in a very very bad financial state at this moment...As soon as my financial situation is sorted I have to cover all commitments. Not that I owe her* [mother] *the money from the past, but that I have to take it* [children's expenses] *all up again...So, when I can provide, I will.*

However, mothers and extended kin who were responsible for the daily needs of the children, were unable to empathise with fathers' reasons for inadequate provision as they experienced their own situations as more dire than the fathers'. In the case of family 9, Busi (EK9) looked

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after the adolescent child (Thato). Busi viewed the father as unburdened by concern for his child's poverty:

> *Because if you care about your child, you make a point of knowing what they have eaten every day, how are they doing. If Thato does not tell him that "I am sick" or that "I need this particular thing" he does not bother himself* [meaning that he does not ask about and provide for his/her needs] *Because he does not take care of him/her.*

The mother, Nomsa (M9), has given up on asking for the father's assistance after years of not receiving any contribution from the father:

> *He is so rude when I tell him the child needs this and that. He tells me that he won't send me that money because he doesn't work or doesn't have that money so he will not send the money that the child needs…His/Her father doesn't take care of him/her, he/she has been staying with me since he/she were still young and the father doesn't care about him/her, he doesn't support the child.*

Nomsa further said that she asked her child to call his/her father to help, but that the child was reluctant to do so:

> *When I tell him/her to call his/her father about school fees he/she would say 'Mom can you please leave dad alone?' He/She would say I am his/her only hope… We are all he/she has, growing up to where he/she is now- it is me and my mother looking after him/her.*

Busi (EK9) said that she tried to compensate for the father's lack of provision, but was also resigned that she often was unable to do so. She, for example, referred to Thato (C9) missing out on a school trip:

> *He did not do anything. Because this child would tell me that they are going on a school trip and I would ask if he/she called his/her father and he/she would say 'Yes I did and he says he does not have money.' I would make a plan when I had money and when I didn't have it he/she could not go.*

The father, Mandla (F9), readily acknowledged that he failed as a provider, but that it was due to his unemployment:

> *So yeah that is my biggest problem that I have and my biggest failing is I am a father that is unemployed who cannot provide for my children.*

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Thato (C9) showed empathy towards his/her father's inability to provide*:*

> *…often times he is so sad, because he then thinks because he can't provide, that he is not good enough for me. And for me, I understand everything. So he thinks he's not good enough for me. He even said 'I think I am not good enough for you'. I love him a lot! He is good enough!*

In family 8, the mother Yvonne was unemployed and lived in a small room with her children. Like most of the mothers and extended kin, she believed that the father would have made a more concerted effort to provide if he really cared for the child.

> *Because if he thought* [meaning that if he considered the child]*, he would try, he would say let us do this and that for the children, especially when it comes to school stuff you see? I would see that at least he tries, he is just failing but now how he is doing it I see he is not trying…He doesn't care, he doesn't care.. He doesn't have stress he doesn't send money.*

Boni (EK8) said that the mother struggled to take care of the children: "*…their mother cannot take care of them alone… and especially because she doesn't earn anything…she has to ask for help from other people."* Thulani (F8) openly said in his interview that he viewed himself as failing his family and that he lost his wife due to inability to provide sufficiently:

> *It is devastating because now as I said to you that my wife moving out of the house it's because… I can't provide like I used to do… I failed her somehow you know and that's why she decided to leave me.*

He was pained though that his value as a man was gauged by his ability to provide:

> *I think I feel… I am punished for not getting a salary that can do everything that they need you know… Although I never do enough as they expect me to but then the little that I can provide I think it is something. You know, what I can do, I have done it, so right now just because I am experiencing a setback all of a sudden I am a bad parent? And you are good? Don't do that, don't judge me like that.*

He was tearful when he told how devastating it was for him that another man provided for his children what he could not:

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The kids told me that there is a guy there actually coming and entertaining them and he's doing stuff that I cannot do you know, yho you have no idea how I am feeling right now [tearing up]*… My life has been taken away from me…*

The mother in family 7, Lindiwe, felt that she was *"suffering"* financially and viewed the father's unemployment as a ploy to avoid maintenance. She said vehemently:

He is so irresponsible, he will never help me with anything. He quit his job because of running away from maintenance and now his excuse is 'I'm not working'. This he does to his own blood! [Angry]*… I don't know if he has a job, even if he had one, they won't tell us, they* [paternal kin and father] *don't want to pay maintenance.*

In turn, the father Johannes viewed the mother as being motivated by greed and refusing to take his unemployment in consideration. He said that his attempts to see his child were at times met with insults by the mother: "*So, if you don't have money, if you go and say I want to see my children, you're going to be called names 'Useless' …that what is really happening.*" Johannes felt strongly that fathers who could not pay maintenance were judged unfairly:

So people think we are running away from maintenance…I think that if you have something, then give it to them [children]. *But they should not put us under pressure if we cannot provide. It would help if they would understand that if the father will give if he can.*

However, the mother in family 10, Tebogo, believed that it was commonplace for fathers not to contribute and the responsibilities of the child being unfairly put on the mothers:

Most of them [referring to fathers] *do not have any responsibilities even if they are staying with the kid, everything is the mother, some help the kids with homework and stuff like that but in most cases fathers are not responsible.* [Annoyed].

She continued stating that she attempted to gain increased financial support from the father, but gave up after multiple failed attempts. She said that she preferred to function independently from the father by making do with less:

I don't want to depend on someone…[referring to father]*… That is why you see sometimes I don't have some things, I don't want to bother someone when I want something for my kids, I just I want to provide on my own and sometimes I can't.*

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The father, Jabulani, in this family empathised with the mother for not understanding when he was unable to provide because he believed that fathers should provide: *"Fathers have to provide and things will be okay… Sometimes when there is not enough money, they* [mothers and children] *don't have to understand if it is not possible, because normally fathers must provide."*

The majority of fathers were unable to provide sufficiently and consistently as only three fathers had sufficient income to contribute continuously. It was evident that mothers, children, and kin mostly viewed the father's contribution as inadequate irrespective of the amount provided. They thought that if fathers cared more about their children and/or were more mindful of children's needs, they would make an effort to contribute more, triangulating either mother and extended kin or mother and child into coalition against the assumed uncaring father as the outgroup member. Fathers, on the other hand, reported that they were thinking about their children and did the best they could to provide for them. They wished for some empathy from the mothers regarding their financial limitations. Mothers, however, were unable to empathise with fathers as they did not have the luxury to say they "don't have". They were faced daily with the needs of their children and had to bear the challenge of meeting these needs.

5.1.2 Fathers' Failure to Deliver on Promises Reinforce Family Members' Distrust

Mothers, children, and extended kin reported that fathers often made promises when they were contacted for money or material provision, but then failed to fulfil these promises. Fathers' false promises were experienced as harmful to children, which elicited protective responses from family members. Yvonne (M8), for example, said that the father of her child: *"…has empty promises, he says to Omphile* [child] *'I will do this, I will do that' and he doesn't do those things for him/her."* She said that the disappointed Omphile no longer reached out to the father to ask for things: *"…even now when he/she want something and I don't have it, I tell him/her to tell the father and he/she will say: 'It's no use telling him.'. When a child says something like that it is painful."* Omphile said that he/she preferred their father to be honest with him/her and that he/she will understand if the father cannot provide:

> *I will want him to tell me that he can maybe try and do better next time, that when he has something, he will give it to me. I am not gonna pressurise him. It is fine if he says he can't do it right now, I understand.*

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In contrast to the above, Thulani (F8) viewed himself as being transparent with his child about his ability to provide:

> *I tell him/her nicely 'you know what, if I can't give something, it doesn't mean I don't want to. The money I am giving your mom, is all I can give. If you want something, we can talk and budget if possible.' I am paying debts. I can't even buy my kids clothes or toys, or stuff for sport.*

Similar to Yvonne in the above example, Mkize (M6), too, was concerned about her child being disappointed and hurt by the father's failure to live up to his promises:

> *He is going to hurt the child because kids have high hopes, for instance, he/she* [child] *would say 'I talked to my dad, he said he will buy me shoes or he's going to take me to KFC' then he doesn't come.*

Mkize herself has given up on contacting the father for money or support*: "It is very rare for me to ask him money. I am tired of asking. So I decided to stop asking him for the money."* She tried to protect her child against disappointment by pleading with the father to be transparent about what he could give the child: "*I told him 'Please don't promise him/her something that you won't fulfil', but he still did."* Enzo (C6), said that he/she feared *"being disappointed again, empty promises, things like that…"* by his/her father.

Takani (C1) illustrated how his/her father's false promises exacerbated his/her resentment towards his/her father:

> *He should tell me that 'I can't or I'll try next year' something like that. I want him to be straight, because really in the process of him lying it makes me more distant and I feel like I am not his child, and that he keeps making promises that he doesn't fulfil. I become more angry and don't want to talk to him anymore.*

His/her guardian Amelia (G1) was of the opinion that Takani avoided contact with his/her father due to his/her father's failed promises:

> *He/She told me he/she saw his/her dad and that he/she refused to go with him. …Maybe he/she is angry… It's because of this thing promising, promising, promising. You know kids , if you promise and promise them…., he* [father] *just come and promise him/her that he will come and maybe they will go to the mall, but he never does that. And what is that*

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> *like for you as a child? Takani will say 'ahh my father is going to take me to the mall' and then he/she is disappointed.*

Kabello (F1), however, felt unfairly treated as only a source of material provision: *"He/she* [Takani] *rejected me a long time ago… She* [mother] *only wants my money and that's all."* [Sad tone of voice]. He also told of how material goods were used as a bargaining tool by his child:

> [The child] *wanted me to buy him/her an electronic thing and I told him/her that if he/she come to visit me I will buy it. But he/she told me that if I want him/her to come visit me- I must buy him/her that thing first. I have told him/her that I do not want to buy him/her to visit me.*

In family 3, Reggie (G3) required financial assistance to support the child, but he reported that he received only false promises from the child's father: *"He said that he will rectify his mistakes, but continues to do nothing. He promised that he will maintain him/her, but up till today he did nothing."* The child, Nitaya (C3), agreed: *"He said he will take care of me every month and he has never done those things."* He/she, as most children, expressed deep emotional pain when the father did not fulfil his promises: *"I don't feel good when he lies to me... It doesn't sit well with me…My heart becomes sore."* Like some of the other children, Nitaya guessed that "*sometimes he doesn't have money and might be afraid to tell me that he doesn't have money."* Despite this awareness of the vulnerability underlying his/her father's false promises, Nitaya gave up on his/her father due to his false promises:

> *I call him and say 'Dad I am sick can I please have money to buy medication?' and he would say 'No problem I will send it.' and then he doesn't send. And then I end up leaving him alone.*

Reggie (G3) confirmed this:

> *He* [father] *called at him/her school, but he/she* [Nitaya] *told the teachers why he/she doesn't answer his/her father's calls* [referring to the father not providing as he promised]. *Yes, that is why he/she does not answer his calls most of the times, because if he/she answers he will come up with stories* [referring to excuses for not sending money the child expected].

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Similar to Nitaya, Lebo (C4) also told of how he/she has lost trust in his/her father due to how he dealt with his/her calls:

> *When I call him and say 'daddy at school they want this and this', then he say 'call me again at one'. When I call him he doesn't take my calls, he switched off the phones and its like that…. At first I was heart broken, and I was crying for that. Then I get used to it, then my mom will tell me 'Lebo call your dad', and I would say 'He won't answer my phone', and then she says 'Let's check' and then I call and then he won't answer my phone again.*

Only three of the fathers admitted to making false promises. The explanation that these three fathers gave for their false promises could shed some light on the complex vulnerability that may underlie fathers' false promises. Mandla (F9) said:

> *I cannot be open to the child about, like when he/she ask for something from me that I cannot afford, I cannot say that I cannot afford. I tell the child that I will see, but I tried my best to do what he/she ask me to do, but I fail. That does not make him/her angry or cross with me, but I still feel embarassed. I cannot say 'I do not have it' but I will say 'I will try'. Sometimes I cannot even fulfil the promise that I made to the child.*

He appreciated that his child did not remind him of unfulfilled promises: *"He/She do not remind me of the promises that I have not kept. I always know that I embarrass him/her somehow but he/she does not show me that I have let him/her down."* Moses (F6) acknowledged that he is not transparent about his inability to provide out of fear that his child will be disappointed: *"No, I usually don't tell him/her I can't afford the things he/she ask because I am afraid to tell him/her. But I do try to help him/her if he/she needs something. I am afraid that my child will be disappointed in me."* Similar to Moses, Petrus (F5) feared that he would disappoint his child by saying that he could not afford what he/she needed and hoped that he would be able to provide at a later point in time:

> *You don't want to disappoint him/her too much. You just try and promise the child and when you get money you deliver it. Like if you can't afford then obviously you disappoint him/her. But if you can't at that point in time, it means you are going to try harder.*

During the process of interviewing the fathers, the research assistants also told me that there may be a cultural lens to fathers' not explicitly saying that they could not meet requests for money or goods. In local black cultures such an explicit expression could be interpreted as the

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father rebuffing the person who made the request and closing the door to future requests, and by default damaging the interpersonal relationship. According to the research assistants, it may be considered culturally more appropriate to respond to requests with "maybe next time" or "I will see what I can do" if one is unable to meet a request.

Nevertheless, many fathers made promises when contacted for provision for their child, which they tended not to fulfil. These unmet promises reinforced distrust in the father and closed maternal system boundaries as mothers wanted to protect their children against emotional pain and disappointment. This also contributed to triangulation with mothers and children aligned and fathers excluded. Children expressed a preference for fathers to be transparent about their inability to provide rather than ending up feeling hurt and resentful about fathers' unfulfilled promises. Fathers, in turn, talked about experiencing embarrassment, shame, and feelings of failure as a father if they were unable to meet the material needs of their child. They seemed to make promises to their children to avoid their children's disappointment and their own shame, and hoped that they would be able to fulfil these promises in the future. The above shows a circular feedback loop between mothers asking fathers to provide money that they could not provide, escalated father shame, fathers' false promises and maternal family mistrust of fathers, which reinforced father shame.

5.2 Theme 2: Father Expectations beyond that of Provider

Despite the foregrounding of material provision as the father's primary role, all the participating family members agreed that children require more than the father's financial contribution. This was demonstrated in the expectations of fathers as indicated in the following three sub-themes. In sub-theme 1, I discuss a pertinent issue that was emphasised across all the families, that fathers are expected to show interest in the daily lives of their children. In sub-theme 2, I highlight how fathers were expected to have an innate desire to see their children. Lastly, I discuss in sub-theme 3 the contribution that fathers are expected to have towards children's academic success at school.

5.2.1 Fathers should show Interest in Children's Daily Lives

Mothers, children and extended kin agreed that fathers ought to actively show interest in their children's lives, but they often perceived fathers as lacking such interest. For example, Thando (EK4) disapproved of the father, Bongani (F4), for his apparent lack of interest in his child:

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> *He should know where his child stays, what he/she eats and not just feed him/her with money when he has it. He should know what he/she eats before he/she goes to bed, what he/she eats in the morning, how he/she progresses at school, he should know what's going on and be up to date… If only this man can give himself time to know what is happening in his child's life, he/she is a child and he/she needs him.*

The mother, Nati (M4), also perceived the father as not showing interest in their child Lebo: *"So I feel like as a father he should ask him/her how often you go play that* [name of sport], *when he/she has her games… So no he doesn't do all those things."* She was perplexed that the father did not ask questions such as:

> *Whether schools have closed and Lebo* [child] *went to visit and whether he/she came back or he/she hasn't, he doesn't know and he doesn't care even care! I'm pretty sure he doesn't even know what he/she wants to be when he/she grows up, he doesn't ask him/her such questions!*

The child, Lebo (C4), who had direct father-child contact as his/her father avoided any contact with the mother, also experienced his/her father as not being interested in listening to him/her telling him about his/her experiences:

> *Ya, I do tell him about myself, but he doesn't take me serious. Like at orientation, when we were at the orientation week, he came to pick me up and I was like 'Dad at school we are doing this!', he was like 'Ya, alright'* [half-heartedly] *then he called a friend and when we drive he calls another friend and things like that. I was like* [hands in the air - giving up]. *It was awkward cause he stopped to call a friend and then I kept quiet.*

He/She felt envious of friends with fathers who asks questions about their lives:

> *Like you know, this other friend of mine, his/her father always take him/her out, take him/her every day, check that he/she did his/her homework -stuff like that, 'Does he/she struggle? Did he/she eat?', things like that. I want my dad to do the same things cause like all the time I see my friend I always wish her dad was my dad.*

The father, in contrast, presented himself as regularly checking in with his child: *"… I call him/her and check on the child, to hear if he/she is fine because you know– he/she is supposed to be well taken care of."*

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The act of 'asking about the child' seemed to be the behaviour that demonstrates that the father is genuinely interested in his child and wants to know about him/her. Fathers who did not ask questions about the child were viewed as not caring. For example, in family 3 Nitaya (C3), who had direct father-child contact, said unhappily that he/she had to take the initiative to tell his/her father about his/her life: *"No, he doesn't ask me, I am the one who tells him."* Reggie (G3) emphasised this when he angrily stated:

> *Actually, he doesn't want to know what is happening in Nitaya's* [child] *life for many days. If he was a good father he would bother himself every day and know what is happening in his/her life…What he/she eats wherever he/she is… Maybe if he calls him/her often and be interested in his/her life, what he/she eats, it is winter now, so things like whether he/she has jerseys or not. He does not bother himself about that.*

Zee (EK3) was astonished that the father did not enquire about Nitaya's (C3) well-being:

> *He will never call you and ask how is the child doing, he will never ask you what is going on in the child's life. For him to enquire about where the child is sleeping, whether he/she has eaten or… how it's going with the child - he doesn't want to know.*

However, the father, Thabo (F3), who seemed to focus on his expected role as provider and his failure to do so, said that before the research interview made him aware of it, he did not know that asking his child about his/her life could be an important way to show his care. He reported that he will act on this new awareness:

> *Yes, as you have showed me this perspective, I will ask him/her face to face or through call… You* [interviewer] *made me think that I should consider about what is happening in his/her life, but I was not aware of this perspective. Now I am insightful, next time when I am talking with him/her I should ask such questions. You are guiding me!* [Sounds as if he appreciates this insight].

