DRAFT PAPER

Submitted to: The politics of care, welfare and social cohesion: intersectional perspectives on redistributive and liberal welfare regimes in a global context: A South African – Swiss Joint Research Seminar: Basel, 3 – 5 May 2010

Narratives of gender and practices of care among young men and women in contemporary South Africa

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[photo taken by 16 year old from Uitsig to represent his masculinity]

This paper is a work in progress that draws on a number of studies to explore constructions, experiences, and understandings of how care and normative gender roles in respect of care and the traditional division of labour in domestic settings is currently understood and reportedly practised by young South Africans. The paper is located in the contemporary context of South African transformatory politics and the continued pursuit of gender justice. While much has changed constitutionally, legally and socially with respect to gender equality, many have pointed out the way in which such changes have failed to translate into

an improved quality of life, access to adequate resources or full citizenship for the majority of women (see for example, Gouws, 2005). The paper argues that gender normative practices and divisions of labour particularly through their intersection with class and age continue to facilitate inequitable distribution of labour within homes, workplaces and broader civil society institutions and practices. While on the surface some men are clearly taking up traditionally female roles of care giving, in particular with respect to involvement with children and household duties, there are layers of care-giving, often unconsciously reproduced, that are interwoven in complex ways into the normative practises of being a man and being a woman that impact in more subtle and nuanced ways on who cares and importantly how one cares and for what. The division of labour in which care has been historically both feminized and devalued in both private and public spaces means that women continue to carry the burden of care with little acknowledgement in both realms.

It has been well argued that we need to address gender inequalities at the level of interpersonal and domestic relations in order to adequately challenge gender inequalities at broader social and political levels. The way in which gender is reproduced through existing care giving is a key way in which gender power is reproduced at the level of the home and is frequently reflected in public practices and workplaces where women are still associated with professions, positions and roles that serve, nurture, support, and take care of others. Such practices not only facilitate a multiple load for women, especially those with fewer economic resources to 'buy in' care assistance, who carry the greater burden of care for the young, old and ill, but also serve to limit and constrain women's (and men's) opportunities in careers and life choices such as early choices of school subjects (as is also evident in our challenges with respect to women in science) (for example, De la Rey, 2002; Gevisser & Morris, 2002).

My central argument here is that it is an imperative to destabilise constructions of what men and women can and should do in homes not because divisions of labour are inherently problematic but because such divisions of labour represent a rigidity that sustains normative gender roles that ultimately bolster male power and devalue women and that which is constructed as 'feminine'. The revalorisation of practices of care is a key component of such a struggle. The paper attempts to unpack the way in which young men and women, and boys and girls, understand femininity and masculinity within the framework of the labour of care in the household. It highlights the powerful way in which practices of gender continue to be framed within a binarism of gender in which masculinity is set up in opposition to femininity and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. Importantly for the purposes of this focus is the way in which such notions of masculinity and femininity are framed by gendered activities which serve to reflect and reproduce the association of femininity with care and masculinity with control. The paper argues for continued measures at both macro and micro levels to challenge normative gender roles as co-negotiated between men and women and institutionalised in families, work places and other institutions of civil society

towards the fair and just distribution of the load of social and interpersonal care and gender more broadly. It argues that a revalorisation of the labour of care (at both domestic and institutional level) and deconstruction of binaristic gendered norms and practices is required to more equitably distribute the load of care in society.

Nancy Folbre (2008, p. 374) reflects how:

> 'Feminist theorists and activists alike have long been shifting away from an emphasis on discrimination against women toward concerns about the distribution of care responsibilities. Most policy recommendations growing out of these concerns focus on the need for more state support for child care, paid family leave, and/or more equal sharing of care responsibilities in the family.'

