

**BLACK MEN'S EXPERIENCES REGARDING
WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS – A SOCIAL
WORK PERSPECTIVE**

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WORK PERSPECTIVE**

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OPSOMMING

Sleuteltermes: ervaring, swart mans / Afrika-mans, vroue, kinders, regte

In die bevordering van vroue- en kinderregte is mans van die proses uitgesluit. Die implementering van hierdie regte het 'n verskuiwing in huishoudelike gesagsverhoudinge vereis. Mans, en sekere swart mans in die besonder, is hierdeur in 'n dilemma geplaas, omdat hulle gevoel het dat die veranderinge hulle strukturele en tradisionele manlike identiteit ondermyn het en dat vroue en kinders hulle regte misbruik het. In baie gevalle is die verhoudings tussen mans, vroue en kinders onder druk geplaas.

Hierdie navorsing is onder swart mans gedoen met die doel om swart mans se ervaring van hulle verhouding met vroue en kinders in die konteks van vroue- en kinderregte te ondersoek en te beskryf. 'n Empiriese studie deur gebruik te maak van 'n kwalitatiewe benadering is gevolg om begrip van swart mans se ervarings te bevorder. Indiepte onderhoude en persoonlike notas/briewe is gebruik om data in te samel.

Die kern van die bevindinge is dat hierdie veranderinge nie slegs belangrik is vir vroue en kinders nie, maar ook vir mans. Die bevindinge het die volgende ses hoofkategorieë geïdentifiseer: swart mans sien vroue- en kinderregte as goed indien dit korrek gebruik word; swart mans ervaar dat vroue en kinders hulle regte misbruik; swart mans voel dat kinders hulle nie respekteer nie omdat hulle hul eie regte plaas bo dié van hulle vader; swart mans voel gemarginaliseer en gebruik veg-, vlug- of passiewe reaksies as "coping"-strategieë; swart mans ervaar vroue- en kinderregte as 'n groot oorsaak van gesinsdisorganisasie; swart mans stel voor dat daar 'n platform moet wees vir mans en vroue om te praat oor hulle verskille en magstipes.

Riglyne vir geskikte diensleweringprogramme vir gesinne word ontwikkel uit die bevindinge.

SUMMARY

Key concepts: Experience, black men/African men, women, children, rights

The promotion of women's and children's rights excluded men from the process. The implementation of these rights called for a shift in domestic power relations. Men, especially certain black men, were plunged in predicament as some felt that the changes undermined their cultural and traditional masculine identities and that women and children abused their rights. In many cases the relationships between men, women and children came under pressure.

This research is conducted among black men. The aim is to explore and describe black men's experience of their relationship with women and children in the context of women's and children's rights. An empirical study using a qualitative approach was followed to promote understanding of black men's experiences. In-depth interviews and personal notes/letters were used to collect data.

The gist of the findings is that these changes are not important to women and children only, but to men too. The findings produced the following six main categories: Black men view women's and children's rights as good if correctly used; black men experience that women and children abuse their rights; black men feel that children do not honour them as they put their own rights above their father's rights; black men feel marginalised and use fight, flight or passiveness as coping strategies; black men experience women's and children's rights as a major cause of family disorganisation; black men suggest that there should be a platform for men and women to talk about their differences and types of power.

Guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes for families are developed from the findings.

FOREWORD

This manuscript is submitted in article format in accordance with Regulation A.11.2.5 for the degree MA (MW). The article will comply with the requirements of one of the journals for Social Work, entitled *Die Maatskaplike Werk Navorsers-Praktisyn / The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*.

Guidelines for authors, as set by this journal, follow.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher is an interdisciplinary journal devoted to the publication of research concerning the methods and practice of helping individuals, families, small groups, organisations and communities. The practice of professional helping is broadly interpreted to refer to the application of intentionally designed intervention programmes and processes to problems of societal and/or interpersonal importance, inclusive of the implementation and evaluation of social policies.

The journal serves as an outlet for the publication of original reports of quantitatively orientated evaluation studies: reports on the development of validation of new methods of assessment for use in practice: empirically based reviews of the practice literature that provide direct application to practice; theoretical or conceptual papers that have direct relevance to practice: qualitative inquiries that inform practice and new developments in the field of organised research. All empirical research articles must conform to accepted standards of scientific inquiry and meet relevant expectations related to validity or credibility, reliability or dependability and objectivity or confirm ability.