Yvonne (M8), who seemed to be unaware of the direct contact between her child and the father, was convinced that the father was not interested in his child's daily life *"He didn't care… not even asking how the first day was for the child he never did, nothing!"* She continued to insist that the father should demonstrate his fatherhood by showing interest: *"He should show that he is a father, he should come, ask him/her… 'What are you struggling with at school, what can we do, you see?'"* The father Thulani (F8), who said that he contacted his child Omphile directly as frequently as financially possible, said that he **was** concerned about his child's well

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being. He said that he asked his child: *"How it is now that I'm no longer there"- like how they are now …"* The child, Omphile (C8), agreed that his/her father was interested in his/her life:*"He asks about friends and tells me that he cares and misses me. He asks me about my life…"*

Busi, (G9) in family 9, viewed the father as uncaring and uninterested:

> *When a person* [referring to father] *does not worry how their child is living, it means he also doesn't care about himself. Because if you care about your child, you make a point of knowing what he/she has eaten every day, how is he/she doing.*

The mother Nomsa (M9) viewed the father's lack of asking questions about the child as an indication of his disinterest: *"He doesn't ask anything about the child, if he/she is okay or what.; he doesn't care about him/her… if he/she has eaten, or what he/she wears."* Nomsa experienced this as the father abandoning his role as father of her child: *"Yes, sometimes he doesn't ask. It is like he/she is mine only"* [referring to the child not having a father].

Most of the family members expressed disbelief that fathers did not know basic information about the children such as age, grade, and clothing size. Lebo (C4) mentioned his/her disappointment that his/her father did not know what grade he/she was in and expected him to know certain biographical information:

> *At that time I was supposed to apply to go to high school. He didn't know that I am going to high school. He was surprised. Things like that, like he must know me. He doesn't know me well. He must know that I am Lebo his child, and things like that but, we don't chat. Like, I don't know him, like I'm scared to tell him some of the things, because we don't chat a lot.*

The mother agreed and was perplexed that the father did not know his/her clothing size or what he/she wanted to be when he/she grows up. Nati (M4) stated: *"You can call Lebo's father and ask him what is he/she good at, he doesn't even know… he used to call me and ask what is Lebo's shoe size."*

Similarly, Nomsa (M9) was exasperated with the father for not knowing the child's age, grade, or school uniform size:

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> *He asked me 'How old is he/she turning?' I told him and then he said 'He/she is that old then what grade is he/she doing?' I told him and also told him 'What kind of a father doesn't know such things about their child?'; even the school uniform, he doesn't know what size he/she is wearing.*

Thato (C9) said that when his/her father called and showed interest in him/her and asked about his/her life, he/she felt that *"I am very important to him, that he loves me.; He would ask me about my friends and what kind of friends I have…".* His/her father, Mandla (F9), said that he demonstrated his love for his child by

> *…calling him/her and talking to him/her and make jokes, asking him/her how he/she is doing at school, checking if he/she does her homework, classwork, and how he/she is doing in his/her studies in general.*

Mandla, however, battled to value this kind of father contribution in the absence of provision:

> *But somehow when we speak, we say that we love each other. I feel embarrassed most of the time and I cannot get myself to talk to him/her. I will say 'Bye, I will talk to you tomorrow'. Because I know, somehow I fail to provide for him/her.*

When probed if he thought that his child could benefit from regular and consistent contact and a close relationship with him, Mandla aknowledged that he could play a role in advising and protecting his child, but eventually he led the conversation back towards the default narrative of "fathers are only as valuable as their money" and said *"I must try my best to provide… I can do more…"* [referring to more financial provision].

Toby (F2) did not emphasise a loving bond with his child, but spoke about fathers' roles in showing interest and protecting children:

> *We fathers need to know more and more. We need to just talk with them openly and make sure that they are not hiding things. If there are some things that are bothering him/her inside emotionally, he/she just need to come out and speak. And once the child speaks, you can address that issue they have…From time to time he/she would tell me that he/she is teased at school. Such little things he/she will usually tell me.*

In summary, fathers were expected to show interest in the child's life by inquiring and asking specific questions about the child's well-being and daily lives. Mothers, children and kin were

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perplexed that fathers did not ask these specific questions and experienced it as the father being disinterested and uncaring. However, fathers reported caring much for their children but they often did not link asking specific questions and knowing basic information about their child as illustration of their care of, and interest in, their child. It, therefore, seems that a lack of clear communication between family members about care expectations from fathers and fathers' not explicitly communicating what they considered demonstrations of their care, led to inaccurate assumptions about the fathers' caring about his child.

5.2.2 Fathers should want Contact with their Children

Intertwined with the expectation that fathers should express interest in their children's lives, mothers, children, and extended kin expected the father to want to see the child and was astounded when the father did not initiate this. For example, Lerato (EK6), expected fathers to frequently visit the child:

> *… they should come and check on them and check on them* [meaning fathers should repeatedly visit their children]*…Just show yourself in the child's life, so he/she can know that you love him/her, he/she can know that you are his/her father.*

The mother Mkize (M6) agreed and viewed the father's lack of contact as abnormal and selfish:

> *Maybe he was selfish because I don't think there's a normal person who would just do nothing* [referring to not having contact with the child]*… Doing nothing while he knows that he has a kid and everything, and detach himself from the situation you see?*

Enzo (C6), the child, was devastated about his/her father's unenthusiastic response to meeting him/her for the first time in over ten years:

> *Uhm, because the first time I was sending him a text message, I was expecting him to jump* [meaning he/she expected an eager response from his/her father to have contact with him/her] *and say 'Okay, when do you wanna meet, when, where?' things like that. It should not have to be me asking him the questions that he needs to be asking me. He should be getting excited to meet his own child.*

Similarly, Miriam (M5), who lived with her child near the father and, thus making frequent visits possible, was shocked that he did not make use of the opportunity to see his child Siya: *"This person* [father] *can go over eight months without seeing Siya!... He has to take the first initiative* [referring to making contact with the child]*, no one else can take that initiative, but*

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himself." She urged the father to initiate contact with his child to build a relationship, but felt defeated by his lack of responsiveness:

> *There isn't any relationship, he is present, but there is just no communication between them, he would rather speak to me than speak to him/her…I don't even think he sees the point, according to me I don't think he sees the point. I tried helping him to see that what he is doing is wrong but if I don't see any change then…* [meaning she gave up].

Nati, the mother in family 4, was also shocked that the father did not visit when he was in the neighbourhood, and recalled:

> *…he drove off without visiting him/her then the child was very upset because he had not seen him/her for weeks and he did not use the opportunity to check in with the child* [Sad expression on face].

She was astonished that the father seemed unaffected by the lack of contact with his child: *"There was a time I used to call him and ask him 'How do you feel not talking to Lebo* [child]*? Not calling him/her or not coming to fetch him/her to go to the mall with him/her, how do you feel?'"* Nati, as most mothers, viewed the father's limited contact as evidence of the father's lack of desire for father-child contact:

> *I was willing that his/her father can come and spend time with him/her but then the father is not interested. …I communicate with the father sometimes and I give his/her father a chance to go but then he is always not interested in those things so yeah* [sigh].

Thando (EK4), also felt strongly about the father's lack of making contact:

> *So, I ask him/her* [child] *'Your father does call you?' and he/she would say 'Yes, when he wants to he calls, only when he feels like it'. So according to me he is bad, he does not play any father figure role, there's no place where I can say he plays a role, he is just a father* [meaning the father is only defined as per biological connection to the child].

Yvonne (M8), the mother in family 8, found it incomprehensible that the father did not visit his child when he was in town: *"He was here in the neighbourhood, he didn't come to me so maybe he can see the child; he had the chance to see him/her but did not do it."* She expected the father to want contact with his child and asked an elder family member to tell the father to visit their child:

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> *It is not right at all! Even his family has tried talking to him, it is like we are forcing it on him and it shouldn't be like that you see?* [meaning father doesn't contact the child]… *"He doesn't come to see the child, he doesn't call he doesn't do anything so he is not a father, if he is a father he is supposed to see his child, right?"* [Astonished]

Boni (EK8) also spoke of the father's apparent lack of enthusiasm to see his child:

> *When he/she heard that the father came, the child wanted to see him. He* [father] *never had that excitement of coming to see his child. He should have made an effort to come see the child even if he was only here for two days. The child would have been satisfied.*

Similarly, Lindiwe (M7) viewed the father as without a role if he did not have contact with their child Gift*: "He doesn't even show a role in my life or the children's life… He is not here. He is not calling… he is not even coming here to check us or to take the kids, you see?"*

Mothers and extended kin believed that fathers making an effort to see their children would demonstrate their love to their children – something that they believed the children much needed. For example, Annie (M1), despite resenting the father and mainly emphasising the father's duty to provide financially, also indicated that the father's demonstration of love for his child would be beneficial and welcome:

> *Yes, he* [referring to the father] *can give that love… Give him/her love, that one. You know come and take him/her that's fine, take him/her to school, going to everything and guide him/her, ya, guide the kid. As a father, guide and love.*

In family 9, where the parental relationship had been completely severed due to resentment, the mother Nomsa (M9) also still viewed father-child contact as illustration of fatherly love which would contribute to her child's happiness:

> *…give him/her the love he/she needs and be with him/her - even if he doesn't do anything for him/her* [meaning that he does not provide] *because he doesn't have the means. At least come and see him/her, that would make him/her happy in his/her heart.; You must sit down with your child, down and talk to him/her and play with him/her - he/she will be okay then.*

In family 2, Koagile (EK2) believed that children need the presence and love of their fathers: *"They need that father figure, they need him to love them… we need that love from that father*

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figure…" She, therefore, encouraged Toby (the father) to take the children with him to his parents' home over the holiday: "*Why don't you go with them… it's the time that you can get that bond with your children. It's the time that you can give them love that they need."* Joyce (EK10) urged the father to have contact with his child as evidence of his affection:

> *I think for a child it would be good to have that dad you can visit, you can meet and talk to about, a confidant… It creates a very good emotional state.; …children they need to feel love. I tell him how important it is to have a relationship with your child so you can help this child be a happy child…*

Takani (C1) who told in the first interview that he/she rejected the father due to limited provision, said that in a follow-up interview that he/she had changed his/her position since then and now prioritised father-child contact as love:

> *Since we last spoke, I have changed my expectation. Before, I expected much of him* [referring to additional maintenance]*, but now I want him and me to have the father-child relationship. But I don't expect that much. So, I really want us to be together and have a bond. I actually wanted him to love me… Love means, to be always there with me, to support me, to share moments with me and make memories.*

The father Kabello (F1) agreed with Takani's view: *"No money will ever be enough, the most important thing is to spend time with your child so that they know you, even if you don't have money."* He wanted a close relationship with his child, but experienced the mother as influencing the child to reject him:

> *What I think is that the mothers always influence the children to take issue with their fathers, and children always believe their mothers. Families should make sure that both mother and father get 50/50 time with the child. The child should know who his/her father is. Fathers have the right to see their children.*

All ten families agreed that lack of father-child contact caused emotional distress for the child, but this did not seem to lead to positive changes in father-child contact. Distress was both reported on and manifested in the interviews by the children. Boni (EK8) spoke about the child's distress about not seeing their father: *'The child was very hurt, you could tell he/she wished to see the father, and because he/she have a small heart he/she even cried.'* Omphile's (C8) emotional distress was evident in the following excerpt:

> *I: Why haven't you spoken to your mom and dad about how you feel about your dad?*

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> *P: I just don't feel like talking about it…it will break my heart* [tearing up]*…I am angry that my father do not come and see me.*

Fikile (C10) could not make sense of his/her father's decrease in contact with him/her: *"I don't know, I don't know what happened* [crying]. *Sometimes it's like I don't have a father…*[sobbing] *I'm very heart broken."* He/she attempted to update him-/her-self about his/her father's life via social media, but was hurt by seeing photos of him and his new family, illuminating his/her marginalised status. Fikile (C10) cried: *"I see on Facebook and WhatsApp… it is very painful because I see them* [starts crying] *taking pictures together, going out together… it would say 'Enjoying family moments'* [cries]*."* The father acknowledged that the child may interpret his lack of contact as a measure of his/her importance, but seemed to comfort himself that **he** knew it was not the case: *"I think he/she might assume that he/she doesn't matter, I think he/she might* ***think*** *he/she doesn't matter that much and meanwhile he/she matters a lot."*

Similar to Fikile, Takani (C1) felt rejected and hurt due to lack of father-child contact: *"I felt like maybe I am unwanted. Rejected, ya and useless"* [Sad expression on face]. He/she said that he/she wished for his/her father to experience the same frustration and pain he/she did due to the father's lack of responsiveness to contact:

> *I started developing this type of an anti-body against him and then I wanted to prove him wrong and study hard and become a Prof or a Doc so that when he is old and will come crawling and then I can ask him for DNA and tell him I don't believe he is my pa and then make him wait, like take more that ten years, so he will be feeling stressed and then he will feel how I feel.*

The majority of the children did not overtly speak to parents or kin about the emotional distress they experienced due to lack of father-child contact. They avoided showing painful emotions due to not wanting to upset themselves, cause upset in the family and/or appear to be disrespectful of parents. Omphile (C8), for example, said that he/she *"didn't want to interfere in their* [mother and father] *love life"* by asking them for more frequent contact with his/her father. He/she also reported that he/she could not face the turmoil around missing his/her father: *"I just don't feel like talking about it…it will break my heart"* [tearing up].

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Similar to Omphile, Nitaya (C3) did not voice his/her emotional distress. In his/her case he/she feared that his/her father may view it as disrespectful and that it would cause additional complications in their relationship: *"…my heart becomes sore and I just keep quiet…the reason that I don't tell him is that my heart might end up broken, because he will see my anger as swearing at him"*. Thabo (F3), his/her father, was not aware that Nitaya (C3) was unhappy with him and seemed to assume that he/she would tell him if he/she was. He said: *"we don't talk often, but I don't think he/she has a problem like that because he/she has never said so"*.

Siya (C5) felt sad when he/she declined his/her father's invitation to go home with him after a day excursion because he/she believed that it would hurt his/her mother:

> *It was sad. It was, but then I just left it how it is. I didn't even tell my mom that he asked me if I wanna go the house… She would just say 'Yes, it's fine', but deep down in her heart, I know it's gonna be painful for her. So, I just left it. I didn't say anything.*

Kaya (EK5) affirmed that Siya rarely shared his/her emotional distress about missing his/her father: "*Three or four months pass without him contacting him/her. And he/she will sometimes say to us that he/she is angry… But when the father talks to him/her he/she does not feel to tell him"*.

This sub-theme highlighted that fathers were expected to make contact with the child as an illustration of his love and affection for him/her. Mothers and extended kin could not understand that a father may not "want" to see his child and interpreted this as a lack of love. Children experienced limited contact with their fathers, especially if contact was possible, as rejection. Mothers' assumptions around fathers' lack of care and children's experience of rejection aligned mother and child to both view the father as lacking in affection for his child and triangulated the father as an outsider. Similar to the previous sub-theme, this also illustrates how uncommunicated expectations of what constitutes normative behaviour for caring fathers led to negative assumptions about the father's interest in his child, which, in turn, strained family relationships. Furthermore, children often did not share their emotional distress about limited father-child contact, especially with fathers. Such sharing, however, has positive feedback potential that could encourage the family system to open boundaries in aid of father-child contact.

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5.2.3 Fathers should contribute towards the Child's Academic Success

All participants in the ten families mentioned in some way that the father has a specific contribution to make in supporting children's academic functioning and success. The mothers, kin and fathers agreed that fathers should show an interest in children's schooling and that such interest could contribute to encouraging children to perform at school. Tebogo (M10) said:

> *If the father encourage their kids and about how are they doing… I think it encourages them when they go to school, whether his/her school uniform is okay, everything at school is okay, no one is bullying him/her, I think it is good if fathers are doing that.*

The father Jabulani (F10) said that he tried to encourage his child's academic performance, but that his infrequent contact with him/her hindered the effectiveness of his attempts at academic encouragement:

> *They* [referring to mother and child] *said he/she is not doing well on that learning area, how can we help him/her?... I will speak to Fikile* [child] *and try to motivate him/her, telephonic motivation and then after some weeks we don't talk, I don't think it is that much effective unlike if you have an active relationship, it becomes more effective…*

Agreement about the importance of children's school progress seemed to be a rallying point between parents with acrimonious relationships. For example, Yvonne (M8) believed that it was a father's duty to keep track of his child's school progress: *"He* [referring to father] *should show that he is a father, even if we don't stay together he should come… check his/her books, ask 'What are you struggling with at school?'"* She said that her child told her that the father encouraged him/her to focus on his/her school work: *"He/she* [referring to child] *just told me that he* [father] *said he/she should be serious about school, even if he/she plays sport, books are more important?"* [She sounded pleased about this]. The father Thulani (F8) also emphasised his contribution when it came to Omphile's school work:

> *I always went through his/her books to see if he/she did his/her work properly. I would tell him/her: listen to your mom, do your school work, school is important., I am saying this because I love you, I want you to do better than me so that you are not as poor as I am now.*

Similarly, Kaya (EK5) expected the father to keep track of the child's academic progress and to intervene if required:

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> *He* [referring to father] *must also engage in his/her school work. He must also find out where the child is weak, where the child is strong, what is happening at school. 'Did you enjoy your school? What are the teachers saying?' you know communicate with the school to find out how the child is performing. Do something when it is that he has found out that the child is not doing well. He must come back to the child and say, 'You know the teacher is saying there that you are not doing well in the subject. What is wrong, how can I help you, what can I do?'*

Petrus (F5) agreed that fathers should track their children's school progress and said that he *"often calls his/her mother and says 'How is he/she coping with school and everything?' and if he/she have problems I will speak to him/her"*. Mandla (F9) also said that he asked about his child's schoolwork when they spoke on the phone: *"I ask him/her how he/she is doing at school, checking if he/she does his/her homework, and so on."* If he was unable to assist him/her with schoolwork, due to him living far away, he *"would tell him/her that if he/she does not understand something in class to ask for help, that is the advice that I have."* Mandla (F9) emphasised academic success as increasing the probability of a tertiary education, which was considered the pathway to a good income:

> *I am always telling him/her straight…if he/she get excellent marks from school he/she may get a bursary to study. But if he/she does not do well at school he/she will be in the same bad position that I am in. I tell him/her I want him/her to have a better future.*

Seven out of the ten fathers intervened and/or were asked to intervene when problems around school work occurred. For example, in family 9 the mother or aunt contacted the father if the child was late for school. Mandla (F9) stated:

> *His/her mother will call me to tell that Thato*[child] *has done this and this then I will call him/her and ask him/her not to do that again and he/she would just agree with me… The child's mother would say he/she get late at school to me and she knows that I will just ask him/her nicely. Sometimes I get a note saying Thato* [child] *came late for school.*

Similarly, the father Thulani (F8) intervened when the mother told the father about the child's unruly behaviour at school:

> *She* [referring to mother] *would complain a lot about Omphile* [child]*, "at school they say the child doesn't listen, he/she didn't do his/her homework". Things like those. If*

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> *he/she tells me those things and it does not stop, I make sure to go there and speak to the child.*

Bongani (F4) also recalled the mother calling him about the child being resistant to school work: *"She* [referring to mother] *does tell me: maybe he/she doesn't want to read or maybe he/she doesn't want to do something."* The mother, Nati (M4), however, was unhappy with the father shouting at the child, instead of calmly speaking to him/her directly:

> *So I ended up calling his/her father and explained to him that I feel like Lebo* [child] *is no longer into school like he's/she's lost interest and his/her father said 'Okay, I will come by later on to talk to him/her.' Instead of him coming so they can sit down and talk with him/her, he just called and shouted at him/her 'Why don't you want to go to school?!'*

Miriam (M5) relied on the father as disciplinarian to alleviate her from always having to be in the 'bad guy' role:

> *I just had to be upfront with him because these are things that I cannot do by myself, I think I need a man input… things we talk about for him to be involved, for him to you know, yes to say something when* [name of child] *has done wrong, I can't always be the bad person.*

Most fathers were responsive to the mothers asking for their disciplinary input, as seen with Petrus (F5): *"Like I'm saying when he's/she's giving problems with school work, when he/she go out and comes home late - I call immediately and reprimand him/her."*

The fathers' responsiveness to mothers' requests to intervene in the child's academia is indicative that when there is agreement about roles, boundaries are more permeable with mothers reaching out to fathers to become more involved, and fathers feeling that they have a role to play.