The paper is concerned in particular with the imperative to work at the goal of more equal sharing of care responsibilities in the family. It argues in particular for critical attention to normative practices of gender and the ways in which they are bound up with either a powerful association with care as in the case of femininity or rejection of and dissociation from care as in masculinity. Ratele et al (in press) point out 'doing chores at home, or playing sport, or drinking alcohol, or any other human activity, becomes important not in itself, but mainly because boys [and girls] mark these activities as made for one sex and not another'. The paper further argues that it is not only the ungluing of the labour of care from practices of doing gender that is required but also a broader re-positioning of care as a valuable component of life practise. The re-valorisation of care cannot however be achieved outside of a critique of the binarism of gender as the devaluation of care is rooted in the binarism of the private-public divide which both founds and serves to reproduce patriarchal power relations.

The paper draws on three different local studies that I have been personally involved as researcher on to explore how some young men and women construct their femininity and masculinity, offering insights into the ways in which dominant discourse on gender and care continues to reproduce and at times resist the normative binaristic constructions and practices in homes. In my analysis of the findings I am informed primarily by feminist social constructionist thinking that also draws on Butlerian notions of gender performativity and work in critical men's studies that has generated valuable thinking and empirical work

around how hegemonic masculinities take on meaning and value in particular social contexts.

Feminization of care & gendered performance: constructions of what boys and girls can do

> .... the unblushing male is not a real person, but rather a set of activities against which boys measure themselves and are measured by other boys. These activities get to be embodied or expressed in forming crucial aspects of ruling masculinity – those things treasured by the culture about being a boy or man and against which what is male is weighed up. A boy or man who embodies ruling masculinity is made of the stuff, colloquially speaking, girls and women want, and other males want to have. But does he exist in places in real life, where the sources of masculinities are reduced, societies heavily affected negatively by globalisation, war, disease, epidemic, historical group oppression, hunger, changing traditions, to name some of the sources? (Ratele et al, in press)

Young people, both boys and girls, especially in working class communities where domestic labour cannot be bought in, are actively engaged in chores and general domestic care (Rama & Richter, 2007; Budlender & Bosch, 2002; Bozalek, 2004). For example, in a recent survey among school learners in KZN and the Western Cape involving over 1000 participants, nearly a quarter of boys (and only slightly higher percentage of girls) in the sample reported that they were expected to act as substitute parent for other siblings (Morrell & Devey, in press). Yet, other research shows that there is still a powerful association of the physical acts of caring with mothering and femininity rather than fathering and masculinity as key to prescriptions for successful masculinity and femininity. Gender role stereotypes hinging around women being engaged in roles that are linked to 'mothering', whether at home or in civil society, are still relatively strong (see for example, Esplen, 2009). The normative assumption of women as inherently and naturally nurturant and able to mother is powerfully embedded in 'traditional and persistent ideologies of motherhood' (Kruger, 2006, p. 195). Thus key to social meanings of femininity across many times and places has been the centrality and idealisation of motherhood. Morrell et al (in press) argue that

> 'The naturalization of motherhood and its unproblematic connection to women has resulted in a blurring of the distinction between 'caring for' and 'caring about' one's

> children. Prescriptions demand that a mother not only care about her children but demonstratively care *for* them'.

Evidence of the salience of these constructions – in particular the centrality of women's role in bodily care, in young people's imagining of what they should do and be are evident in the quote below, which emerges in a focus group conducted with a study among young people in the Western Cape and also presented in a recent paper by Ratele *et* al (in press) and documented in Fouten (2006). The excerpt begins with a reflection on what men and women can do in the household and begins with quite a strong argument about how boys and men can and may *even* like to perform traditionally female defined tasks in the household:

Interviewer:	Let us talk about the men that you saw on the video [music video depicting men doing a range of activities], there are those who like to exercise and those who like to be at home doing chores. Then what type of men would you really wish to be?
Maxie:	I am that guy who likes to do household chores.
Interviewer:	Is that a type of guy you like yourself?
Maxie:	I also like to do repairs because my mother cannot do them.
Interviewer:	Why can't she do that?
Jabu:	She cannot climb up the roof because her duty is to cook.
Interviewer:	There are men who can cook, so what do women do while men are cooking?
Jabu:	We do not cook, we only assist them.
Interviewer:	Ok, do you mean cooking is only meant for women?
A number of voices:	Yes, we cannot cook nice food but they can cook delicious food.