All reviews will be conducted using blind peer-review procedures. Authors can expect an editorial decision within three months of submission. Manuscripts and an abstract should be submitted in triplicate to **The Editor, The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher**, PO Box 524, Auckland Park, 2006. Articles should be typewritten and double-spaced, with tables and figures on separate pages. Manuscripts should follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 4th edition. Abstracts are compulsory.

A copy of the final revised manuscript saved on an IBM-compatible disk and formatted in MS Word format should be included with the final revised hard copy, or e-mailed to wam@w.rau.ac.za. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal, nor should manuscripts have been published elsewhere in substantially similar form or with substantially similar content. A publication fee is payable by authors before publication.

BLACK MEN'S EXPERIENCES REGARDING WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study will explore the experiences of black men regarding women's and children's rights. It will therefore focus on the perspective of men only. The concerns of the study stem from the growing recognition that singling out women and children as special groups excludes men from the picture.

Significant structural changes have occurred in the South African society since the first democratic elections in 1994. The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) provides for a Bill of Rights in which, amongst others, the rights of women and children are emphasised. This was also reinforced by a women's conference held in Beijing during 1995. As a result women increasingly claim these rights, while men experience the implications of this differently.

Many men, especially black males, seem to be caught up in a masculinity crisis. As Foremen (Cited in Chant, 2000:13) puts it: "In the world in which masculine values no longer provide the security that they seem to provide for their fathers and grandfathers, men's fear is growing." Their roles in the families, the economic environment – everywhere - are being challenged. Women's and children's rights, policies and statutes increase these challenges, and some men see this as undermining their traditional masculine identities. Castells (cited in Chant, 2000:13) observed that individually and collectively anxiety over the loss of male power is provoking an increase in male violence and psychological abuse. Chant (2000:13) further adds, "Where men lose power and status and are unable to enjoy their habitual entitlements, women might be the main victims". Johnson and Ferrado (2000:948) indicated that the use of violence by men was motivated by a wish to exert general control over their women, as men see it as their right to control or have power over women and children.

As a social worker at the Department of Welfare, Brits office, the researcher observed an increase in office statistics regarding marital strife, alcoholism, non-maintenance and

desertion of families by male partners. After some formal and informal discussions with male clients it was deduced that most black men could no longer cope well with the women and children in their families. Domestic violence also increased, despite the promulgation of the Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998). About half of the cases seen daily in the researcher's office involve marital conflict.

Frequent complaints of violence committed by men against their family members were received by officials from shelters for victims of domestic violence and from officers at the local maintenance office. It is not only women and children who experience survival hardships, however - men also experience survival pressure. The researcher is of the opinion that it could be dangerous to neglect taking steps to intervene in men's current predicament. Knowledge about men's experiences would enable social work practitioners to understand the situation from the viewpoint of the male clients. Based on that knowledge it could be possible to develop guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes. There is a desperate need for such programmes.

As far as research studies already done in South Africa are concerned, the predicament of women and children has been thoroughly covered (see for instance Callaghan, 1995; Church, 1994; Harrison, 1998; Labe, 1997; Omarjee, 1997). Only one study could be found regarding men's attitudes towards the changing roles and status of women (Mosiane, 1999). How males, more specifically black males, experience the issue of specific rights of women and children, is largely unknown. The viewpoints of black males have not yet been adequately explored.

The specific research questions are therefore:

- How do men experience their relationship with women and children in the context of women's and children's rights?
- What guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes can be developed?

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this research are:

- To explore black men's experience of women's and children's rights.
- To develop guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes.

1.3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

An exploration of the experiences of black men regarding the rights of women and children will give an understanding of how men's experiences of women's and children's rights impact on the family. It would also make it possible for social workers to develop guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes.

1.4 THEORETICAL PARADIGM

This study was conducted from the point of view of the General System Theory as well as from a Christian perspective.