The children also mentioned in their interviews that fathers made a point of inquiring about schoolwork when they had contact with their fathers. Some experienced this as encouragement. For example, Siya (C5) experienced his/her father as encouraging him/her to perform academically and that he was responsive to assist him/her with academic challenges:

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> *If my report is not that good, he encourages me to do well and tells me I must read my books. Like last term, when I was writing exams- he will call me and told me to study hard. So, he encourages me to do good things. He ask me what subjects I don't understand. When I need help, he helps me to get extra classes. He also bought me a phone when I passed.*

Similarly, Thato (C9) appreciated his/her father's encouragement to do well at school: *"I should focus on my books and he wants me to have a great future unlike him. He wants me to finish school because he didn't. Like you won't have a job if I don't have grade twelve."* He/she wanted to make his/her father proud by excelling at school: *"I feel like he doesn't want me to disappoint him the way he disappointed his parents. If I finish my school I want to make my parents proud of me."*

Often, however, children were frustrated with fathers' focus on schoolwork to the neglect of other areas in their lives that represented for them fatherly interest and love, as illustrated in Gift's (C7) account of a conversation with his/her father:

> *P: I tell him 'I went to school, I am doing fine, I got this and this in my marks and that is it.'… It feels like he asks one thing all over again. When he calls I just know that he is going to ask me one thing all over again and we just talk for one minute thirty seconds and that is it* [tearing up].
>
> *I: What would you share with him?*
>
> *P: How much I miss him. I just want that to change, I want him to ask me about different things.*

This sub-theme illustrates that fathers' interest in children's school progress was viewed by fathers, mothers and kin as a resource to encourage school performance. Mothers relied on fathers to intervene as disciplinarians when children did not perform well at aschool, and fathers were receptive to mothers' requests for academic discipline. The adults overlaped in their understanding of the family system rules and fathers benefited children when they were involved in the child's academia. In this case the adults were unified and respected the hierarchical separation between adults and children that avoids harmful triangulation, as in the case when parent and child align against the other parent. Although the majority of the children appreciated their fathers' encouragement of their academic performance and knew that they

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were acting in the children's best interest, they were often frustrated or disappointed with fathers focusing on school-related matters to the detriment of other areas of conversation.

5.3 Theme 3: Responsibility for Father-Child Contact

In five of the families (1, 6, 7, 9, and 10), there was direct father-child contact, four families (2, 3, 4 and 8) had both direct father-child contact as well as father-mother contact, and one family (5) only had father-child contact through the mother. At the time of the interviews, most father-child contact took place via cell phone less than once a month. The purpose of the contact was usually related to asking for material things, especially when the mother was involved, but also included father and child calling each other or messaging to check in. Nevertheless, in all ten families the various family members made assumptions about whose responsibility it was to initiate father-child contact. None of these assumptions or expectations were overtly communicated, which resulted in unclear rules of engagement and family members waiting on each other to make contact. When they were not contacted as expected, each assumed that the family member they expected to make contact did not want regular father-child contact. This is in line with the family systems theory principle that infrequent and unclear communication strain the family system's ability to develop and negotiate rules and norms around acceptable ways of making contact and straining family relationships. This theme is made up of three sub-themes which will be presented in the following section. The first sub-theme highlights how the onus of father-child contact is on the father. In the second sub-theme I discuss how fathers await contact from the mother as permitting/approving his presence, but that mothers viewed this as 'forcing' father-child contact. The third sub-theme illustrates that parents expected their older children to independently initiate father-child contact.

5.3.1 The Onus of Father-Child Contact is on the Father

Mothers and extended kin expected the father to initiate contact and viewed it as his responsibility to make practical arrangements to have father-child contact. For example, Lindiwe (M7) believed that the father should contact the child: "*I think he is the one who must call Gift* [child] *because he is the one that has the telephone number. And he is the one, that even if he is using someone else's number HE can call!"* The father, Johannes (F7), sometimes called his child without the mother of his child knowing and also secretly met with him/her to see him/her. He, however, avoided going to his child's home to have contact with him/her

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because he feared unpleasant confrontations with his/her mother: *"... they* [children] *ask me 'When are you coming?'. I'm honest with them, 'I'm afraid of that woman.'"*

The mother and grandmother in family 5 also insisted that the onus for father-child contact is on the father. Kaya (EK5) recalled how she did not want her grandchild to see his/her father when the paternal grandmother invited him/her, because it was not initiated by the father himself:

> *I don't want him/her to go, because the father is not taking initiative, the grandparents* [referring to the paternal grandmother] *want to see the child, and that is only when he'd interact with the child. You see, so it's just as good as the child being here, not going there, because it is not HIS initiative... The responsibility is on his side because he doesn't stay with the child, the child stays with us. He's the one who has to show interest in the child.*

The mother in this family, Miriam (M5), shared the grandmother's expectation that the father should initiate contact:

> *I believe that he should be the one initiating that* [referring to father-child contact]*, you know that bridge, he doesn't do that. He is the adult, he has to take the first initiative, no one else can take that initiative, but himself. My child cannot start picking up the phone and checking 'Hey guys how are you doing?'*

Petrus (F5), however, avoided the mother's house because he felt that he disappointed her parents by not marrying her:

> *...the grandmother and grandfather, they are there so, they play a very vital role because they are always there... I take and get out* [meaning he keeps his visits brief if he goes]. *It's not comfortable, basically you see, to sit at the grandparents, more especially if you didn't marry their child* [meaning grandparents are disappointed]. *It's difficult, ya to speak to them, to stay with them and talk. Ya, it's awkward.*

Mkize (M2) also viewed it as the father's responsibility to initiate contact with his child: *"No, it's not about me it's about him. If he wants to see the child, HE must come and see him/her... There's nothing holding him back from my side to say I don't want him to see the kids."* Toby (F2) the father agreed that there are no active obstacles for him to contact the child: *"I don't see any obstacle so far."* Kgomosto (EK2), however, thought that the father avoided the

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children's primary residence after he divorced the mother, in fear of being shamed for leaving the mother: *"…he doesn't want to see us…we call him to fetch the children, also he didn't come…maybe he doesn't want to confront us with his eyes."*

Moreover, all the mothers emphasised that they did not deny the father access to the child, and that it was up to the father to make the effort to contact his child. Mkize (M6) proudly stated that she never rebuffed the father: *"Because there was never a time where he wanted to visit him/her and then I refused him, never."* She blamed the father for not having initiated contact with the child as she expected: *"He never initiated everything from his side. It must be from him."* The child, Enzo (C6) agreed and added that the father's possession of the maternal grandmother's contact information affirmed his choice not to initiate father-child contact: *"My mom always told me that she never ever told my dad not to visit me. Like my dad always knew where my grandmother lives and he could easily get my mother's numbers from her."* He/she was greatly disappointed with his/her father not initiating practical meeting plans upon first contact. When he/she was asked if he/she reached out to his/her father about setting up a meeting, he/she said: *No, because I expected it from him."* The father Moses (F6), however, similar to most of the other fathers, thought that making contact would be an imposition on the mothers. When he was asked why he did not talk to the mother about visiting his child, he said:

> *I thought I was giving too much stress… I just stopped the contact and then I thought maybe I was putting pressure on her, maybe she got things to do… Even myself I never tried to contact the mother because maybe I am disturbing her.*

He wanted to see his child, but feared that this would be an imposition on the mother:

> *Me, I was little bit frustrated, but I accepted that* [referring to not seeing his child]. *I told myself that I won't push myself on the mother to see the child* [meaning impose self on mother]. *I was just pained.*

Moses (F6) attempted to see his child at an extended kin's house, and wanted to get the mother's contact details to reach his child, but avoided it after he felt threatened by a male maternal family member.

Busi (G9) the primary caretaker of Thato (C9) expected the father to approach her to have contact with his child and stressed that she would not oppose it:

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> *If he can show respect and ask to see his child, I will not refuse because it is his child. If I refuse this child will also get hurt. But if he comes to me with respect and tell me 'May I please see my child for such a period of time', I will not refuse.*

Tebogo (M10) also illustrated how she did not 'refuse' father-child contact. She expected the father to know that he is allowed to see the child and should initiate contact, since she did not deny him access:

> *Him as a father must be the one contacting him/her…; I can allow him to meet with him/her I cannot say 'no' when he says 'Can I meet Fikile* [child] *in town, one two three…?' I can allow that to happen.*

The father Jabulani agreed: "*…she never denied me access it is just me - I haven't arranged it."* He held himself accountable for the limited father-child contact because he did not initiate contact: *"I do not do it from my side is my understanding … and that will make her not to call me also… ya that is on my side"* [meaning his lack of initiation may discourage his child to make contact].

Nati (M4) proudly stated that she did not stop the father from making contact and wanted the father to contact the child:

> *I never denied the father access to his child. But I think also for me to be okay, is when I can see her father willingly calling Lebo* [child] *and telling him/her that 'I miss you and I'm coming to see you.' 'I'm coming to fetch you' or he calls 'Nati, I'm coming to fetch Lebo.' I don't have a problem. I never denied him access.*

She said that she did not want to be blamed by the child for father-child disconnection:

> *So I once told myself that I'm not going to deny him a chance to be with his child, Lebo* [child] *will not understand why he/she can't see his/her father, when he/she is old he/she will think I am a bad mother such that I didn't want him/her to see his/her father, let me pack my bags and stay with my father because she denied me access to my father, he/she won't be understanding the reasons why.*

In this sub-theme, I focused on mothers, children and extended kin expecting fathers to initiate contact with the child. Mothers and extended kin were proud of never denying the father access to the child and viewed it as implied permission and open access granted to the father to contact

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his child. Fathers who did not initiate contact were blamed for father-child disconnection and were viewed as lacking in desire to contact the child. Children felt hurt and rejected when fathers did not initiate contact. Fathers, however **did** desire contact with their children and a few initiated contact that the mother was not always aware of. Fathers avoided initiation of contact in fear that their presence causes distress, and is unwelcome to the mother and extended kin.

5.3.2 Fathers awaited Mothers' Contact, but Mothers viewed this as "Forcing" Father-Child Contact

As opposed to the previous sub-theme in which I highlighted that mothers and children expected fathers to initiate contact, fathers expected mothers or other family members to inform him that his contact was wanted or needed. When fathers explained infrequent father-child contact in their interviews, they often said: "they never called me". The majority of mothers, children and extended kin, in turn, viewed their initiation of father-child contact as "forcing" a father-child relationship. For example, when Petrus (F5), who had father-child contact predominantly through the mother but also had the child's direct number, was asked how father-child contact is initiated, he said that he waits for the child to mention to her mother that she misses him or wants to see him, and for the mother to inform him about this:

> *Yo, he/she misses me a lot when I'm not there hey… But obviously he/she won't call me direct. He/she will tell the mother and then the mother will tell me and say 'hey you know…' children they are, he's/she's close to his/her mother and you know the thing that I am not staying with them, maybe he's/she's not so open to me.*

The child Siya (C5), in contrast, was pained that he/she only had contact with his/her father as reactive to his/her initiation: *"Sometimes he comes and visit, only when I tell him that I miss him… I have to communicate with him, only when I call him, that's the time we talk."* The mother Miriam (M5), who desired and encouraged father-child contact, had started giving up on such a relationship in response to what she experienced as the father's lack of father-child contact initiation:

> *Because as a parent you have to enforce, you have to force, you force it if you see that it's* [referring to father-child contact] *not happening. If they* [father and paternal family] *want a relationship with him/her they will do it, I can't force my child on them or I can't force myself on them. And if they do, my arms are ready to welcome them.*

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Moses (F6), the father who had not had contact with his child for over ten years, patiently waited for when he would be contacted and readied himself for it:

> *I told myself that he/she will grow up and he/she will know where his/her father is* [meaning that the child knows how to get in contact with him]. *That is what I told myself because when she* [referring to the mother] *called me and told me that 'I am having a problem, this child wanted to see you', I was expecting that.*

He expected the mother to act as a facilitator between father and child: *"To me, I thought maybe it is the time she* [referring to the mother] *is bringing the child Enzo close to me. I realized, that call that she gave to me is the mother introducing the child to the father."* The mother Mkize (M6), however, viewed her involvement beyond telling the father that the child wanted to meet him, as forcing the relationship:

> *…there is nothing I can do. I won't force him to love or visit you* [speaking to child]. *I wouldn't do that. If me going to him again and it doesn't help, we can not force the relationship with someone* [referring to child] *he doesn't want a relationship with.*

Yvonne (M8) also viewed her role as father-child contact facilitator as "forcing" the relationship. She said that she has given up on getting the father to keep in contact and relied on extended kin to urge the father to contact the child: *"What can I say because I try to speak to* [father's name] *but he continues to live the way he is living now* [referring to the father living away from the child]. *I can't force him to love his children if he doesn't want to, so no"* [meaning if the father does not initiate contact she also will not]. She continued to illustrate her willingness to be responsive towards the father's initiation of contact, but felt otherwise out of options regarding father-child contact:

> *When he wants then he can tell me when he wants the child, so that I can prepare for him/her so that I can know if he is fetching him/her or not. He should not tell me when I am at work that he is coming. But because he chose what he chose* [referring to working far away from his child] *there is nothing I can do about that.*

Joyce (EK10) agreed, but thought that if she could talk with the father, they could find a solution without "forcing" a relationships: *"I think if he will allow me to talk to him* [meaning take her call] *it would be easy, if I talk to him I believe we will find a way forward not to force him to take this child."*

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Thabo (F3) viewed the mother as mediating father-child contact as culturally normative. Furthermore, he expected the mother to be in a better position to gauge when contact with this child would be appropriate and not upset the stepfather the mother and child resided with:

> *…according to culture, it was supposed to be his/her mother who gets me into contact with the child, she has the chance that when the stepfather is not there, she can look for me and tell me. Otherwise I may come not knowing whether the stepfather is there and then he would think that this person wants to get back together with her ex.*

Kabello (F1) believed his child should take the initiative to reach out to him. When asked when last he spoke to his child, he seemed to hold his child responsible for not initiating contact with him: *"Aaah maybe last year, he/she never calls me!"* He further expressed his frustration about not being contacted by the maternal family: *"I never talk to her* [referring to the aunt/guardian and mother]. *She never phones me. No one is calling me that side."* Takani (C1) felt hurt because his/her father did not reciprocate in initiating contact and viewed it as forcing a relationship that his/her father is not interested in: *"I don't think he cares, like I said, so why should I? If he doesn't want to, then why should I force him. It feels like I force him."* Annie (M1) the mother acknowleged that her negative feelings towards the father may have influenced her child's hostility towards his/her father, but experienced herself as powerless to do anything about it:

> *Mmm, maybe it's like that, that* [name of child] *is influenced by me not liking…it's not that I don't like his/her father, it's just that we are separated, and he has a wife now. I don't influence* [name of child] *to hate his/her father. Maybe he/she* [child] *is protective of me and does not like for me to get hurt. There is nothing I can do to change that.*

In the interviews with the majority of the fathers it was mentioned that making contact with the mother may be misconstrued as an attempt to romantically reconcile. Fathers thus avoided initiation of contact with the mother and rather opted to wait for the mother or child to reach out to him. Moses (F6) told of how he discontinued contact with the mother after she viewed his contact as evidence of him not having 'moved on' from their relationship:

> *She never phoned me. That is where I decided the next day to phone her at work about the child and then she told me to get on with my own life as she is moving on with her own life. So I stopped trying to contact her because she may think that I want to get back with her.*

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Moses (F6) was concerned that continued attempts to contact the mother may be viewed as harrasment and put him at risk of a restraining order: *"We may end up having this restraining order or whatever…that was my thought."*

Mandla (F9) viewed parental contact as disrespectfult towards the step-parent/new partner, causing conflict between the mother and new partner:

> *I'm not a person who like to get contact with her.; If we go, there it will just look like we disrespect him and me myself as the father of Thato he* [stepfather] *would think I want to reconcile with his/her mother again.; That guy is gonna be jealous, and they get into fights just because of me…let me respect that.*

Thabo (F3) similarly said that he feared that his presence may cause conflict between the mother and stepfather: *"…when you interfere with a child that has a stepfather you will cause fights between the mother and the stepfather."* He thought it was therefore expected of the father to distance himself from his child, which Zee (EK3) affirmed:

> *He would talk to me on the phone and not talk to* [Nitaya]*'s mother, because* [Nitaya]*'s mother was living with another man. He did not want to create a fight between* [Nitaya]*'s mother and her husband.*

This sub-theme shows a complex circular interaction between the mother and father that maintain infrequent father-child contact. Fathers awaited an invitation from the mother, child and/or extended kin as an indication that their presence is welcome. Fathers expected mothers to facilitate father-child contact and viewed it as culturally normative. The father's shame for his inability to provide, and assuming that his initiation of contact without providing the expected provision would be an imposition on the maternal family, further reinforced the father's position of awaiting the initiation of contact from the mother and/or child. Fathers also viewed mothers as being in a better position to gauge when father-child contact would be most appropriate, given that the mother is privy to the routine and home context that the child is part of. Mothers, however, viewed initiation or facilitation of father-child contact as 'forcing' the father-child relationship. They were willing to be responsive to the fathers' initiation of contact and were especially perplexed and deflated if the father did not initiate father-child contact after encouraging him to do so. This fed into the mother's assumption that the father did not

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desire contact with his child, that the only acceptable topic of conversation was provision, and to wait for contact from the father.