[School San: located in historically black urban area]

While Maxie is clearly proposing alternative ways of being a man, and even an attraction to doing household work, he 'likes' to do it, his contribution is quickly destabilised by the other boys in the group. Jabu answers the question for him of why his mother cannot do the repairs and shifts the group sentiment very strongly towards consensus that nurturing work, like cooking, is something that boys can indeed 'assist' with, but cannot ever succeed in doing as well as women. Such an essentialised discourse, a notion that women are inherently better at such things and an insistence that while boys and men can physically do these things, they are only being borrowed so to speak, rather than doing it from the heart

or ‘naturally’, is a powerful rationale for continued gender divisions of labour. Engaging in such tasks is not owned, but is always adjunct to the main player who is always necessarily a girl or woman. It is also interesting to note that Maxie’s mother was disabled and had he been able to answer the question in this way – his mother cannot help with repairs not because she is a woman but because she is physically incapable – perhaps his argument would have had some basis for intelligibility by the others and not simply diffused by the stronger arguments for the disavowal of male ownership of nurturing roles in the household.

While this discussion has begun with contestations about what men and women can and cannot do it goes on to draw on cultural discourses, on *ilobola* (bride wealth, historically paid in cattle but in contemporary South Africa increasingly a monetary sum) to legitimise divisions of labour in the household. Here we see an almost clear assertion by these boys that *ilobola* as a contract = male control of wife and household = women serving men in the household but also a strong contestation about meanings of *ilobola* and a further contestation about what men and boys can and can’t do.

Jabu:	She is obliged to do everything because I have paid *ilobola*.
Loyiso:	But bear in mind that whoever you hire can still seduce you.
Maxie:	Helping each other has nothing to do with *ilobola* but with love.
Loyiso:	So if you take *ilobola* as a priority, it means you do not love you partner.
Jabu:	No, I do love her but *ilobola* equates chores.
Maxie:	That is totally not a sign of love but abuse
Loyiso:	You remind me of men who usually complain about soaked nappies because of the unpleasant smell.
Jabu:	I will never wash nappies.
Interviewer:	What else can’t you do?
Jabu:	I do not wash dishes and also do not cook.
Interviewer:	What exactly do you do at home?
Jabu:	I make up my bed. I can help around the house with other chores but not nappies.
Interviewer:	Why?
Jabu:	It is a woman’s duty; otherwise it will cause me a spell.
Maxie:	It won’t.
Interviewer:	What do you mean by that?
Jabu:	It is something that will make you get horrible pimples.

Maxie:	That is just laziness; a baby's dung does not cause anyone to get pimples.
Interviewer:	Why don't you want to wash nappies?
Jabu:	I married her so that she can wash nappies.
Interviewer:	Did you marry her to wash nappies?
Jabu:	No, but it is one of her duties.
Maxie:	What if your wife is ill?
Jabu:	I can hire someone.
Maxie:	What if you do not have money?
Loyiso:	What if you are not employed and the only employed person is your wife. Who is going to do the chores?
Jabu:	My sister.
Loyiso:	What if your sister is married?
Jabu:	I think there will be someone who can help me. I still maintain that I would rather do the cleaning than washing nappies.

(School San)

What is interesting about this dialogue is the way in which Jabu asserts and reasserts the importance of men not being engaged in certain tasks and how the performances of such tasks may undermine and even in some ways corrupt and defile their status as men – articulated through bewitchment and the physical punishment of the eruption of pimples, notions of being infected, of being soiled by dealing with soiled nappies or babies, somehow infected by femininity (here the association may be that girls are the ones who get pimples) through performing what is seen as female activities. A similar response from young boys and girls has been recorded in a recent study by the Sonke Gender Justice Network (Clacherty, in press) and Flood et al (in press) have also noted that a fear of being ostracised by peers for doing non-traditional roles inhibits men's involvement in care.