1.4.1 General systems theory

The General Systems Theory as outlined by Du Bois and Miley (1999:61-63), emphasises the following: the System's Theory offers a mechanism to understand the complex interdependent relationships and interactions among people and various social environments. It also highlights the significance of the exchange or interaction process and how the stability of the system, especially human systems, can be influenced or affected.

The central focus is on the relationships that exist among members of the human systems and between social systems and their impinging environments. Human systems come in different sizes and shapes, such as individual, family, small group, community and organisations. These systems are differentiated from one another by their pattern of relationships, purpose for their togetherness and shared attributes or common grounds.

The Systems Theory indicates that all systems are parts of larger systems, while at the same time consisting of other smaller systems as parts. The family is for instance a system as well as a subsystem of the larger neighbourhood or community. The same family, as a system, is composed of parts or subsystems like parents and children. According to the study conducted, men, women and children are subsystems of the family. They form a whole, which is the subsystem of a larger community. This means that the family can influence or be influenced by community issues.

A system is further viewed as characterised by the organisation of the structure and boundaries. Some boundaries are flexible while others are rigid. The organisation also spells out how roles and power are shared within the system to maintain order and stability. The Systems Theory is directed towards growth and development.

Human systems are not static or predictable, as a result of their interaction inside and outside the system. The interaction introduces new resources from the environment as well as feeds the environment with information within the family system. While exchanging resources, some inputs influence the organisation of the structure, causing imbalances, which affect relationships.

The family as one of the most highly organised and structured systems, with its extremely interdependent parts or subsystems, works together to achieve or maintain stable relations. The Systems Theory does not allow one part to function independently if stability is to be maintained. This means that the whole is greater than the individual parts. No one part is to function independently, because of shared attributes and the working towards common goal, namely stability of the system.

Women, children and men are again viewed as subsystems of larger social systems like the family, community and the country at large. There are complex relationships of mutual dependence between family subsystems. It is argued that the relationships between men, women and children are affected by changes, such as political changes, which gave women and children exclusive rights. The implementation of these policies influenced the status and position of men directly, especially in the domestic sphere. Expected changes in the status of women and children affected the relationship between men, women and children.

1.4.2 Christian view

The research is conducted from the view that the relationship between man and woman, and later their children, were created by God, the Creator of heaven and earth. God created man and woman in His image. God blessed them, gave them freedom, dignity and also entrusted them with the responsibility of ruling over nature and the creatures moving upon the earth (Genesis 1:26-29 in the New King James Version, 1985:1-2).

Man and woman broke God's plan and that tarnished the relationship between God, men and woman. The relationship between man and woman was affected. Both man and woman are individually responsible for their actions before God. In the New Testament the principle of grace is introduced. Therefore (according to Ephesians 5:22-26 in the New King James Version, 1985:1316), wives are urged to submit to their husbands while husbands are exhorted to love their wives. According to nature, in God's creation, men and women are different, yet complement each other. Men are usually physically stronger than women. This is God's arrangement for men and women to be able to complement each other in the functioning of their relationship.

The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:3 (New King James version, 1985:1316), sees the husband as the head of the family. He typifies Christ as head of the church. However, Christ is the saviour out of love. The thought here is that a husband should love his wife. The obligation of love does not mean that the man rules but it means that a husband must be willing to pay the price, to support, to preserve or even to die for his wife, just like Christ died for the church.

The subjection of wives to husband does not mean that they should obey their husbands in everything. The wife's subjection and husband's love constitute a proper relationship, which typifies the normal family life. Ephesians 6:2-3 urges children to honour their parents. Honouring is different from obeying. Obeying is an action, whereas honouring is an attitude. This is the commandment concerning relationships between children and parents. Another commandment from Matthew 22:39 says, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (New King James Version, 1985:1115).

Therefore, the relationship between men, women and children in Christian terms is a matter of love, reasonableness, being considerate, transformation and closeness to

Christ. Family relationship in this Christian view means commitment to dialogue and understanding between men, women and children in order to nourish their relationships (Kimathi, 1994:58).

1.5 RESEARCH METHOD

1.5.1 Literature study

A literature study or review was conducted for all aspects of the study. The topics that were covered include gender roles of men and women at home, work, and in communities, from a traditional, modern and Christian perspective; the current political dispensation as it influences men, women and children in South Africa; 1994 as a turning point; the constitution of the Republic of South Africa: human rights, women's rights, children's rights, gender issues, subjective experience and how it influences human behaviour.