5.3.3 Parents expected older Children to independently initiate Father-Child Contact

In six out of the ten families, father-child contact during early childhood was limited and done via the mother. However, once the child reached adolescence and received a cell phone, it enabled them to directly contact the father, leading to more frequent contact than early childhood. In one family, the father has had continuous frequent contact with the child, after parental separation occurred eight months prior to the interviews. In the three remaining families there was a complete break in contact between the father and child from early childhood until the child reached adolescence and reached out independently. Mothers assumed that their adolescent children were old enough to contact their fathers independently. For example, Tebogo (M10) preferred to have as little contact as possible with the father, and did not feel it necessary to facilitate father-child contact any longer: *"I don't contact him often unless there is something, a reason to contact him, but now that Fikile* [child] *is old enough to communicate with him, I don't like to communicate with him often."* She also thought that the child is old enough to identify his/her own material needs and to contact his/her father him-/herself about these needs:

> *These days he/she is old enough to see that 'My mum cannot afford this', he/she is the one who calls him and say 'I need this', like last time he/she said 'I need clothes' and he said he will send him/her a voucher.*

When Fikile (C10), the child, reached 13 years of age, he/she received a cell phone and one of the first things he/she did was to call the father. He/she recalled how hurt he/she felt when contacting his/her father for the first time independently and he did not know that it was he/she who was calling him: *"Ya, at first he didn't know who I was, who he was talking to."* He/she then tearfully told in the interview how he/she was compelled to tell him that it was his child calling.

Nati (M4) said that she encouraged her child to contact his/her father herself: *"I'm the one who pushes it, and I would tell him/her to call him and 'Tell him that you miss him' and he/she knows he will turn him/her down, but I will just say 'Call him.'"* She viewed her child as capable of identifying her basic needs and independently contacting the father about them: *"I*

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felt like I won't tell him [referring to father] *about them as* Lebo (C4) *is able to send him a text telling him that we are out of groceries and other things."* The frustrated Lebo, however, longed for his/her parents to speak to each other about what he/she needs, and not to expect it of him/her:

> *They* [referring to parents] *don't talk about me, if I tell my mom 'Mommy, did you tell my dad?'* [referring to content about him/her]*, then 'No, you must tell your dad, your dad is not my dad, so you must tell your dad'. And my mom thought I must tell my dad how I felt.*

He/she felt defeated in his/her attempts to get his/her mother to facilitate father-child contact: *"I will tell my mom I want to go to my daddy, she will say 'You know how your dad is' and I will say 'Okay'"* [meaning leave it].

Similar to Nati (M4), Miriam (M5) insisted that her child can call the father him-/herself to ask for what he/she needed: *"I'm not the only parent. Sometimes you have to pick up a phone and call your dad and tell him that I need one, two, three."* Mkize (M6) reported that she gave Enzo (C6) (who have had no contact with his/her father for over ten years), his/her father's contact number when he/she turned 16 years of age. She felt adamant that father-child contact was the choice of her child once he/she reached adolescence*: "I let him/her call and make an arrangement with him. It is no longer about me. Enzo has grown up he/she can make his/her own decisions."* Enzo confirmed that his/her mother gave him/her his/her father's contact number when he/she turned 16: *"Earlier this year my mom gave me my father's numbers and she said I can do anything I want to do with the numbers. So, uhm, I texted him once."* He/she subsequently decided that he/she is not old enough to deal with the emotional impact of meeting his/her father and opted to rather not meet him until he/she is older: *"I'm not saying that I don't wanna meet him, but not right now. Like maybe when I am old enough, like 21, somewhere there."*

Some fathers also expected the child to initiate contact and took care to emphasise that they were open to hearing from their children – as if this was their contribution to encouraging father-child contact: Petrus (F5) stated: *"No, basically, he/she can contact me whenever. There is no strict rules like 'don't call me' no, he/she can call me whenever he/she wants to."* Siya (C5), however, needed his/her father to reciprocate contact and felt uncomfortable with him/her being the only initiator of contact: *"Cause uhm, like, I felt uncomfortable, like with my dad,*

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cause we never speak… I am the one that is supposed to call him, he doesn't call, so I wanted our relationship to become better and ya."

Moses (F6) was anxious about meeting his child Enzo (C6) but was adamant about welcoming him/her when he/she comes to his house: *"I never saw him/her in 16 years. I don't know what I am going to do. But if they come here, they will be welcomed."* Enzo (C6) initiated contact with his/her estranged father, and was shattered that he did not respond to him/her request to meet:

> *Why did my dad never reach out to me?; I thought right now is the time, I feel ready to meet my dad, but I didn't get the same reaction from him that I expected.* [Tearing up]*; I was expecting him to say 'I'm your father. When do you wanna meet? Uhm, when do you wanna see me?', he never said those things. I've been texting him telling him I want to meet him, but he never tells me he wants to meet me too*. [Crying]

As mentioned in the previous sub-themes, Kabello (F1) thought the onus of father-child contact rested on Takani: *"He/she must come closer to me or make contact with me."* Takani (C1), who usually initiated contact, wanted his/her father to call him/her and was angry and hurt that he never did: *"As I said, he doesn't call me, maintain contact. So maybe during break he can call me and maybe he can say 'Let's meet sometime somewhere', but then he doesn't. It doesn't go that way."*

Mothers assumed that adolescent children were old enough to contact their fathers independently as the child was viewed as old enough to independently identify and communicate their material needs to the father. Children usually received a cell phone in adolescence which mothers viewed as giving the child a means of communication with the father. Fathers also expected their older children to initiate contact with them and viewed their openness to receive contact from their children as their contribution towards encouraging father-child contact. Children, however, felt uncomfortable to communicate their material needs to the father and yearned for parents to speak directly to each other about material provision. They also felt rejected by fathers' lack of contact initiation and resented to be the only initiator of father-child contact. This maintained limited contact initiated by the child and conversations with the father restricted to material needs. The father circularly in turn did not

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initiate contact as he perceived his role as limited to when he is contacted for provision. Limited father-child contact thus remained as per the status quo.

5.4 Extended Kin as Father-Child Resource

As mothers, fathers and children waited for each other to initiate contact, extended kin seemed to be resourceful father-child connecters by opening boundaries that allowed for father-child contact. In line with interdependence, extended kin initiated contact with both the father and child, and spontaneously linked father and child by talking about the father or child to the other and arranging father-child contact. Majority fathers (seven out of ten) had contact with extended kin about their child. In some families (three out of ten) the extended kin served as the only portal of information and contact between father and child besides from rare direct phone calls. Extended kin promoted and encouraged father-child relationships in spite of traditional monies being owed to them. Interestingly, the partners of the biological parents did not feature as a prominent influencing family figure during the stories participants told of father-child contact. Besides those instances where fathers mentioned mothers' new male partners and fearing that their contact with the mothers may be disrespectful towards the new partners, references to parents' partners were rare. In family one, the female partner of the father was mentioned by the child as being a hindrance to father-child contact and threatening towards the child; the step-mother in family five was experienced positively by the biological mother as she ensured consistent monthly maintenance payments to be made; and in family six the father stated that the step-mother facilitated father-child contact. Rather paternal and maternal grandparents, uncles, and aunts seemed to be more involved when it came to father-child contact. In this theme I discuss two sub-themes. In subtheme 1, I discuss how extended kin act as a link between father and child via relaying information, acting as intermediaries, and their homes as a place where fathers and children spend time together. In sub-theme 2, I highlight that payment of damages was not demanded as a prerequisite for father-child contact.

5.4.1 Extended Kin as link between Father and Child

In eight of the ten families, extended kin demonstrated more permeable boundaries between the maternal and paternal family systems by sharing information about the child with the father. For example, Johannes (F7), who rarely has airtime or data to connect with Gift (C7), readily received information about him/her via the paternal grandmother and aunt: *"My aunt sees him/her everyday. My mother and my younger sister communicates with him/her. That's why*

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my sister always calls and say Gift sent this message." Gift (C7) highlighted the grandmother's role in his/her relationship with his/her father by telling that he/she appreciated that his/her grandmother remembered and reminded his/her father of his/her birthday:

> *His mother* [referring to grandmother] *says 'Call it is your child's birthday' and then he calls. He always remembers MY birthday. In fact all of my aunts, these days I have very close contact with her, and also the grandma. What makes me feel special is that they always remember MY birthday.*

According to Brenda (EK7), the grandmother was interested in her grandchildren and the father kept her updated on the their progress: *"Yes, they would talk and he would tell her if they* [referring to grandchildren] *have passed and he would tell her which one is going to which grade, so he would tell her the children's progress."*

Mandla (F9) was grateful for the close relationship between Thato (C9) and a maternal aunt who regularly informed him about Thato's well-being:

> *Most of the time we* [referring to father and maternal aunt] *speak about Thato, since she also has a child…we speak about the children and if Thato cope and if he/she wants something. She's not afraid to say 'Can you get this for Thato?' and she says that 'Sometimes I'm afraid to do this for* [nickname for her own child] *since Thato does not have them.' and I am feeling ashamed sometimes.*

He attempted to parent and protect the child via the above-mentioned maternal aunt, who co-resided with the maternal grandmother when the child moved in with them to protect him/her from the risk her aggressive step-father posed: *"When the aunt is there she can sometimes help when I cannot and she would let me know what is going on with Thato and he/she would be safe there."*

In family three, the Zee (EK3) and Reggie (G3) held much animosity towards the father, Thabo (F3), due to his limited financial contribution. In spite of this, Zee and Reggie still collaborated with Thabo when he reached out to them to have contact with his child. Thabo (F3) said that he relied on Reggie for information about Nitaya: *"I can ask him how he/she is, and how he/she is living, does he/she go to school and life."* He also reported that he made use of Zee (EK3) to relay messages to Nitaya: *"It was that thing of being a messenger when I want Nitaya I would use her, when Nitaya's phone is not going through, I used her to pass the message."* Zee (EK3),

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in turn, relayed Nitaya's feelings about the father-child relationship, that the child was too scared to share with the father directly:

> *He/she is afraid to tell the father the truth, he/she can tell me that 'My father does this this and that'. So when he calls me wanting to speak to Nitaya I would tell him that 'Your child says this this and that.*

In family five the maternal and paternal grandmothers spoke to each other about their concern about lack of father-child contact and worked together to encourage the parent they are directly related to in this regard. For example, Kaya (EK5) reported that the maternal grandmother encouraged the mother to allow father-child contact:

> *She tells her that he is the father. You have a child and it's tied to that man, he has to take care of that child. He has a child the child is somewhere, let that child go and visit the father. His child must know that the father is there for him/her and the child's got siblings* [referring to half siblings].

Kaya (EK5) also encouraged the mother to speak to the father to invite Siya's (C5) half siblings to visit them:

> *The mother often talks to Siya's father and I told her to say to him 'Tell the mother of your child* [referring to step-mother], *that Siya's half sister must come holidays, during school holidays to come and visit us.*

The role of kin in father-child contact was also apparent in that the majority of families referred to extended kin's houses (usually a grandparent or aunt's house) as safer neutral terrain for father-child contact. For example, Mkize (M6) told the father that if he wanted to see the child that he can do so at the maternal grandmother's house:

> *I wanted to meet him on the common ground. That is what I suggested because he knows my mother's house and it was easier for him to go there. When we met he was staying that side, close to my mother. Even if he had moved or lived with someone else, my mother's house will be a neutral place.*

Father-child contact, however, was complicated when the contact was restricted to **only** the extended kin's house, as family homes are typically in rural areas or further from urban areas where most parents reside. Moses (F6) understood that the mother may not want him in her

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house, but was baffled that the only other alternative acceptable to the mother was the maternal grandmother's house which was two hours away from him. He said that the mother told him:

> *'If you want to see your child, you will phone us and then you must go to X and I will also come there with your child, but you cannot come here.' I understand that she does not want me to come to their home because maybe she has a boyfriend. But it does not make sense for both of us to travel so far so that I can see the child.*

Extended kin's houses also served as an alternative safer location for the child to visit, if the father's house was in a dangerous and crime riddled area. Mandla (F9) only saw Thato (C9) over December holidays at his father's (i.e., the paternal grandfather) house as his own place could not accommodate Thato and was in a dangerous area.

Fathers reminisced about extended kin's houses serving as a normative family gathering context where father-child contact was had. Thulani (F8) also spoke about his mother's (i.e., paternal grandmother) home as a place he and Omphile visited together over December holidays:

> *We make it a point that in December time we call my siblings that 'Lets get together and lets drive to X to my mum's place' and then they would spend time there and then she brought them all up, all of my siblings' children all the cousins and my sister's and my children, that old lady brought them up all of them.*

In this sub-theme, it was shown that extended kin often served as informants about the child and/or intermediaries between father and child. Extended kin also encouraged both fathers and mothers to make father-child contact possible. This illustrates the systemic principle of interdependence, i.e., the grandmother's relationship in a family can influence another relationship (i.e., father-child relationship). Furthermore, extended kin's houses were viewed as a neutral and safe territory for father-child contact. Extended kin, therefore, could be seen as an important resource in non-resident father-child contact.

5.4.2 Payment of Damages not demanded as Prerequisite for Father-Child Contact

Given that eight of the ten sets of parents in my study were not married at the time of the child's conception or afterwards, I expected that the payment of damages would be brought up as a hindrance to father-child contact as indicated in other research (Nkani, 2017; Clarke et al.,

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2015; Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Swartz et al., 2013; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Participants, however, did not spontaneously mention this as a factor and I, therefore, decided to ask about the potential role of damages in father-child contact in the follow-up interviews. As I explored the role of damages, my impression was that most of the families did not implement or demand this traditional practice and, those who did, did not view it as a hindrance to father-child contact. For example, Boni (EK8) shared that the paternal grandmother and the father (her son) were prepared to pay damages but that the maternal family did not require payment of damages in spite of the mother being impregnated prior to marriage. The maternal family wanted the child to have the father's surname as acknowledgement of paternity and its implied monthly financial contribution towards the child. The paternal grandmother preferred to have a discussion with the maternal family to ensure that they were comfortable with the child having the paternal surname, as it is customary for children to take the maternal surname before damages are paid. She told that a mutual agreement between the families about the child's surname was important:

> *Yes it is damages, so the father will have to work for it and pay it but with the first child they said they don't want the damages because they thought we were going to give the child the father's surname, but they could not give the child the father's surname without any mutual agreement, there must be an agreement first from both families* [Meaning even in the absence of damages/lobola that both families must be comfortable with what surname the child uses].

Lerato (EK6) viewed it as a voluntary act of fathers to pay damages:

> *He knows that he did it, he knows that he did it. That's why the mother said they are not going to ask them to pay damages, they are not going to ask them to pay anything, they know what they did* [referring to the father knowing he impregnated the mother].

She said that although damages were not paid, father-child contact was still supported when the father called to say that he wanted to see his child: "*One day he called and said he wants to see the child… So she took the child to him and that was the end of it.*" Thando (EK4) recalled how the maternal family went to claim damages from the father, but that once negotiations became conflicted they opted to not pursue it further:

> *Our family once went there… as we are Black people they went over to the father side to claim that there is a certain amount of money that they should pay* [meaning damages] *and there were disagreements then and then nothing was ever done.*

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Busi (G9) said that an attempt was made by the maternal family to negotiate damages with the father's family. She said that a letter was written to the paternal family stipulating the amount for damages but no response was received. The family then decided not to pursue it further, saying: "*So because we are both the mother and father here, let us just let it go.*" However, despite feeling disgruntled with the father for not following the traditional norm of paying damages to the maternal family, the family supported him to see his child.

Some of the fathers viewed other forms of financial support as damages payment. Jabulani (F10), for example, referred to his contribution towards medical expenses for the birth of the child and his continued provision for her as damages payment:

> *The damages was to try and help pay for medical costs during the pregnancy process… My involvement was more financial because everyone were upset then. … When the child was born we started making arrangements for paying damages according to what we can afford and and the monthly money arrangement came in* [referring to maintenance].

Mandla (F9) also acknowledged damages as a cultural norm and believed that in place of paying damages he provided accommodation for the mother and child when they did not have a place to live: *"They did not have a home … I was the one who was responsible for everything until they found their own one. That is why maybe Thato's grandmother didn't ask for damages negotiations."*

Petrus (F5), when asked if the payment of damages impacted on his relationship with Siya (C5), emphasised that continuous financial contribution towards a child is preferred in his culture, as opposed to payment of damages:

> *No, not, not with everybody, not all the cultures. In our culture, we don't deal much with damages and such things. As long as you are there to support the child, because most of the people they pay damages and the next thing they are not there.* [Meaning that the payment of damages did not mean that the father would continue to provide financial support after the payment of damages].

Most participants did not bring up damages as a hindrance to father-child contact, contrary to my expectation. Extended kin viewed damages as voluntary and did not demand it as requirement for father-child contact. Many extended kin decided to "let it go" if the father had

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not paid damages so as to avoid conflict. Some of the fathers reported that the maternal family preferred continued financial provision for the child over a once off payment for damages. The maternal families' willingness to forego the payment of damages without withholding contact with the child could therefore be viewed as a further father-child contact enabler.