Also interesting about the way in which this dialogue unfolds is that is evident that the closer we get to dealing with actual bodies (as in changing babies), the more repugnant and damaging this seems to be for boyhood and manhood. Thus it is acceptable to assist with cleaning and household chores, but cleaning a body and dealing with bodily emissions is totally unacceptable. What is also noteworthy here is the way in which financial capacity is drawn on as a way of saving face for boys and men – for reinstating a *counter blushing* masculinity (Ratele et al, in press) – so if you really have to do these feminine things because you have no choice then you can hope to have enough money to buy out such tasks. Such a

notion flags the complex intersectionality of gender and class – where access to finances is imagined at least as a means to avoiding the degeneration that is assumed to come with engaging in feminine tasks which is re-iterated as way of challenging Maxie's attempt to re-emphasise that men and women are both capable of multiple tasks no matter what their gender:

Maxie:	I disagree with him because it goes with the feeling. If you want to cook you can cook and if your mother feels like fixing the roof, she can.
Interviewer:	How do you know that anyone can fix the roof?
Maxie:	The decision lies with an individual.
Interviewer:	But you are not born with that, you acquired it somewhere?
Maxie:	That is external environmental influence.
Interviewer:	Do you consider those influences correct or incorrect?
Maxie:	For example, a bachelor does all the chores himself.
Jabu:	But men have money, they can still hire someone to assist them.
Maxie:	Men differ financially, those who do not have enough money to hire an assistant to do the chores, do everything themselves.
Jabu:	He can still look for a girlfriend to help him.

Further of interest in this excerpt is the association of masculinity with money – 'men have money' – the centrality of the breadwinner role that has been highlighted as still salient in contemporary constructions of masculinity in South African contexts, and evident for teenage South African males (see for example Cleaver, 2002; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Morrell, 2007; Rabe, 2006; Ratele et al, 2007), but also powerfully impacted on and undermined by historical contexts of colonialism and racial capitalism, as well as in recent years HIV (see for example, Mfecane, 2008; Niehaus, 2005; Wilson, 2006).

Gendered divisions of labour: Reported practices in the home

Richter (2007) in documenting and reflecting on the way in which men's roles in the family and as caregivers for children are conceived, concludes somewhat negatively that men's roles in families and particularly in care-giving have tended to resist change, even in response to political and material change. The gendered division of labour across culture

has been shown to be strongly resilient and resistant to change (see for example, Baxter, 2002). On the other hand, there is acknowledgement that men are generally more active in their children's lives than has previously been assumed and that men would like to be more involved with their children and in practices of care in the home (see for example, Swartz & Bhana, 2009; Hendricks, Swartz & Bhana, in press).

At a material level, Budlender *et al.*'s (2001) time survey of South African care practices gives us some idea of the lived experience of care, highlighting how powerfully gendered domestic care of people and spaces is:

Mean minutes per day spent on unpaid care work activities by sex

	Full sample		Actors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Household maintenance	74	181	107	199
Care of persons	4	32	63	110
Community service	5	3	145	98
Unpaid care	83	216	117	235

(Budlender et al, 2001)

Mean minutes per day spent on child care by relationship to children

Children under 18	Male	Female
None	2	9
Yes, but not living in household	2	14
Yes, and living in household	**6**	**64**

(Budlender et al, 2001)

In this section I share one component of research with a group of teenage, school-going parents (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, in press) based on ethnographic work and indepth interviews with 26 learners at KZN and WCape schools. In looking at how participants talk about how care is practised their narratives appear to mirror the gendered imaginings of what men and women should do with respect to care and domestic reproductive labour as articulated by young people in the section above. In many of the cases biological fathers were not involved in care, and tended to play a role as contributing financially (or at least their families did). But in cases where fathers extend beyond the role of providers, they appear to do so along traditional lines. Fathers in some cases seemed willing to 'play' with their children but will only undertake the more traditional female care-giving roles when

asked by the female parent. Generally the male role seems to be extremely constrained, with some but very limited nurturing activities involved. Moreover this research also highlights how even within the labour of care there are further divisions with the degree of closeness to the body correlating with strength of feminization of the task.