1.5.2 Empirical study

Design

A qualitative approach was followed because the researcher wished to explore and describe the meaning of and to promote an understanding of this specific human experience from the viewpoint of men (Bryman & Burgess, 1995:45).

Participants

The participants were selected purposefully (Creswell, 1994:148). Male service users who visited the Welfare Service Point and local ministers of religion were invited to participate in the study. The male service users were selected because they represent men who experience family problems. The ministers of religion were considered to be a rich source of information because of their continuous contact with men at their congregations and gatherings of different kinds, e.g. wedding ceremonies and funeral services. All participants were black men from the Brits-Bojanala district. The sample size was determined by saturation (Schurink, 1998:254). Eventually 31 men participated, of whom 20 were service users and 11 were ministers of religion.

Data Collection

It was planned initially to collect data by means of in-depth interviews and focus groups. These data collection methods were selected because both are unstructured approaches that are very useful in exploratory research when research questions cannot be narrowly defined (Fontana & Frey, 1994:366). These approaches also allow the participants to express their views broadly and to expand freely on aspects of their own experiences. The focus groups, however, did not materialise, as the participants did not regularly show up for group meetings. After exploring their reasons, the researcher realised that they perceived discussing their views in a group as a threat. Some men were also unwilling to be interviewed. As a result the researcher had to re-plan. Personal letters were introduced as an alternative data collection tool.

The personal letter is an approach that allows participants to express their views by writing them down without being disturbed or helped. The setting should be as natural as possible (Creswell, 1994:149). According to Bryman and Burgess (1999:81) an in-depth interview is a systematic method of constructing and reporting subjective experiences. By subjective experience is meant a subject's lived experience. In the study, the participants responded in the way they believe best represents their thoughts and feelings. The researcher used probing to obtain clarity and understanding where necessary. Notes were taken from their response, as they were not prepared to be tape-recorded.

The participants were given the option either to be interviewed or to write a personal letter. For both methods the question "what are the experiences of black men regarding the rights of the women and children?" were posed. Fifteen men were interviewed and sixteen wrote personal letters.

Procedure

The research design steps of a qualitative approach were followed and included the following:

- (a) Contextualisation and problem statement.
- (b) Identifying the sample (purposeful).

- (c) Conducting the study.
- (d) Analysing (descriptive) information.
- (e) Writing the research report.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical aspects were adhered to by the following means (De Vos *et al.*, 1998:23-25):

- Participants were invited to participate, the general aim and procedures of the study were explained and participants' voluntary consent was sought. When it became clear that they were uncomfortable with some of the data-gathering procedures, changes were introduced.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly applied. Therefore, when the use of a tape recorder and focus groups were rejected, methods that help to bring about a safer environment for participation were introduced.
- In order to protect participants against any harm, sensitivity towards culture, emotionality, acceptability and empathy was maintained. The issue of how a woman goes about addressing men (how one talks (style) and dresses, as well as the meeting place) was kept in mind at all times.
- Participants were informed of the limitations of the qualitative (subjective) study regarding the issue of generalising the findings.

Data Analysis

Tesch's method for data reduction was followed (Creswell, 1994:154). Steps to analyse data included systematic coding and grouping or summarising the descriptions of responses from respondents. For the data, which was fairly disorganised, key issues or topics were identified and compared, to identify relationship between categories. Linkages relating to findings were made, seeing that the main aim was to describe and explore rather than to explain.

To ensure trustworthiness and consistency (validity and reliability), subject-oriented information was obtained through human experiences in a natural setting. The

researcher was personally involved in all instances of data collection and analysis. Member checking was conducted, and peer examination, a co-coder as well as consensus discussions were used (*cf.* Creswell, 1994:157-158).

1.6 DESCRIPTION OF KEY CONCEPTS

African Men/ Black Man: Male adult racially categorised as African from age 18 years and above.

Women: Female adult human beings from age 18 years and above.

Children: Human off springs, boys and girls below 21 years of age.

Experience: Direct personal participation or observation, feelings, accumulated knowledge of practical matters.

Rights: Legally and/or normally accepted measures to help direct social behaviour or interaction.