5.5 Change in Families after the Interviews

This code relates to changes in the father-child relationship since the initial interview. In the majority of the families, meaningful shifts were found in the approach towards father-child contact, frequency and quality of father-child contact, and some fathers increased provision subsequent to the first interviews. Although there were no changes in father-child contact in family one, Takani (C1) showed a significant emotional shift from rejecting his/her father, towards a desire for and prioritisation of the father-child relationship:

> *Since we last spoke, I've changed a lot, I have changed my expectation. Before I expected much of him, but now I want him and I to be the father-son/daughter relationship. But I don't expect that much. So, I really want us to be together and have a bond.*

In family three, Thabo (F3) who exemplified his role as father through provision, provided more frequently and consistently after the first interviews: *"No sister, right now we have fixed things with Nitaya* [child]. *I can now give him/her a bit of money to buy some things that they need."* He also showed more interest in the child's life and academia as reported by Nitaya:

> *Yes, my father did change since the interviews. He is showing more interest in my life by asking questions about myself and about school work, he gives me money more frequently and asks if I need money and he gives me guidance on things.*

In family four, Lebo (C4) made more frequent contact with his/her father, had more expansive conversations with the father, and joined the father for a family event:

> *Yes, I go to his place a lot and spend time with him. I spend some time at my father's place and we spend some time together. We watch TV and we talk about things that we are watching. I am at his house more now. More than once a month now.*

His/her mother Nati (M4) agreed:

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The changes is that now he is spending a lot of time with him/her, like even now he is going to pick him/her up and over the holidays. I don't know why, but I think that it is Lebo who is communicating with him more often lately and this thing of talking 'What does he like?' and 'What he doesn't like?' So, there is more conversation at the moment.

In family five, Petrus (F5) contacted Siya (C5) immediately after the interview to invite him/her to his house. He/she visited his house for the first time after the interview. He felt emotionally closer to Siya (C5), increased father-child contact to three times a week, and experienced Siya as expressing a need for contact directly to him:

Yes, a lot. We are close hey, even now, they were here for a couple of weeks at my parents' home, and basically, we chat a lot. Changes. Not seeing me has been stressful for him/her. So he/she called me to say that he/she wants to come and see me and I went to fetch him/her to come to me.

Siya (C5) agreed and appreciated his/her father initiating father-child contact, stating:

Yes, it changed this year. Last month I went to my dad's place. We started talking, he calls me sometimes. He told me that he will come and fetch me another day when he is free. Previously he never used to call, checking on me and I could sit maybe five-six months without seeing him.

Miriam (M5) affirmed: *"Yes, maybe the interview gave him something to think about because you guys dig deep obviously."*

In family six the disheartened Enzo (C6) still had not met his/her father and reported no change:

No, nothing at all has changed. I tried getting into contact with him again, but he just shot me down he doesn't want anything to do with me; it was difficult. I don't know why I tried again; at this stage I just don't want to be disappointed anymore.

Moses (F6) said that he delayed meeting Enzo (C6) due to financial constraints and feared that he would not be enough for his child if he met him/her without a gift. He further explained that the Covid-19 pandemic delayed the first father-child meeting:

You can't just come empty handed for the person you haven't seen the past 16 years. I was worried I won't be enough if I didn't have something to offer…I postponed it to the next year, and that's when this Corona thing started now and that put everything on hold.

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Mkize (M6), however, said that there was some change in that she was surprised that Moses (F6) contacted her after the interview to arrange for monthly maintenance to be paid over:

> *I was so surprised this week, I think it was after you spoke with him, he said to me that he wants to do some arrangements with me and everything, then I asked which arrangements and he said 'I will call you'.*

In family eight Omphile (C8) reported that his/her father contacted him/her more frequently after the interview:

> *Now, we speak almost every day, either I call him on please call me or we talk on WhatsApp. In the beginning it was tough to live in a different place away from my father, but it is fine now, because we communicate and he calls me almost every day. It is easier now.*

Thulani (F8) agreed: *"Yes, in terms of communication we've improved a lot. I call him/her and if I don't call him/her he/she calls me. We speak every week, because I want to speak to him/her more."*

In family nine, Nomsa (M9) reported that the father made more frequent contact and provided more, even though it was still limited:

> *At least he is trying but he still does not help with the school fees. At least now he does talk to the child. At least, things have now changed. It is better now when compared to the past. At least now when Thato asks money for lunchbox or something else, at least he does give him/her something, but not every month. He gives him/her money only when he/she asks him, and it is not even enough. It is not more than R200. I do not know why he changed, no-no I do not know.*

Thato (C9) affirmed that his/her father makes more frequent contact with him/her since the first interview with him and showed deepened interest in his/her well-being:

> *Yes, like now he usually calls me every day, we are fine now. He is more concerned about how I do with my school, how my life is going, is everything okay at home; he shows the care. I think he saw that he was wrong, the things he was doing in the past, he can see that now is the time in my life that I need him the most.*

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Busi (EK9) also noted an increase in father-child contact to twice a week and that the father provided more frequently.

In family ten Jabulani (F10) mentioned an increase in father-child contact to once a week on the telephone:

> *Yes, something changed, the communication part of it, now we often communicate with each other like texting and chatting. We speak nearly every week. It changed because we needed to improvise because of the distance that we live far so we needed to improvise by talking more on the phone, after we spoke to you.*

Tebogo (M10) agreed: *"Yes, now they talk often, in a week maybe once in a week. I'm not sure why hahahaha, I think it changed after you came here, but I don't know why."* Fikile (C10), in contrast, reported that there has been no change and that he/she is still responsible to initiate contact: *"Not really, I am still the only one who calls him. We don't talk more often, it is all still the same."*

The above illustrate that seven out of ten families showed some change in frequency and quality of father-child contact, as well as some increase in the father's provision.

5.6 Conclusion

In the above sections, I presented the five themes that best represent the participants' experiences of non-resident fatherhood, family relationships and father-child contact. It was evident in theme one that families did not adequately negotiate family norms and expectations of each other. Fathers were viewed as mainly providers with parents disagreeing about the adequacy of provision. Furthermore, fathers' failure to deliver on promises regarding provision reinforced family members' mistrust of fathers. In theme two, I discussed expectations of fathers beyond provision. Fathers were expected to show interest in their children's lives and desire contact with their child as evidence of their affection for the child. One area where family members' understanding of the father's role was congruous was that fathers were expected to contribute towards their children's academic success. This agreement allowed for more permeable family system boundaries that enabled father-child contact.

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In theme three I highlighted the participants' views of who is responsible for initiating father-child contact. Mothers, children and extended kin put the onus of father-child contact on the father. Fathers in return awaited the mothers' contact as indication that their presence was welcome and convenient, but mothers viewed this as 'forcing' father-child contact. Unspoken expectations and hurt feelings around initiation of father-child contact created a communication void between the parents that circularly fed into negative assumptions about the other and maintained limited father-child contact. Parents expected older children to independently initiate contact when they received a phone (usually during adolescence), and that the child would be able to identify and communicate their own material needs and desire for the father's presence.

In theme four I illustrated how extended kin could be viewed as a father-child relationship resource. Extended kin facilitated father-child contact by acting as informants to - and intermediaries between - father and child. Extended kin's houses were often viewed as a neutral context for father-child contact. Furthermore, I expected kin to view the payment of damages to be a prerequisite for father-child contact, and, therefore, a hindrance to father-child contact. However, extended kin reported to prioritise the father-child relationship and contact, further positioning extended kin as allies to non-resident fathers and children having contact and a good quality relationship. Extended kin appeared to have more permeable family boundaries than expected that increased father-child contact potential.

Lastly, in theme five I discussed the changes that occurred in families and father-child contact between the first and follow-up interviews. The majority of families reported increased quality and frequency of father-child contact, as well as increase in provision from the father. This illustrates how a single empathic and enquiring conversation with family members can serve as a catalyst to improve father-child relationships. This suggests that non-resident father families may be open to feedback and able to implement changes toward frequent father-child contact. In chapter six, I will discuss these findings in more depth.

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CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In chapter five, I presented the five themes that I identified that speak to my research objective: if and how the quality of family relationships influences infrequent contact between non-resident fathers and their adolescent children. These respective themes are: (i) Fathers as mainly material providers; (ii) Expectations of fathers beyond provision; (iii) Responsibility for father-child contact; (iv) Extended kin as father-child resource; and (v) Changes in father-child contact since interviews. In this chapter I critically discuss these findings within the context of relevant literature.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Theme 1: Provision

Provision dominated as a theme in the interviews, indicating that the father as provider discourse still very much prevails in South African families and that the lack of open and clear communication about provision strain family relationships. Fathers being defined by their ability to provide is highlighted in research globally and locally (Curtiss et al., 2021; Helman et al., 2019; Hohers & Bryan, 2020; Morrell et al., 2016). Locally, for example, Lesch and Scheffler (2016) found in their study of South African low-income fathers that 'good' fathers are defined by their ability to provide and co-reside with their child. The SOSAF 2021 survey (Malinga, 2021), however, show some shifts in South African men's thinking about good fatherhood being conditional to employment, as only 17% of their respondents strongly agreed with this view and 20% somewhat agreed. The remaining 63% were either neutral (21%), disagreed somewhat (14%), or strongly disagreed (28%). This indicates that the majority of men were still undecided as to whether being employed was needed for a man to be a good father (Malinga, 2021). The voluntary sample of mostly employed men in this survey, though, is not representative of all South African fathers.

Provision seems to have a more prominent role in the challenging financial circumstances of families who live in low socio-economic contexts (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020; Okeke, 2018), as was the case for most of the families in the current study. The father's duty to provide is intensified in such marginalised contexts and is also a more challenging problem to solve

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(Helman et al., 2019). As pointed out by Bryan (2013), the father's contribution of material capital was used as a measuring stick of effective fatherhood by the participants in the current study, largely negating other interpersonal capital he could contribute towards the child. The fathers' perceived inadequate financial provision seemed to inform the participating family members in this study's attitudes towards fathers, negatively affecting the quality of the family relationships with the father and, as a result, father-child contact. Similarly, Makusha et al. (2012) found that Black South African mothers exercise greater control or restrict fathers' access and involvement with their child, if they expected more than what the child's father currently provides.

The mothers in my study thought that, if fathers cared more about their children and/or were more mindful of children's needs, they would choose to make an effort to contribute more. Fathers, on the other hand, said that they *were* thinking about their children and did the best they could to provide for them but were not always able to. Mothers, however, were unable to empathise with fathers as they had to bear the daily challenge of meeting children's needs. It seems, therefore, that the combination of family members' maintaining the father as provider discourse and lack of open and consistent communication about provision contributed to closed maternal family system boundaries and homeostasis of infrequent father-child contact.

My findings also highlight a circular dynamic in non-resident father families whereby family members and fathers' own expectations to provide and negative judgment of fathers if they were unable to provide seemed to elicit shame in fathers for their inability to provide. This, in turn, often prompted fathers to evade pleas or requests for provision by making provision promises to mothers and children that they did not or could not keep. Similar to other research findings, mothers and children then felt betrayed and let down by the child's father who had failed to fulfil his promises (Makusha & Richter, 2016). This further contributed to maternal families distrusting fathers and maintaining closed maternal family system boundaries toward father-child contact.

Expectations that men should have consistent employment and be able to provide for their families is imbedded in notions of traditional masculinity that emerged in the beginning of the 20th century (Makusha & Richter, 2016). Gendered constructions that father's should provide still prevail on macro-systemic level. Provider masculinity in contemporary South Africa is linked with disposable income, and failure to provide economically for one's family leads to

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mothers viewing fathers as 'being irresponsible' (Makusha & Richter, 2016), as also indicated in my findings. Responsible fatherhood with provision, as well as imposing unrealistic financial demands, criminalizing low-income men, and discounting paternal viewpoints have long been areas of concern in the social sciences (Threlfall & Kohl, 2015).

Roy and Lucas (2006) suggest that job creation for economically marginalised fathers be prioritised in order to address the plight of fathers who are unable to provide sufficiently. However, given the adverse economic situation in South Africa and the high unemployment figures, this is unlikely to be achievable in the near future. The high unemployment rate is further exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19 and has brought additional economic pressures as more and more people lost their income and it becomes increasingly difficult for many fathers to provide materially for their children (Mamacos, 2020). Since 2020 the unemployment rate has increased substantially as many businesses closed and employee roles were made redundant (Komanisi et al., 2022), and this has subsequently hindered fathers' ability to provide financially. The father as mainly provider discourse in combination with fathers' inability seem to contribute importantly to fathers wanting to avoid scrutiny, shame and blame that they are failing at fatherhood. It could further be argued that the father as primarily a provider discourse is reinforced by the current legislation that prioritises the appropriation of child maintenance from fathers which is often expensive and time consuming for fathers (Ratele, 2018). The emphasis on payment of child maintenance is important but may simultaneously contribute to men hiding from mothers and children and limiting father-child contact to avoid maintenance prosecution and persecution. This was evident during the participant recruitment phase where fathers were reluctant to participate in the research, in fear that the research was a ploy to locate and prosecute them for defaulting on child maintenance payments. Furthermore, a recent South African study by Mercer et al. (2018) has found that, compared to formal child maintenance payment, informal and in-kind contributions to childcare are more strongly correlated with increased non-resident father-child contact and closer emotional father-child relationships. It is thus imperative that the father as predominantly a provider discourse be challenged, especially in lower socio-economic contexts, and that the capital a father can offer goes beyond that of financial provision (Helman et al., 2019). A study in North America with a racially mixed group of low-income fathers illustrated that putting less emphasis on the role of the father as provider led to fathers' prioritisation of their involvement in their children's development, and tending to participate more in caregiving activities (Macon et al., 2017).

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6.1.2 Theme 2: Father Expectations beyond that of Provider

My study findings are encouraging in that it indicates that, despite the foregrounding of material provision as the father's primary role, family members agreed that children require more than the father's financial contribution. The mothers, children and extended kin in my study emphasised the importance of fathers showing an active interest in and knowing the details of children's daily lives. Children specifically wanted fathers to make contact, participate in activities, and ask about their interests and friends. Family members' emphasis on father roles other than provision suggests some openness for positive feedback in the family system that could allow fathers to contribute in other ways and result in more frequent father-child contact.

Mothers, children, and extended kin believed that fathers should want and initiate contact with their children as demonstration of their love for their children. Makusha and Richter (2018) emphasise that fathers making physical contact with children is an important component of caregiving and engaging in competent care work. The children in this study, however, had limited father-child contact that caused them emotional distress as they felt unwanted and rejected by their fathers. Other studies indicate that distanced father-child relationships and infrequent contact correlate with higher prevalence of depression and anxiety in children (Markowrtiz & Ryan, 2016) among many other undesirable child outcomes such as increased risk taking behaviours (Burns et al., 2002) and low self-esteem (Keizer et al., 2019). According to family systems theory, adolescent children's distress could be viewed as feedback, a process in which information about past behaviours and from the environment is fed back into the system (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Luhmann, 2013). Positive feedback refers to a system acknowledging a change and accepting it, whereas negative feedback refers to the rejecting the change and remaining unchanged (Shin & Konrad, 2017; Becvar & Becvar, 2014). Positive feedback is error activated, where the system accepts feedback regarding a deviation from a previous way of doing that no longer serves to benefit the system, often due to changes that occur in the system itself or in the larger context to which the system needs to adapt (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). The distress of the adolescents in my study, however, did not function as positive feedback and result in change. Similar to other South African studies (e.g., Barber et al., 2012; Nduna & Jewkes, 2012), this may be due to the adolescents in my study not overtly expressing their desire for father-child contact to the adult family members, specifically not to

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fathers. Also, Black South African children report that they often experience that their opinions and emotions are not taken seriously by adults (Barber et al., 2012), which, in turn, may be due to cultural ideas that children should listen, respect and adhere to the guidance of their elders (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). The fathers in my study were, therefore, unaware of their children's distress. Given the potential of children's views and experiences to function as positive feedback that could lead to family system changes which encourage consistent non-resident father involvement, it would be helpful to consider how families could be supported or assisted to listen to and validate adolescent children's views and experiences and for fathers to hear that they are wanted and needed by their children for more than financial contributions. One way would be to arrange family discussions where adolescents' inputs are regarded in decision-making about father-child contact.

The fathers in this study reported that they loved their children and desired contact with them, but did not seem to grasp the importance of making an effort to know about their children's daily lives and actively seeking regular contact with their children. This relates to the differentation that families in a Lithuanian study (Maslauskaitė & Tereškinas, 2020) made between non-resident fathers' "caring for" and "caring about". Fathers in this study emphasised "caring for" by prioritising their role as provider, but their children prioritised "caring about" that refers to emotional care such as showing interest in the child's life (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Maslauskaitė & Tereškinas, 2020). "Caring about" his child is emphasised as important capital that the father has to offer, especially in families with lower socioeconomic status (Maslauskaitė & Tereškinas, 2020). It may be beneficial on the macro-system level to leverage cultural norms such as acting in the best interest of the child to counter gendered notions such as the father as *only* provider discourse. Awareness should be created that fathers can benefit children by offering capital besides money and serve the child's best interest through a supportive father-child relationship.

Furthermore, father-child relationship quality is often measured as hands-on caretaking and engagement in developmentally appropriate interactions such as talking about friends and sensitive topics, exercising, and helping with homework (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013), but the family members in my study did not consider these except for some who mentioned fathers' helping with homework. It would helpful on the micro-system level for both mothers and non-resident fathers to be educated and supported to consider how non-resident fathers can be more involved with daily caretaking of children (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001) if they live close

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enough. The daily involvement of non-resident fathers who live far away from their children and who have limited resources to maintain daily contact with their children, however, is a challenging issue that needs further exploration.

Some of the fathers in my study demonstrated their care by contacting their children through making phone/video calls and texting, similar to other non-resident fathers (De Wit et al., 2014; Szalma & Rékai, 2020). The children greatly appreciated fathers who contacted them telephonically, whilst others longed for their father to do so and were hurt if he did not. Most of the children in a South African study (De Wit et al., 2014) reported that, although their parents had been divorced, they still had regular telephonic contact with their fathers which made them feel important to their fathers.

De Wit et al. (2014) found that the South African non-residential fathers in their study spent most of their time engaging with their children in shopping and eating in restaurants. However, low-income fathers, such as most of the fathers in my study, are mostly not able to afford these kinds of activities on a regular basis. According to Anderson and Letiecq (2005), these fathers' resources are limited as they are "riddled with unequal access to education, employment, political power, commercial goods and services, and social resources" (p. 187). These barriers are likely to result in a qualitatively different parenting experience in comparison to higher income fathers (Amato & Dorius, 2010). In order to support low-income non-resident fathers' contact with children, appropriate father-child contact spaces that are safe and require little to no money should be identified and encouraged, such as participation in cultural or religious community activities, extra-curricular school activities (e.g., watching sport), and making use of local free infrastructure like parks and hiking trails. Non-resident low-income fathers may not be aware of such spaces and how these can be utilised for close non-resident father-child involvement (Dyer et al., 2017). However, the *recreational fathering* approach, where fathers primarily focus on treating and entertaining children through recreational activities such as going to restaurants, theme parks and other leisure activities (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), must be approached with caution (Maslauskaitė & Tereškinas, 2020). It could be argued that recreational fathering does not build the tenacity and resilience in the father-child relationship for the child to be able to rely on when enduring emotional distress. Maslauskaitė and Tereškinas (2020) argue that recreational fathering may result in a superficial father-child relationship as it does not allow fathers and children with the conditions to practice empathy, negotiation and interpersonal problem solving. Cabrera et al. (2018) and De Wit et al. (2014)

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also emphasise that, although non-resident father-child contact is necessary for non-resident fathers to contribute to their children's lives, the quality of the interaction must be prioritised.