> Int: When you're together; does he take care of the baby for example changing the baby's nappy?
> Nokwanda: If I ask him to help me with the baby, he does.
> Int: Are you saying that if you don't, then he doesn't?
> Nokwanda: No, he doesn't. The only thing he does is to play with the baby. (Dingiswayo High, KZN)

> Int: Hmm! Do you think your boyfriend loves his son though?
> Smangele: Very much, Miss. They get along very well. When he's visiting they play quite a lot.
> Int: When he was young, did he ever bathe him or change his nappy?
> Smangele: Oh…No! He would carry him when he's quiet but when the baby started crying for whatever reason; he would give him to me. (Dingiswayo High, KZN)

There were also a number of cases where the father was more active, although not necessarily living with the female learner parent. But in these situations it appeared that these young men did little of the traditional female caring even when they were responsible for the child, as their female relatives would take on this role:

> Int: Do you ever change his nappies or do you just call your mother to do that for you?
> Malusi: Well, I call my mother to help with that.
> Int: Does she also prepare the milk bottle for him?
> Malusi: Yes.
> Int: But he's your baby…
> Malusi: It's just that I have never been left alone with him, just the two of us.
> Int: Let's say you're there, the baby needs to be changed, why do you feel you need to call your mother?
> Malusi: If she's there, then I call her. But if she were to be gone, then I'd change him.
> Int: Have you ever done that before?
> Malusi: No, I haven't. (Dingiswayo High, KZN)

While it is evident that many female learner-parents did not receive much assistance from the biological father, it could be argued this division of labour is to some extent negotiated by both through their own enactment of what they think is appropriate. Thus there are times where the young mothers inadvertently reproduced the gendered roles by not expecting or demanding very much from the biological father or even actively prevented his

engagement. The narratives of female participants reveal a discourse of female ‘ownership’ of children – speaking of ‘my child’ also speaks to an assumption of 'ownership' of babies and children - which inadvertently extends their control as primary caregivers thus reproducing the burden of childcare. Similarly the use of a language of gratitude when describing what the biological father offers, highlights a sense of lack of expectation from the father, further illustrative of stereotypic notions of what a father should which ultimately reproduces and legitimises this imbalance:

> Pheli: …my boyfriend was very cooperative. In most cases he would remain with the baby if I had things to do and I would go and collect the baby when I was through or he would bring him home. I *really used to appreciate* what he was doing. I remember this other time I wanted to go and see my aunt… he remained with the baby for the whole afternoon until I came back. In numerous occasions he would come to my place fetch the baby and spend some time with him. He has been a loving and caring father to *my son*… (our emphasis) (Pheli, Maputo Senior Secondary School, Western Cape)

The gendered roles are however not entirely unquestioned even though accepted. The young women appear in many cases to wish for more assistance from the fathers of their children, but do not appear to expect equality in terms of ongoing support, either financial or emotional in the parenting roles, beyond the payment of *Inhlawulo*[1] and child support where possible. In Molly’s case below her questioning of the male parent’s role is evident in her use of the term ‘funny’ yet her inability to resist or challenge this is also present and ultimately accepted and possibly excused by her ‘love’ for him:

> Molly: I am happy to be a mother but at times there are problems that come with this responsibility. My boyfriend is handling fatherhood in a funny way. It is like he hasn’t really accepted it. I take the baby to him all the time but he has never asked for him on his own accord. He would never take a walk or stroll out there with his baby. Yes he is there for my baby but he would never initiate anything as far as the baby is concerned. Even when the child was admitted at Tygerberg hospital he would phone occasionally checking on the baby’s progress. He never came to the hospital, not even when his own mother spent the night with the child, but I love him and we plan to marry after I have gone through school and am working. (Molly, Joshua Gumede High School, Western Cape)

[1] Payment of ‘damages’. Financial compensation by paternal family to maternal family of the child by way of acknowledging responsibility.