One father contribution that mothers, fathers, and extended kin agreed on in this study was fathers' support of the child's academic functioning and success (Morrell et al., 2016). This overlapping perspective between parents about the norms and fathers' role in chidren's academia can thus be highlighted as an opportunity for father-child contact that does not necessarily entail money and could foster effective co-parenting relationships. Furthermore, if fathers capitalise on this father-child interaction by also showing interest in other areas of the child's life, it may be an opportunity to expand on the quality of father-child interpersonal relationships. Many of the fathers in this study, however, were not consistently or closely engaged in their children's academic lives and were often only involved when they were called in to admonish children who performed poorly. It seems, therefore, important to stress ways that non-resident fathers can play a constructive and consistent role in their children's academic success as having a father involved in and encouraging children's academia greatly curbs the school dropout rate of children (Mukansi et al., 2018). Nobles (2011) found that low-income Mexican migrant fathers oriented their children towards their future and finishing school, and assisted their children telephonically with homework and stayed abreast of their children's progress. It is also recommended that non-resident fathers can be made aware that their academic involvement can go beyond these roles on exo-system and meso-system levels which could include volunteering at schools and coaching if they live close enough, and communicating with teachers (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Moreover, on an exo-system level schools could have a non-resident parent policy whereby they inform or educate parents/guardians that non-resident parents' involvement could be beneficial to the child. In line with this policy, they could inquire if there is a non-resident parent, and ask the primary parent or guardian permission to include non-resident parents in communication about school procedures, calendars, academic performance etc. Child assent and guardian consent procedures in such instances should, however, still be strictly adhered to.

In South Africa, low-income and/or unemployed non-resident fathers may, however, be limited, by their ability to afford airtime, data or travel costs to frequently engage in this way. Furthermore, fathers who have a lower level of education themselves, as many of the fathers in the current study, may be hindered in their ability to help their children with their secondary school academic challenges (King et al., 2004). My findings also indicate that fathers should

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be mindful of over focusing on academia to the neglect of other areas of children's lives. Although the majority of the children in this study appreciated their fathers' encouragement of their academic performance as acting in their best interest, it was not sufficient in building quality interpersonal connection if it was to the detriment of other areas of conversation.

6.1.3 Theme 3: Responsibility for Father-Child Contact

Theme three highlights a complex circular interaction between the mother and father where each parent interacts with and influences the other, and each also elicits behaviour from the other (A is a logical complement of B, just as B's behaviour is a logical complement to the behaviour of A) in order to maintain infrequent father-child contact. I highlighted in the presentation of this theme that family members held rather rigid and righteous assumptions and expectations about whose responsibility it was to initiate father-child contact. These, however, were not overtly communicated, and resulted in a circular dynamic in which family members abdicated their responsibility to make contact, waiting instead on each other to make contact. This is a profound finding rooted in systems thinking as it illustrates the principle of circularity where people and events are viewed in the context of mutual interaction and influence (Becvar & Becvar, 2014; Hilpert & Marchand, 2018). In a circular fashion, we see how the members of the non-resident father family continuously shape each other and their position within the family, as well as each other's values and beliefs.

Mothers and extended kin in this study expected the father to initiate contact and viewed it as his responsibility to make practical arrangements to have father-child contact. In concurrence with other research, the mothers believed that lack of such initiation was indicative of fathers' lack of desire for contact with their children (Nixon & Hadfield, 2018). Mothers were proud of never denying the father access to the child and viewed it as implied permission and open access granted to the father to contact his child. This is in line with the so called 'hands-off' approach where mothers are open to father-child contact, but not prepared to be active facilitators (Nixon & Hadfield, 2018). However, mothers' resistance to, or lack of encouragement of, father involvement is a strong determinant of non-resident fathers' involvement with children (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Mothers should thus be made aware that active overt encouragement of father-child contact can contribute to father involvement and father-child contact. Mothers may also benefit from being reminded that mediating information between their child and the environment (in this case the father) still

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benefits their child during adolescence (Nixon & Hadfield, 2018). It could, therefore, be argued that mothers' willingness to participate in gate opening behaviours such as sharing relevant information (i.e. the child's emotional, medical, academic or social state) with the father and informing him of upcoming events and his possible role in it (e.g., participation in school events) could assist in building father-child contact and bonds. The latter, however, should be considered within the context of mothers often having to shoulder the brunt of child well-being and care.

In concurrance with other research (Alport et al., 2018; Fagan, 2020; Hunter, 2006), fathers in my study, *did* desire contact with their children. They reported, however, that they avoided initiation of contact in fear that their contact would be an imposition on the mothers, that their presence might cause distress, and/or was unwelcome to the mother and extended kin. They rather awaited an invitation from the mother, child and/or extended kin as an indication that their presence was welcome, wanted or needed, which fed into the mother's assumption that the father did not desire contact. Curtiss et al. (2021) also found that the fathers viewed themselves as mainly providers and believed it was not in their hands to increase involvement with their child as the mother was primarily in charge of the child's movements and schedule. Furthermore, Kruk (2010) points out that fathers often feel disempowered when mothers make unilateral decisions regarding children, and viewed any contact as in the mother's hands. Given that mothers in this study reported that they viewed the act of fathers asking to see their children as an expression of their interest, fathers should be made aware that their overt requesting of father-child visitation could contribute to father-child contact. We should, however, be mindful not to exacerbate gendered notions that mothers are mainly responsible for child caretaking and blamed for the shortcomings of fathers. Rather, both parents should play an active role in acting in the best interests of the child, mother, father, and community at large, and encourage father-child involvement (Kurian et al., 2022; Yogman & Eppel, 2022).

The participants in my study reported that father-child contact during early childhood was limited and done via the mother. However, similar to the findings on Irish non-resident father-child contact, the responsibility for facilitating father-child contact was surrendered to children by mothers when children got a cell phone (Nixon & Hadfield, 2018). Mothers in this study thought that their adolescent children were old enough to identify their own material needs and to contact the father independently about these needs. Fathers also expected the child to initiate contact and they took care to emphasise that they were open to hearing from their children – as

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if this openness was their contribution to encouraging father-child contact. In turn, children felt uncomfortable to be the main initiator of father-child contact and needed fathers to reciprocate. They felt rejected if the fathers were merely reactive to their initiation of contact. The parents' expectation of the child to initiate contact and the child's discomfort with this responsibility contributed to children reaching out less which resulted in maintaining minimal or absent father-child contact. In keeping with other research (Sobolewski & King, 2005) children desired cooperative co-parenting, defined as the "ability of mothers and non-resident fathers to actively engage with one another in order to share childrearing responsibilities" (p. 1198). This style of parenting is known to increase father-child contact.

The assumptions and misconceptions regarding the responsibility to initiate father-child contact that existed between the participants of my study highlight the importance of non-resident families having a space where parents could have direct conversations to explicitly negotiate the rules of their co-parental relationship, and explicate where boundaries between them are open (e.g., communicating about child well-being and father-child contact) and where they are closed (e.g., communicating about partner relationships and work) to ensure secure and confident rules of engagement. This could also be a space where adolescents could voice their needs, and agreements could be worked out to accommodate these needs. Given that various South African cultural groups have their own customary practices to preserve families - such as the use of family meetings in Xhosa families to address family problems (Kuo et al., 2019) - families could be encouraged to use culturally appropriate or familiar family interventions to negotiate and support non-resident fathers' positive and consistent involvement. The practice of family meetings typically entails that older members (parents or extended kin) arrange for family members to come together. Each member of the family then has an opportunity to share their view about an issue and how to work together to solve the problem (Smith, 2006). Family meetings where father, mother, child and extended kin are involved may offer a space for open and transparent need communication regarding the needs of mothers, children and non-resident fathers about father-child contact. Family meetings could be considered the ideal meso-systemic context (i.e., where two micro-systems such as maternal and paternal families interact) to express needs around father-child contact and negotiate norms around contact arrangements that stand to benefit the entire family. Overt communication between parents could eliminate the circular miscommunication that maintain negative assumptions about the other as illustrated in the current study data. This may assist micro-systems (maternal, paternal, and extended kin family members) to increase the permeability of

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their boundaries, incorporate positive feedback, and activate morphogenesis towards frequent father-child contact.

6.1.4 Theme 4: Extended Kin as Resource

As already indicated above and highlighted in the literature review, extended kin are important members of most Black South African families. Furthermore, according to Moore (2021), oppressive colonial and apartheid policies forced South African family members into interdependence, as high levels of poverty resulted in family members needing one another to survive. In current times, family members (including extended kin) continue to rely on each other by dividing responsibilities of child rearing and providing (Moore, 2021). Madhavan and Roy (2012) also found that economically marginalised Black men in South Africa and the United States effectively work with their kin to have father-child contact and implement fathering via the extended kin to ensure the well-being of children. They illustrate that fathers building rapport and co-parenting with extended kin enable them to be responsible fathers. Moreover, negotiation between maternal and paternal kin and flexible fathering allow men and their kin networks to secure father involvement. Extended kin, therefore, cannot be separated from the co-parental relationship and should be viewed as part of the multi-parental group. Policy makers should therefore assume a systemic lens on child and family policy making that include unmarried non-resident fathers and extended kin as part of the definition of family. Family services could consider including non-resident fathers and extended kin in mediation process.

In line with such a collective approach through working together as a family towards caretaking of children, extended kin in this study seemed to be important resources in facilitating father-child connection. They often acted as informants and mediators between mothers, fathers and children. Not only did extended kin in this study encourage both fathers and mothers to make father-child contact possible, their houses were often used as appropriate or neutral terrain for father-child contact. Father-child contact, however, was complicated when the contact was restricted to *only* the extended kin's (specifically grandparents') homes, as family homes are typically in rural areas or further from urban areas where most parents reside. Makusha and Richter (2016) also mention that the influence of extended family can play a key role in father-child contact as these family members can allow or prevent father involvement, in spite of the mother's wishes. Encouragement from family members and learning from extended kin about

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fatherhood are important contributors to father-child contact and quality of relationship (Fagan, 2020). This is in keeping with the systemic principle of interdependence that the extended kin-child or extended kin-father relationship could contribute to father-child connection. Extended family inclusion should be considered to be in the best interest of the child in the South African context and inform the Children's Act 38 section 7 (Department of Social Development, 2013). It should be noted that Ebersohn's Adapted Model of the Bio-ecological systems model illustrates how the child usually forms a part of a primary (resident) and secondary micro-system (visit to the father) between which the child periodically moves on the meso-system level (Bouwer & Ebershohn, 2015). This, however, was not the case with the children in this study who did not move freely between the two sub-systems, but rather had alternative areas for father-child contact such as the extended kin's houses.

Previous South African research indicates that cultural gatekeeping has a significant impact on father involvement, with the non-payment of *lobola* and/or damages regulating father-child involvement (Makusha & Richter, 2016). Until a child's father pays damages for impregnating a girl before marriage, he may not be recognised as a legitimate father of a child, especially by the family of the child's mother, and he may be restricted from visiting and spending time with his child at the mother's family homestead (Makusha et al., 2012). The majority of families in my study, however, no longer implemented or demanded these traditional practices, and those who did, did not view it as a hindrance to father-child contact. This is in line with other studies that also show that Black South African families are beginning to involve paternal kin in childcare and incorporating a child into paternal lineages even in the absence of payment of damages (Hunter, 2006; Mkhawanazi & Block, 2016). Bhana and Nkani (2014), drawing on research conducted in an urban township in KwaZulu-Natal, suggest that women-headed households tended to be more flexible by allowing the involvement of the father after the birth even though damages had not been paid. This could be ascribed to the fading out of traditional cultural norms in an urban context which is viewed by some as a negative factor that undermines family functioning (Magezi, 2018). Alternatively, it could be viewed as a positive cultural evolution on the macro-system and micro-system level that minimises the hindrances that traditional customs like payment of damages and *lobola* may impose for unemployed and underemployed fathers who cannot meet these traditional expectations, (Clarke et al., 2015; Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Nkani, 2017; Swartz, et al., 2013; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). On the chrono-system level it may show changes in cultural norms over time, and should be investigated in follow-up studies.

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6.1.5 Theme 5: Change in Families after the Interviews

This study found unexpected positive shifts in family members' approach towards frequency and quality of father-child contact, and some fathers even increased financial provision subsequent to the first interviews. This is in line with the family systems theory's principle of unintended consequences. This principle highlights the following: interrelatedness of people and factors in a family system; that a specific input into a system does not result in a linear, proportionate and predictable reaction; and that small inputs may instigate big system changes whilst extensive inputs may result in small system changes (Stanton & Welsh, 2012). The first interviews of this study seemed to have unintentionally acted as a change agent by prompting family members to reflect on father-child contact and their own part in it. This suggests that such a reflection brought about by a conversation with an outsider about father-child contact can bring about morphogenesis in family dynamics as it relates to non-resident father-child contact. It also illustrates that most of the non-residential families in this study were susceptible to input of information from the environment and open to change. Black South African non-residential families may, therefore, be more flexible and open to input and change than previously thought. This potential could be utilised, as mentioned earlier, by encouraging and facilitating family conversations about non-resident father-child contact.

Transformative family mediation is suggested as a way to reach agreement about father-child contact and resolve conflict in a holistic family centred manner that is relationally focussed and, as in this study, include extended kin (Lesch et al., 2021). It should be noted, however, that in South Africa mediation is usually only applied, if needed, for married parents who are legally obligated to agree on a parenting plan upon divorce. Unmarried parents are not required to do so, and subsequently father-child contact may suffer as a consequence (Department of Social Development, 2013). Also, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 still does not confer automatic, inherent parental rights on unmarried biological fathers in the same way it does for mothers (Department of Social Development, 2013). According to this Act, unmarried biological fathers will only have automatic parental rights if they were living with the mother at the time of the child's birth, they consent to be identified as the father of the child or pay damages in terms of customary law, contribute to the upbringing of the child, and have paid maintenance (Department of Social Development, 2013). This leaves non-resident, unmarried, and unemployed fathers as a legally marginalised group when it comes to parental plans and father-

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child contact (Lesch & Kelapile, 2015). Co-parental mediation in the South African context should therefore include unmarried parents and consider more family centred approaches that include extended kin (Lesch et al., 2021). Psychologists, social workers, and other relevant professionals at NGOs, local clinics and hospitals could bring about awareness of mediation services or workshops they offer for non-resident father family members by advertising and offering psychoeducational sessions for free. Male dominated industries that typically employ men who are non-resident fathers (e.g., mining) are often required to have employee wellness programmes, during which seminars and speakers can specifically bring about awareness of potential mediation programmes and family dispute solution strategies.

6.2 Summary

This study explored if and how the quality of family relationships influenced infrequent contact between non-resident fathers and their adolescent children. It was evident that the quality of family relationships *did* influence the frequency of father-child contact. The dominance of the father as provider discourse negatively affected family relationships and limited father-child contact as mothers linked the father's provision as proof of his love and care towards his child. It is encouraging, however, that families in this study acknowledge that fathers have roles beyond provision. These ideas should be further emphasised and more should be done on the macro-system level to emphasise, promote and support a range of father contributions to child well-being for non-resident fathers. Moreover, more should be done on a macro-level to foreground and validate various family forms such as non-resident father families, where the unmarried non-resident father is considered to be part of the family.

Part of how non-resident fathers can be supported is to provide them with knowledge and skills to build father-child connection that does not involve money. Additionally, as families agreed that fathers could and should support their children's schooling, this opportunity for father-child contact that does not necessarily entail money and could foster effective co-parenting relationships, should be amplified. However, the challenge for family well-being agencies and institutions is how to reach and provide non-resident fathers with such knowledge and skills.

My findings also highlighted that unarticulated assumptions around responsibility to initiate father-child contact are detrimental to the quality of family relationships that hindered father-child contact. I suggested that family meetings where father, mother, child, and extended kin

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are involved may pose an ideal context for open and transparent communication about father-child contact. The meaningful shifts in the approach towards father-child frequency and quality of father-child contact after the interviews also highlight the potential of transformative mediation processes to open lines of communication between family members. Research should be done about how mediation services could be made available that would be credible and accessible to all family members. It should perhaps be made mandatory for all non-resident parents (married and unmarried) to agree to a parenting plan that benefits the child.

My findings indicate that extended kin could be father-child contact facilitators by acting as informants and mediators. They could circumvent parental contact that may be conflict filled. Extended kin being involved in arranging father-child contact is congruous to the interdependent norm in Black South African families where extended family members collaborate in nurturing and caring for children, and should be harnessed to facilitate father-child contact.

6.3 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

A significant strength of this study is that it did not rely on individual perspectives of only fathers, mothers, or children, but that it included all these members as well as extended kin of the same families. Such multiple data sources are known to produce a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon being studied (Sargeant, 2012). There is also widespread agreement that multiple family member perspectives assist in capturing complex family dynamics (Bottorff et al., 2005; Holmberg et al., 2004; Marchetti-Mercer, 2012), especially as it relates to family relationships, sensitive topics, and independent views of joint experiences (Reczek, 2014). My analysis of the data on an individual and family unit level assisted in capturing themes within and across family units. The use of multiple family members furthermore provided a balanced view that did not skew the data towards the biases of individual family members or dyads (typically mothers and children), that tend to vilify the father (Madhavan et al., 2015). Future research should opt to use multiple informants from the same family as the unit of analysis as this stand to provide rich information about non-resident fatherhood and family relationships.

This study contributes to the current body of knowledge by answering the call of the 2018 State of South African Fathers' Report to include father perspectives into fatherhood studies (Nduna

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& Khunou, 2018). Makusha et al. (2018) also highlight the importance of acknowledging fatherhood and father involvement within the context of extended kin as is reflected in many Black family systems in South Africa. The current study, therefore, imbedded fatherhood within the extended kin family context that values interdependence and where extended kin are involved in child rearing. Furthermore, this study's focus on Black non-resident biological fathers is specifically relevant in the South African context as the majority of Black biological fathers do not reside with their children, and very little is known about this group of fathers. This study also sheds further light on the complications and restrictions when unemployed or low-income fathers fail in expectations to provide for their children.

Limitations of this study include that by using voluntary, purposive sampling the sample may be biased toward participants who were inherently in support of father-child contact and involvement. Also, the fathers in this study, by volunteering to participate, were likely fathers who had some investment in their children, potentially biasing the results towards the finding that non-resident fathers desired contact with their children. Although generalizability was not the aim of this research, the findings generated through the use of a small voluntary sample cannot be assumed to be relevant to other South African communities. Future research should explore the transferability of these findings to other communities or groups in South Africa.

As discussed in the section "Researcher Reflexivity", it is possible that my outsider researcher status limited the number of participants in the study. Furthermore, I may have missed nuances and experiences in the analysis that an insider researcher would have been better able to detect and capture (Hayfield & Huxley, 2014). However, my outsider status could have benefited the study as I made sure to ask for participants for clarification when I did not understand and/or participants may have shared a more detailed account of their experiences by not assuming that I would know about implied meanings (Bucerius, 2013).

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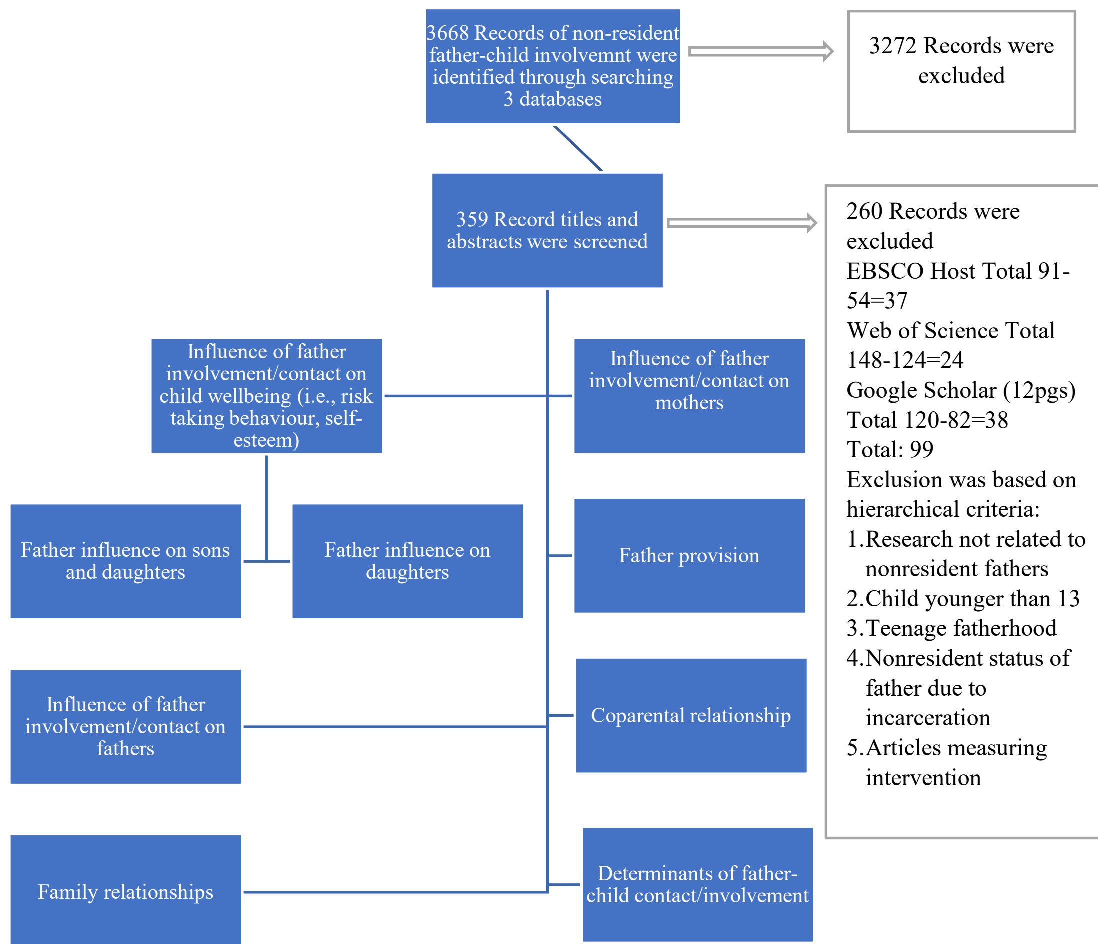
Appendices

Appendix A: Systematic Review of Literature



I identified 3668 records of non-resident father-child involvement through searching three databases (EBSCOHost, Web of Science, and verified Google Scholar articles) using the keywords: ("nonresident fathers" OR "divorced fathers" OR "separated fathers") AND (adolescents OR teenagers OR youth OR young adults) AND ("involvement OR contact" OR "family involvement" "father-child") NOT stepfathers.

Themes identified when screening titles and abstracts of records are:

1. Influence of Father Involvement/Contact on Children

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Bastaits, K., Ponnet, K., & Mortelmans, D. (2012). Parenting of divorced fathers and the association with children's self-esteem. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *41*(12), 1643–1656. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1007/s10964-012-9783-6

Cryer-Coupet, Q. R., Dorsey, M. S., Lemmons, B. P., & Hope, E. C. (2020). Examining multiple dimensions of father involvement as predictors of risk-taking intentions among black adolescent females. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *108*, 104604.

Ellis, K. R., Caldwell, C. H., Assari, S., & De Loney, E. H. (2014). Nonresident African-American fathers' influence on sons' exercise intentions in the fathers and sons program. *American Journal of Health Promotion : AJHP*, *29*(2), 89–98. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.4278/ajhp.130417-QUAN-179

Jethwani, M., Mincy, R., & Klempin, S. (2014). I would like them to get where I never got to: Nonresident fathers' presence in the educational lives of their children. *Children & Youth Services Review*, *40*, 51–60. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.02.009

King, V., Boyd, L. M., & Thorsen, M. L. (2015). Adolescents' perceptions of family belonging in stepfamilies. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *77*(3), 761-774.

Lee, S.-A. (2018). Parental Divorce, Relationships with Fathers and Mothers, and Children's Romantic Relationships in Young Adulthood. *Journal of Adult Development*, *25*(2), 121–134. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1007/s10804-017-9279-4

Modecki, K., Hagan, M., Sandler, I., & Wolchik, S. (2015). Latent Profiles of Nonresidential Father Engagement Six Years After Divorce Predict Long-Term Offspring Outcomes. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, *44*(1), 123–136. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1080/15374416.2013.865193

Smith, P., Khunou, G., & Nathane-Taulela, M. (2014). Are you your father's child? Social identity influences of father absence in a South African setting. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *24*(5), 433–436. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1080/14330237.2014.997013

Sneed, C. D., & Willis, L. A. (2016). Differences between residential and non-residential fathers on sexual socialisation of African American youth. *Sex Education*, *16*(2), 199–212. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1080/14681811.2015.1089226

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Tsuchiya, K., Lee, D. B., Qian, Y., Caldwell, C. H., & Mincy, R. B. (2020). Risk and protective family factors during childhood on youth violence among African American males: The role of mothers and nonresident fathers. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *48*(5), 1543–1563. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1002/jcop.22346

Werneck, H., Eder, M. O., Ebner, S., & Werneck-Rohrer, S. (2015). [Father-Child-Contact and Well-being of the Children in Separated and Non-Separated Families]. *Praxis Der Kinderpsychologie Und Kinderpsychiatrie*, *64*(2), 135–151. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.13109/prkk.2015.64.2.135

Yogman, M. W., & Eppel, A. M. (2022). The role of fathers in child and family health. *Engaged fatherhood for men, families and gender equality*, 15-30.

1.1 Influence of Father Involvement/Contact on Sons:

Burns, J. C., & Caldwell, C. H. (2016). Breaking the ice! Predictors about communication between nonresident African American fathers and sons about sex. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, *28*(2), 84–90. https://doi.org/10.1002/2327-6924.12252

Langa, M. (2010) Adolescent Boys' Talk about Absent Fathers, Journal of Psychology in Africa, 20:4, 519-526, DOI: 10.1080/14330237.2010.10820410

1.2 Influence of Father Involvement/Contact on Daugher:

Flouri, E., & Buchanan, A. (2003). The role of father involvement in children's later mental health. *Journal of Adolescence*, *26*(1), 63–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-1971(02)00116-1

Kelly, T. M. (2017). Daughters' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers after parents' divorce. *The Family Journal*, *25*(4), 376-382.

2. Influence of Father Involvement/Contact on Mothers:

Berger, L. M., Cancian, M., & Meyer, D. R. (2012). Maternal re-partnering and new-partner fertility: Associations with nonresident father investments in children. *Children & Youth Services Review*, *34*(2), 426–436. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.11.012

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Raskin, M., Fosse, N. E., & Easterbrooks, M. A. (2015). Influence of mother's depression on her reports of father involvement and child behavioral problems: A latent state-trait approach. *Infant mental health journal*, *36*(1), 88-103.

Ray, J. A., Choi, J.-K., & Jackson, A. P. (2021). Adverse childhood experiences and behavior problems among poor Black children: Nonresident father involvement and single mothers' parenting stress. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *121*, N.PAG. https://doi-org.ez.sun.ac.za/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105264

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Remember to ask for examples of things.

QUESTIONS TO EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS AND CHILD:

Thank you very much for part taking in this study. Your input and perspective are very valuable. As you know this study is about families with fathers who don't live in the same house as his children and the relationships with their children and other family members. I will therefore be asking some questions about (child's name)'s father, (child's name), and you.

1. As you know the interviews will be anonymous and I will be using a false name for all participants. What name would you like me to use for you instead of your real name?

2. I am curious to know, what are the reasons that you decided to participate in this study?

3. How often do you have contact with; (name of child)'s father / your father? *(You can also use the father's name)*

4. What type of contact do you have? i.e., Is it face to face, telephone conversations, or via text?

a. What do you do when you see each other?

b. What do you talk about?

5. How do you see the role of; (name of child)'s father / your father, in the family?

(You can also use the father's name) i.e., Is he in a provider role, does he help with care taking like home work or driving him around/playing/role model/protector?

a. What does he do as a father?

b. What are his responsibilities?

c. How should he be treated?

6. How do you and (name of child)'s father / your father get along?

a. What are his good qualities?

b. What are his bad qualities?

c. How often have you had family disagreements?

i. Have these disagreements been resolved?

ii. How have they been resolved?

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7. Do you think that how you and the father get along influence the contact between; (father's name) and (child's name) / you?

a. If so, how?

8. What are the things that make it easy for you to let (child's name) have contact with his/her father? / to see your, father?

9. What are the things that make it difficult for you to let (child's name) see; his/her father? / see your, father?

10. What would need to change to make father-child contact easier for you?

11. How do you see the child's relationship with his/her mother? (EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS)

12. How do you see the child's relationship with his/her/your father?

13. How do you think the mother of the child sees your relationship with the child? (EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS)

14. Does the child ever speak about how he/she feels about the father?

15. How do you think the father of the child sees your relationship with the child?

16. Is there anything on this topic of fathers and their relationship with their children and family members culturally that can't be spoken about?

a. Is there anything about fathers or their family relationships that cannot be discussed with a woman?

b. Is there anything about father or their family relationships that cannot be discussed with a white person? (If applicable)

17. There are many different cultures in South Africa. How does your specific culture accept a child into a family?

a. Does your culture have specific rituals between families or for children?

b. How does lobola work in your culture?

c. How does damages work in your culture?

18. The last few questions are not related to the father of the child / your father, but are important for us to know for the study.

a. Did you go to primary school? Did you complete it? Did you go to high school? How far did you go? (If completed) Did you have any tertiary education? If so, how far did you go?

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b. Do you earn an income? Some people may feel sensitive about their income, some may feel their income is too little or too much. How much is your income after tax?

c. How would you describe your residence? Is it a formal house, or a shack, or an apartment?

d. Do you relate to any specific cultural group like Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, etc? / Am I right in saying that the cultural group that you relate to is Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa etc?

19. The R100 gratuity will be sent to you via; an e-wallet pin / a data voucher, to your cell phone once all interviews have been conducted. Which cell phone number would you like us to send it to?

20. Do you know of anyone who belongs to a family with a non-residential father with a child of 14 years or older who may want to participate?

Thank you again for your time and valued contribution.

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QUESTIONS TO THE FATHER ABOUT HIS CHILD AND EACH RELEVANT EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER:

Thank you very much for part taking in this study. Your input and perspective is very valuable. As you know, this study is about fathers and getting their side of the story about their relationships with their children and other family members. Since it is important for this study to get a clear picture of how you get along with various people, it may take some time, so if you need to take a water or bathroom break at some point, please let me know.

1. As you know the interviews will be anonymous and I will be using a false name for all participants. What name would you like me to use for you instead of your real name?

2. I am curious to know, what are the reasons that you decided to participate in this study?

3. How do you see your role as a father in the family?

i.e., Are you in a provider role, do you help with caretaking like homework/playing/driving your child places/role model/protector?

a. What do you do as a father?

b. What are your responsibilities?

c. How should you be treated?

4. How often do you have contact with (name of child) / (family member…)?

5. What type of contact do you have? i.e., Is it face to face, telephone conversations, or via text?

a. What do you do when you see each other?

b. What do you talk about?

6. How do you and (name of child) / family member get along?

a. What are his/her good qualities?

b. What are his/her bad qualities?

c. How often have you had family disagreements with (name of child) / family member?

i. Have these disagreements been resolved?

ii. How have they been resolved?

7. Do you think that how you and (name of child) / family member get along influence the contact between you and (child's name)?

a. If so, how?

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8. What are the things that make it easy for you to have contact with your child when it comes to (family member)? / What in the relationship with your child makes father-child contact easy for you?

9. What are the things that make it difficult for you to have contact with your child when it comes to (family member)? / What in the relationship with your child makes father-child contact difficult for you?

10. What would need to change to make father-child contact easier for you when it comes to (family member)? / What would need to change in the relationship with you and your child to make father-child contact easier?

11. How do you see the child's relationship with his/her mother?

12. How do you see the child's relationship with his/her extended family member?

13. How do you think the mother of the child sees your relationship with the child?

14. How do you think the extended family member of the child sees your relationship with the child?

15. Does your child ever speak about how he/she feels about you?

a. How do you think he/she feels about you?

16. Is there anything on this topic culturally that can't be spoken about? To a woman? To a white person? (If applicable)

17. Is there anything on this topic culturally that can't be spoken about? To a woman? To a white person? (If applicable)

18. There are many different cultures in South Africa. How does your specific culture accept a child into a family?

a. Does your culture have specific rituals between families or for children?

b. How does lobola work in your culture?

c. How does damages work in your culture?

19. The last few questions are not related to you or your child, but are important for us to know for the study.

a. Did you go to primary school? Did you complete it? Did you go to high school? How far did you go? (If completed) Did you have any tertiary education? If so, how far did you go?

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b. Do you earn an income? Some people may feel sensitive about their income, some may feel their income is too little or too much. How much is your income after tax?

c. How would you describe your residence? Is it a formal house, or a shack, or an apartment?

d. Do you relate to any specific cultural group like Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa etc? / Am I right in saying that the cultural group that you relate to is Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa etc?

20. The R100 gratuity will be sent to you via; an e-wallet pin / a data voucher, to your cellphone once all interviews have been conducted. Which cellphone number would you like us to send it to?

21. Do you know of anyone who belongs to a family with a non-residential father with a child of 14 years or older who may want to participate?

Thank you again for your time and valued contribution.

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Appendix C: Child Assent and Parent/Guardian Consent for Child to Participate Form

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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

CHILD ASSENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE FORM

Dear learner,
Thank you for your interest to participate in this study. I would like to use this opportunity to just briefly again explain what the study is about:

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Research shows that although many South African black fathers do not live with their children (non-residential fathers), we know very little about how this affects these families. You may wonder why I am focusing on black families and this may even be a sensitive issue for you. I would therefore like to explain that, because of apartheid practices, non-residential fathers are most common in black South African families and that it is important to know how these families feel about this, since we don't know a lot about it. I specifically want to know more about how the relationships between the non-residential father and other family members (for example the mother of his child and the child's grandparents) influence the father's contact with his child. I would therefore like to talk to different family members of non-residential fathers to get their views and experiences.

I want to highlight again that there are many ways of being a family in South Africa, and that there is nothing wrong with families or children with non-residential fathers. Non-residential fathers can also have satisfying, loving and caring relationships with their children, even if they are not living with their children in the same home.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you assent and your parent/guardian gives permission for you to take part in this study, I will interview you for about one hour in a place where both you and I will feel safe and comfortable, in private, and where we won't be distracted, like at a private office at your school or at my practice. Money for transport to the interview venue will be provided at the standard taxi/bus rate. A telephonic interview will be arranged at a time comfortable to you if your travel expenses exceed R50. You may stop participation in this study at any time.
In the interview we will talk about your experience of your family and the relationships between different family members. I will ask questions like the following:

1. Describe the contact between you and your father?
2. What are your views about this contact?
3. What are your views about the quality of the relationship between you and your father?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your biological father/other family members?
5. What makes contact with your father difficult for you?
6. What makes contact with your father easy for you?
7. How do you think other family members influence the contact between you and your father?
8. What would make contact with your father easier?

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

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It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable or become aware of problems during or after the interview. If you find a topic to be too sensitive or uncomfortable to talk about, you can tell me and we can take a break or move on to the next topic. You don't have to discuss any topic that you do not want to. In the unlikely event that you feel overwhelmed or distressed, I can help you to arrange to see a counsellor or psychologist. You can also contact the following counselling services if you want to contact someone yourself: Free services offered by the Department of Health at Mamelodi East (071)6098635, Mamelodi West (012)8052119, and Pretoria Central (012)3541654 (See Appendix D); and paid services offered by the following clinical psychologists in private practice: Michael Oosthuizen 0825844331, Antoinette Nicolaou 0827460479/antoinette@anpsyche.co.za, and Lebo Mhambi 0844881209/lebomhambi@gmail.com.