Interestingly in a photonarrative research project recently conducted with 20 participants from Cape Town schools, primarily working class, historically designated 'coloured' areas, 16 of them boys, one quarter of the sample of boys specifically took photos of themselves doing household domestic chores, from cleaning the yard and kitchen to cooking. And it is also clear that young men are engaged in household tasks that are normally considered female and many of them understand and accept that this is something that they have to do and it does not appear to carry as much shame and denigration as has emerged in other research and the discussion on girls and boys work in the focus groups cited here. For example, in these excerpts from a group of school-going adolescent boys in Cape Town working class communities:

M: It's when my mom goes shopping then she asks me to clean the house, = I uhhuh= uhm, to wash the dishes, to clean the rooms.

I: Any you don't have a problem with doing that?

M: No, it's always [unclear]=

I: Are this [these things] do you usually do these things as young men?

M: Yes. Uhm, mostly during the school holidays, most of the children are at home and their parents expect them to clean around the house ...

I: Okay ... here you're standing with the broom and you're busy sweeping.

M: Yes.

I: So is this not a woman's job to do to sweep?
M: No. It's not a woman's thing. Anyone, what if, what if your wife passes away? Who is gonna clean the house then? = I uhr= So, anyone should be able to do it actually.
I: So you, you aren't really bothered by these kinds of things?
M: No, I'm not bothered by it.
I: Okay. But is it normal for young men like yourself to do these kinds of things, to sweep, and to clean for money, and things like that?
M: Most, most children are underprivileged they their parents don't have enough money to buy things for them. So, =I hmm= during school holidays, they go and looks for work of something like that. =I hmmm= Okay. (14 years, Mitchells Plain)

In this young man's narrative we see a sense of comfort and open resistance to constructions of certain tasks as women's work as well as an acknowledgement of the need for all to assist in the household in situations of economic disadvantage. The difference between the focus group discussions documented above, and the importance to reiterate what boys and girls should do and this individual interview where there seems more acceptance and understanding may have been methodological. If masculinity is performed for other men, a focus group situation would place more imperative on boys to prove where they stand and take a more active stand against anything feminine (unless like Maxie they make a conscious decision to challenge this). Thus the fact that these are individual interviews where there is less imperative (possibly) to prove masculinity to other peers may be playing some role in the more muted and accepting response. But also worth noting is that the activities photographed are more about cleaning and cooking, but we do not have any images that reflect an engagement with bodily care, feeding, bathing, reading to a child, cuddling a sibling, etc. This may relate to the argument made earlier and reflected in all three sets of data presented here, that the closer one gets to care that involves bodily contact, a sense of intimacy and closeness, the more resistant boys appear to be in associating themselves with such activities.

Conclusions

What I have tried to unpack in this paper are the imperatives on boys and girls to set up their identities and practices in opposition to each other, their investments in this, and how this may impact on the lived experience and division of labour of care. Critical men's studies

have shown how important it is that boys disassociate themselves from girls and non-hegemonic boys/men. Boys, as many researchers have argued, have to construct themselves as masculine in opposition to girls and those boys who don't meet the requirements of hegemonic masculinity (see for example, Pattman, 2007; Phoenix, Frosch, Patman, 2003; Ratele et al., 2007). As Pattman (2007, p. 32) argues, boys have to work hard to achieve masculinity 'through demonstrations of misogyny and homophobia'. One area of this hard work and arguably part of both misogyny and homophobia also involves setting themselves and their practices up in opposition to feminized activities, such as household chores and care of others in the home. Whether boys and men actually do or do not do these tasks is not an issue, but what is important is the fantasied construction of these tasks as 'other', especially those that involve more physical contact at a bodily level. But this is not only about avoidance but also about devaluation and denigration . This is something that is imagined to threaten one's masculinity, that impacts on power relations between men and women. Interestingly the opposite discourse that femininity is defined by care and chores does not emerge as obviously central in defining girls' and women's femininity, which is understandable given that like masculinity, femininity is defined in opposition to rather than what is expected of. However what does emerge as salient is the way in which girls and women assist in reproducing the stereotypic notions of what each should do – how they play a role in co-constructing gendered divisions of labour with respect to care.