4 POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO YOU OR SOCIETY

No benefits are guaranteed to you in this study. By being in this study you will help researchers better understand how relationships between key extended kin and black African non-residential fathers influence contact between father and child. A summary of the results from this study will be available to you through the main researcher. She can be contacted at erikanellpsychology@gmail.com

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Payment in the form of a R100 data voucher will be provided to you, and R100 Pick and Pay voucher to other family members to say 'thank you' for participation in the study, if both your mother/primary guardian and father consent and also agree to participate. The R100 voucher will be given to you and your family once interviews with you and your mother/primary guardian and father, and extended kin are complete. Withdrawal from the study forfeits the vouchers automatically. Participation is completely voluntary and will help expand the knowledge base in the field of Human Sciences.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

Any information you will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you will be protected. No information will be included that would reveal your identity**. Please take note of the limits of confidentiality, and that I have to report if you or someone else is at risk of serious harm as in cases of child abuse, should this become known.** False names will protect your real identity. All soft copies of data will be password protected and, along with hard copies, stored in a secure place in a locked cabinet in my personal private practice.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you assent to taking part in the study, you may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence and then all hard and soft copies of any of your information will be destroyed/deleted. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still be in the study. I may withdraw you from this study if I see that you are emotionally/psychologically distressed during the time of the interview. Should you withdraw from the study all information will be permanently disposed of (i.e., recordings will be permanently deleted and notes and forms will be shredded).

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Erika Nell at erikanellpsychology@gmail.com, and/or the supervisor Dr. Elmien Lesch at +27 21 808 3466 / el5@sun.ac.za.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your assent at any time and stop participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

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DECLARATION OF ASSENT BY THE CHILD AND CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD-PARTICIPANT

As participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information have been explained.

Child:
By signing below, I ______________________________ *(name of child)* agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Erika Nell.

_______________________________________...... _____________________

Signature of Child Participant **Date**

Parent:
By signing below, I ______________________________ *(name of parent/guardian)* give consent for my child to take part in this research study, as conducted by Erika Nell.

_______________________________________...... _____________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator,** I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the parent/legal guardian. I also declare that the parent/legal guardian was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions.

____ _____________________

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

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Appendix D: Adult Consent/Screening Form to Participate in Research

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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH/SCREENING

My name is Erika Nell. I am a clinical psychologist and I am doing a doctoral degree in the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. I would like to invite you to take part in my doctoral research that aims to explore if and how the relationships between the non-residential father (this means a father who do not live with their children in the same home) and other family members (for instance the mother and grandparents of his child) influence the father's contact with his child. I am focusing on black families because the research shows that, although many South African black fathers do not live with their children, we know very little about the experiences of black South African families that are affected by this issue. I would therefore like to talk to non-residential fathers and their families to get their views on the issue.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As I already explained, very little is known about what black South African families think and feel about fathers who do not live with their children and how this influences the contact between father and child. To address this gap in knowledge, it would be really helpful if you as a family member could take part in this study to assist me in gathering more information about non-residential fathers and how their relationships with various family members influence fathers' contact with their children.

You may wonder why I am focusing on black families and this may even be a sensitive issue for you. I would therefore like to explain that my motivation for this focus comes from research that shows that, mostly due to past colonial and apartheid practices, non-residential fathers are most common in black South African families. Furthermore, we know very little about how various family members experience this issue. I want to add here that there are many ways of being a family in South Africa; and that there is nothing wrong about families or children with non-residential fathers. Non-residential fathers can also have satisfying, loving and caring relationships with their children, even if they are not living with their children in the same home.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you consent to take part in this study, I will interview you for approximately one hour in a place where both you and I will feel safe and comfortable, is private, and where minimum distractions exist. Compensation for transport to the interview venue will be reimbursed at the standard taxi/bus rate up to the amount of R50. Telephonic interviews will be arranged at a time convenient to willing participants whose travel expenses exceed R50. A private office will be available as an option. You may stop participation in this study at any time.
The interview itself will consist of you telling me about your experience of your family and the relationships between different family members. I will ask questions like the following:

1. Describe the contact between the child/ren and non-residential father in your family?
2. What are your views about this contact?

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3. What are your views about the quality of the relationship between the non-residential father and child/ren in your family?
4. How would you describe your relationship with the biological father/other family members?
5. What makes father-child contact hard for you?
6. What makes father-child contact easy for you?
7. How do you think other family members influence father-child contact?
8. What do think is needed to make father-child contact easier?

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that you may experience discomfort or become aware of problems during or after the interview. If you find a certain topic to be too sensitive or uncomfortable to talk about, you can tell me and we can take a break or move on to the next topic. Your boundaries will be respected and you will therefore not be obligated to discuss any topic that you do not wish to discuss. In the unlikely event that you feel overwhelmed or distressed, I can help you to arrange to see a counsellor or psychologist. You can also contact the following counselling services if you wish to contact someone yourself: Free services offered by the Department of Health at Mamelodi East (071)6098635, Mamelodi West (012)8052119, and Pretoria Central (012)3541654 (See Appendix D); and paid services offered by the following clinical psychologists in private practice: Michael Oosthuizen 0825844331, Antoinette Nicolaou 0827460479/antoinette@anpsyche.co.za, and Lebo Mhambi 0844881209/lebomhambi@gmail.com.

4 POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY

No benefits are guaranteed to participants in this study. By participating in this study, you will help researchers better understand how relationships between key extended kin and black South African non-residential fathers influence contact between father and child. A summary of the results from this study will be available to you through the main researcher. She can be contacted at erikanellpsychology@gmail.com

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Payment in the form of a R100 data voucher will be provided to your child, and R100 Pick and Pay voucher to all other participants as a sign of gratitude for participation in the study, if both the child's mother/primary guardian and father consent to participate. The R100 voucher will be given to you and your child once interviews with him/her and her mother/primary guardian and father, and extended kin are complete. Withdrawal from the study forfeits the compensation automatically. Participation is completely voluntary. Participation in this study will be contributing to the existing knowledge base of the field of Human Sciences.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

Any information you will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child will be protected. This will be done in that no information will be included that would reveal your identity (i.e., audiotapes or research notes), when the results of the research are published or discussed at professional psychological conferences in the future. **Please take note of the limits of confidentiality, as the researcher is required to report instances of child abuse, should this become known.** Pseudonyms (false names) will protect your real identity. All soft copies of data will be password protected and, along with hard copies, stored in a secure location in a locked cabinet in my personal private practice.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to taking part in the study, please note that you may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if any significant emotional/psychological distress is present during the time of interview. Should you withdraw from the study all data will be permanently disposed of (i.e., recordings will be permanently deleted and notes and forms will be shredded).

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8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Erika Nell at erikanellpsychology@gmail.com, and/or the supervisor Dr. Elmien Lesch at +27 21 808 3466 / el5@sun.ac.za.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

10. SCREENING

I want to ask you to answer the questions below so that I can see if you belong to the kind of family that this study will be focusing on:

Name and surname:
Contact number:

Relationship to child:
Email address:

Name and surname of child:
Age of child:

Name of child's school:
Grade of child:

(Please tick the block that is true in your situation)

How would you define your racial category?

African □
Coloured □
Asian □
Caucasian □
Indian □
Other □

Are both you and the biological father of the child South African citizens?

Yes □ No □

Relationship status of the parents of the child:

- Married □
- Divorced □
- Not married but together □
- Not married and separated □

How often does the child have contact with his/her father?

- Weekly □
- Every second week □
- Once a month □
- Once every 2 months □
- Once every 4 months □
- Once every 6 months or less □
- Never □

When the child has contact with his/her father is the contact…

a) Direct (face to face) □
b) Indirect (i.e., via text or phone call or skype) □

When the child has contact with his/her biological father, how long does such contact usually last?

a) Less than an hour □
b) A couple of hours □

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c) A day ☐
d) A couple of days ☐
e) A week or more ☐

Which of the following people in the family play an important role in family decision making (such as father-child contact)?

- Biological mother ☐
- Maternal grandmother ☐
- Maternal grandfather ☐
- Paternal grandmother ☐
- Paternal grandfather ☐
- Stepfather/mother's partner ☐
- Stepmother/father's partner ☐
- Paternal aunt ☐
- Paternal uncle ☐
- Maternal aunt ☐
- Maternal uncle ☐
- Other ☐

Contact details:

- Biological father:
    - Name
    - Contact number
    - Email address

- Influential family member 1:
    - Name
    - Relationship with child
    - Contact number
    - Email address

- Influential family member 2:
    - Name
    - Relationship with child
    - Contact number
    - Email address

Please note: Should you and your family be selected for participation in this study, you will be contacted to schedule the interviews. Consenting and filling in answers to the questions does not automatically include you and your family in the study.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD-PARTICIPANT

As participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information have been explained.

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By signing below, I ______________________________ *(name of parent)* agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Erika Nell.

_______________________________________...... _____________________
Signature of Participant **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator,** I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the parent/legal guardian. I also declare that the parent/legal guardian was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions.

____ _____________________
Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

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Appendix E: Electronic Consent Form

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ELECTRONIC CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear prospective participant
My name is Erika Nell. I am a clinical psychologist and I am doing a doctoral degree in the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. I would like to invite you to take part in my doctoral research that aims to explore if and how the relationships between the non-residential father (this means a father who does not live with his children in the same home) and other family members (for instance the mother and grandparents of his child) influence the father's contact with his child. I am focusing on black families because the research shows that, although many South African black fathers do not live with their children, we know very little about the experiences of black South African families that are affected by this issue. I would therefore like to talk to non-residential fathers and their families to get their views about the issue.

As I already explained, very little is known about how black South African families think and feel about fathers who do not live with their children and how this influences the contact between father and child. To address this gap in knowledge, it would be really helpful if you as a family member could take part in this study to assist me in gathering more information about non-residential fathers and how their relationships with various family members influence fathers' contact with their children.
You may wonder why I am focusing on black families and this may even be a sensitive issue for you. I would therefore like to explain that my motivation for this focus comes from research that shows that, mostly due to past colonial and apartheid practices, non-residential fathers are most common in black South African families. Furthermore, we know very little about how various family members experience this issue. I want to add here that there are many ways of being a family in South Africa; and that there is nothing wrong about families or children with non-residential fathers. Non-residential fathers can also have satisfying, loving and caring relationships with their children, even if they are not living with their children in the same home.
If you consent to take part in this study, I will interview you for approximately one hour in a place where both you and I will feel safe and comfortable, is private, and where minimum distractions exist. A private office will be available as an option. You may stop participation in this study at any time.
The interview itself will consist of you telling me about your experience of your family and the relationships between different family members. I will ask questions like the following:

1. Describe the contact between the child/ren and non-residential father in your family.
2. What are your views about this contact?
3. What are your views about the quality of the relationship between the non-residential father and child/ren in your family?
4. How would you describe your relationship with the biological father/other family members?
5. What makes father-child contact hard for you?
6. What makes father-child contact easy for you?
7. How do you think other family members influence father-child contact?
8. What do think is needed to make father-child contact easier?

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It is possible that you may experience discomfort or become aware of problems during or after the interview. If you find a certain topic to be too sensitive or uncomfortable to talk about, you can tell me and we can take a break or move on to the next topic. Your boundaries will be respected and you will therefore not be obligated to discuss any topic that you do not wish to discuss. In the unlikely event that you feel overwhelmed or distressed, I can help you to arrange to see a counsellor or psychologist. You can also contact the following counselling services if you wish to contact someone yourself: Free services offered by the Department of Health at Mamelodi East (071)6098635, Mamelodi West (012)8052119, and Pretoria Central (012)3541654 (See Appendix D); and paid services offered by the following clinical psychologists in private practice: Michael Oosthuizen 0825844331, Antoinette Nicolaou 0827460479/antoinette@anpsyche.co.za, and Lebo Mhambi 0844881209/lebomhambi@gmail.com.
No benefits are guaranteed to participants in this study. By participating in this study you will help researchers better understand how relationships between key extended kin and black African non-residential fathers influence contact between father and child. A summary of the results from this study will be available to you through the main researcher. She can be contacted at erikanellpsychology@gmail.com

A R100 data voucher for your child and R100 Pick and Pay Voucher will be provided to you as a sign of gratitude for participation in the study, if both his/her mother/primary guardian and father consent and also agree to participate. The R100 voucher will be given to you and your child once interviews with him/her and her mother/primary guardian, father and extended kin is complete. Withdrawal from the study forfeits the compensation automatically. Participation is completely voluntary. Participation in this study will be contributing to the existing knowledge base of the field of Human Sciences.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:
You have the right to decline answering any questions and you can exit the at any time without giving a reason. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Mrs Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

Any information you will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child will be protected. This will be done in a way that no information will be included that would reveal your identity (i.e., audiotapes or research notes), when the results of the research are published or discussed at professional psychological conferences in the future. Please take note of the limits of confidentiality, as the researcher is required to report instances of child abuse, should this become known. Pseudonyms (false names) will protect your real identity. All soft copies of data will be password protected and along with hard copies, stored in a secure location in a locked cabinet in my personal private practice.
You can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to taking part in the study, please note that you may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this study if any significant emotional/psychological distress is present, during the time of interview. Should you withdraw from the study all data will be permanently disposed of (i.e., recordings will be permanently deleted and notes and forms will be shredded).
If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Erika Nell at erikanellpsychology@gmail.com, and/or the supervisor Dr. Elmien Lesch at +27 21 808 3466 / el5@sun.ac.za.

To save a copy of this text, you can down load this document and save it to your personal computer.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided for the current study.

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YES
NO

☐
☐

I agree to take part in this study.

YES
NO

☐
☐

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Appendix F: Interviewer Confidentiality Agreement

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INTERVIEWER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

It is critical that strict confidentiality be maintained before, during and after all phases of the interview and research process. You may not discuss the process with anyone besides the principal researcher (Erika Nell: erikanellpsychology@gmail.com), or promotor of the study (Dr. Elmien Lesch: +27 21 808 3466 / el5@sun.ac.za). Should you have any questions regarding your rights as an interviewer you may contact the Division for Research Development (Maléne Fouché: mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622). By signing this you are also agreeing that you can be a fair and impartial interviewer without bias or prejudice regarding any interviewee, or criticising or attempting to alter any interviewee's views. You undertake to respect each interviewee's right to her/his views in spite of those views differing from your own.

If requested by the participants, the principal researcher is responsible for providing information to them regarding the outcome and publications of the research.

My (Name of interviewer: and principal researcher) signature below signify that I understand and will uphold the confidentiality of the research participants who participate in the current study. I also understand that failure to comply with these standards may result in disciplinary/legal actions.

Signature of Interviewer **Date**

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

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Appendix G: Codes, Sub-themes, and Themes

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Appendix H:
Context setting and discarded codes

Context setting codes:

Duration of last father-child contact?

Frequency of father-child contact?

Other children

Progression of parental relationship over time

Reason for participation

Discarded codes:

Paternity questioned

Child come to know about father

Extended kin-father relationship

Father and child being together eases ability to provide

Father as link to paternal family

Father asserting his role

Father enjoy relationship with child

Father loves child

Father role: Friend

Father role: Medical care

Father role: Protector

Father role: Religion

Father role: Role model

Father wanting child

Father wants best for child

Father-child contact content

Father-child contact via community gatekeepers

Father-child excursions

Father-child meet secretly

Fathering boys vs girls

Fathers involved in crime

Fathers learn to be fathers

Fathers warning against men like them

Fleeing fathers

Half sibling contact

How fathers aught to be treated

Indirect father-child contact

Influence of proximity on father-child contact

Kin competing for recourses

Mother facilitating father-child contact

Mother-paternal kin relationship

Mother-step-mother conflict

Nature of parental contact

Non-residential fatherhood is undesirable

Other context for father-child contact

Parents who get along

Prioritising the child over parental conflict

Rejected father

Satisfied with father-child contact

Social fathers are important

Step-father replacing father

Step-mother as deterrent

Step-mother controls money

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Step-mother easing father-child contact

Step-mothers threatened

Step-parent as risk to child

Undesirable child traits

Undesirable extended kin traits

Undesirable mother traits

Visitation agreement: Formal

Visitation: Informal agreement

Visitation: No agreement

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Appendix I: Tshwane District Health Services

TSHWANE DISTRICT HEALTH SERVICES: MENTAL HEALTH

CLINICS WITH PSYCHOLOGISTS

SEPTEMBER 2017

Area	Facility	Address	Tel (1)
Atteridgeville	Atteridgeville Clinic	Ramokoebe Square, Cnr Mareka & Ramokobane St	(012)3730126 (012)3730464
Eersterust	Eersterust Clinic	Cnr PS Fourie Dr & Hans Coverdale Rd East	(012)8063000
Ga-rankuwa	Phedisong 4 CHC	5808 Lenyai St, Zone 4	(012)7032993 (012)7008906
Hammanskraal	Mandisa Siceka Clinic	Portion 16, Mandela Village	(012)7113906
Hammanskraal	Refentse Clinic	3197 Tambo 2, Stinkwater	(012)7155178
Hammanskraal	Suurman Clinic	Stand 91, Suurman	(012)7102945
Hercules	Hercules Clinic	Cnr Ribbens St & Taljaard St	(012)3581784
Laudium	Laudium CHC	Cnr Bengal St & 25th Ave	(012)3749900
Mabopane	Tlamelong Clinic	2734 Block B	(083)7074197
Mamelodi East	Stanza Bopape Clinic	2 Shilovhane St (next to Putco bus depot)	(071)6098635
Mamelodi West	Mamelodi West Clinic	Shabangu Ave	(012)8052119
Metsweding	Bronkhorstspruit Clinic	Cnr Market St & Louis Botha Ave	(082)9291877
Metsweding	Dark City Clinic	Stand 1107, Section F, Ekangala	(013)9357027
Metsweding	Refilwe Clinic	1169 Masina Road, Refilwe	(012)7320671
Metsweding	Zithobeni Clinic	624 Kabini St, Zithobeni (next to police, library, crèche)	(013)9370146
Pretoria Central	Skinner Clinic	Cnr Dr Savage Rd and Steve Biko Rd	(012)3541654
Pretoria North	Pretoria North Clinic	376 Jack Hinden St, Pretoria North	(012)5656667
Pretorius Park	Pretorius Park Clinic	Cnr Bugle St & Loristo St	(012)3582112
Saulsville	Bophelong Clinic	66 Masopha Street	(012)3753525
Soshanguve	Maria Rantho Clinic	3180 Block LL	(012)7972857
Soshanguve	Soshanguve 3 CHC	1834 Block BB	(012)7903305
Soshanguve South	K. T. Motubatse Clinic	20941 Ext. 4	(082)3195649
Winterveldt	Kgabo CHC	1526 Kgabo Stand	(074)7048900

PRIVATE SERVICES

Michael Oosthuizen 0825844331/moosthuizenpsychology@gmail.com
Antoinette Nicolaou 0827460479/antoinette@anpsyche.co.za
Marcia Munyangane 0720423772/marciamunyangane@gmail.com