In challenging gendered divisions of labour at social and political levels and in the realm of the household, it is key to remember the centrality of the binarism of gender and how it is through adhering to the hegemonic gender roles and practices that such divisions of labour get perpetuated. These associations are then reproduced in broader social and political divisions of labour where we find a powerful association of nurturing, supportive work with women and leadership, management, instrumental work with men. Thus it has been noted that in universities, women tend to take on the more supportive, nurturing roles of mentorship and supervision and generally tend to expend a labour of care with respect to students more than male academics do (see for example, de la Rey, 1999). Such dynamics have also been well illustrated in the HIV/AIDS epidemic with the majority of those engaged in voluntary care such as home-based care for those who are ill being women (see for

example, Akintola, 2006). When men are engaged in non-traditional roles such as nursing and counselling, studies have flagged the discomfort that goes with this and how their masculinity may be in question (see for example, Williams, 2005). Interestingly in this respect, is a local study by Davies & Eagle (in press) which argues that participants, young male peer counsellors, had to make use of a 'masculine "overcoat"', strategically distancing themselves from 'softness', 'emotions' and femininity in order to protect themselves from the denigration of being seen to do 'female work'.

Division of labour is clearly not in itself a problem, rather the problem is with the unequal valuing and unfair distribution inherent in the current gendered division of labour that serves to reflect and legitimise larger power imbalances that at its most violent end perpetuates gender-based violence and coercive sexual practices. In this respect our efforts at both unlocking gender from care, and re-valorising care at both ideological and material levels, remains an imperative.

Attention to constructions of fatherhood and the role boys and men with respect to children, other dependents and their care needs urgent attention. Since the social expectation that men are not involved in child care influences meanings of father, it is an imperative to begin deconstructing both the stereotype of the mother as well as that of the father, and in particular to begin to show how capable men are of caring for children. In this respect interventions at school may be a particular site for change. Sathiparsad (in press) for example argues that 'involving young men in teenage pregnancy prevention initiatives may be one way of sensitizing men to responsibilities related to childcare and to building alternative and more gender equitable models of masculinity'. Positive role models such as those shown in the Fatherhood Project of the HSRC arguably can also play a strong role in shifting social meaning and expectations. This is especially important in the light of continued stereotypic imagery of fathering and masculinities and mothering and femininities which is more than evident in advertising and backed up by empirical research. Prinsloo (2006, p. 143), for example, suggests that there is both a quantitatively low representation of fathers and fathering in the media, but also a qualitatively restricted 'repertoire of roles for dads' (p. 143).

Also important to understand better are those boys who do resist traditional expectations of them and why. Mirroring the call of Akosua Adomako Ampofo and John Boateng (2007, p. 61) for understanding 'how feminist girls and women are born ... ' we need to understand how non-hegemonic boys and men, like Maxie in the focus group in this paper, begin to feel a desire and a freedom to take up this position. It is evident that more and more young people are taking on human rights and equality discourses in responding to gender and that can be supported and nurtured in both public and private spaces. But positive role modelling in the home where both men and women are engaged in actively and consciously attempting to destabilise traditional roles are key to transformation is also important.

At both a political and interpersonal level, a revalorisation of caring practices and caring professions is key to challenging existing inequitable divisions of labour. This requires shifting care from the 'background' (as articulated by Tronto, 2001, drawing on the work of Val Plumwood) in the dualism of the private – public to the realisation of how it underpins all social functioning from home to work. If boys and men simply take on household care because they feel they don't have a choice but can abandon as soon as they do, through material accumulation or the attainment of a female partner, then we have achieved very little. We need to find creative and constructive ways of deconstructing the binarisms of both gender and care. Attention to unpaid care and more financial rewards for public labours of care are only one level of redress – the destabilising of the powerful association of care, especially bodily, emotional care with femininity and its consequent denigration in a patriarchal society, need to be raised and addressed. We need to work at the generation of more nuanced approaches and educational messages that speak to the multiple layers of gendered care practices, their enmeshment with the binarism of gender and the construction of gendered identity.

Acknowledgments
Kopano Ratele and Elron Fouten (and the rest of the SANPAD & Photonarrative Research teams) and Robert Morrell and Deevia Bhana (and the rest of the SANPAD research team).

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