Gender: Widely shared ideas and expectations (norm) about men and women.

Participants/ respondents: Persons taking part in the study by giving or sharing their views willingly.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report comprises the following chapters:

CHAPTER 1: Orientation to the study.

CHAPTER 2: Black men's experiences regarding women's and children's rights.

CHAPTER 3: Practice guidelines for improving Black men's relationship with women and children.

CHAPTER 4: Conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2 and 3 are written in an article format. The author guidelines of *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher* were adhered to, except for the following deviations for the purposes of this research report:

- Headings are numbered.
- The report is typed in 1½ spacing.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK MEN REGARDING WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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E.H. Ryke is a lecturer at the same university.

ABSTRACT

This article reports on the experiences of black men regarding women's and children's rights. The concerns of the research stem from the growing recognition that singling out women and children as special groups exclude men from the picture. The explorative qualitative research was conducted with 31 Black men. Data was analysed by means of Tesch's approach. The results of the research indicated that although men support women's and children's rights in principle, the manner in which these rights are practised, especially within the family setting, either confuses or frustrates men extremely. Confusion is experienced due to the changing roles within the family and frustration because men experience women and children as abusing their rights.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Thin (1995:22) points out that status and rights are relational concepts. This indicates that changes in the rights and status of women and children affect relations between women, men and children. Rights and status involve values, norms and roles of women and men as traditionally described and enforced through the socialisation process. By providing exclusive rights to women and children, traditional masculine identities are being challenged.

In order to gain better understanding of men's experiences, qualitative research was undertaken. In this article, background information on women's and children's rights,

the research process followed and findings are presented. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

2.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.2.1 Macro changes

The structural and political changes, which took place in South Africa since the first democratic election in 1994, brought numerous social changes. The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) provides for a Bill of Rights in which, amongst others, the rights of women and children are emphasised. This was also reinforced by a women's conference held in Beijing during 1995. The Platform of Action for women was adopted there. South Africa on 15 June 1995 committed itself to promote and protect the rights of children. The process of change, brought about by modernisation and urbanisation, was accelerated as a result of this.

Since the institution of the rights of women and children, severe relationship problems between men, women and children were experienced while many black men implied that the rights of women and children were worsening the situation. The changes were experienced by men as undermining traditional masculine identities. It is also seen as another instance of trying to move women into a men's domain, rather than challenging the nature of androcentrism itself (Thin, 1995:22). This means that "by asking for equal rights with men as if they were men", women may be denying their own value, and "by using men as their measure", women may be ensuring that they are always second-class (Tinker, 1990:50-51).

The government's tendency of focusing primarily on women and children (provision of rights exclusively to women and children only) added to men's predicament in that these changes did not provide men with alternatives. Baker (cited in Chant 2000:13) asserted that world-wide, men largely derive their identity from being providers or "breadwinners". They lack ideas or alternatives to other meaningful roles in the family in a changing economic environment.

According to De Bruyn (1995:14) women play a major role in the socialisation process: "Most times women complain about the behaviour and attitudes of men and yet they raised their sons" (Adekumbi as cited in Akintunde, 2001:108).

2.2.2 African traditional relationship between men, women and children

Despite the diversity of African societies, one feature shared by all of these societies has always been that life was organised around the family. Kinship bonds were so strong that sometimes the family unit could not be easily identified within the extended family system. This implies that culture and tradition, as an integral part of a person, are widely upheld in Black African communities and are expressed through the socialisation process (Mungazi 1996:19). The African understanding of the meaning of the family is very different from the Western understanding. The African family operates along clearly defined lines. Different roles are ascribed to men and women culturally (Mungazi, 1996:17). In the traditional African Culture, patriarchy was at the core of family life. Men generally were unquestioned heads of the family, as well as the leaders, authority figures and decision-makers. They were also providers, or breadwinners as well as disciplinarians.

In the traditional African family and community women played maternal roles. Women's responsibilities were mainly around the home, child rearing, cooking, household chores, socialisation involving training and education of children in line with family and community expectations (Mungazi, 1996:32). Women were expected to be submissive. Children were considered to occupy a very important place within the family and community. Everything of importance was structured around the purpose of seeking to ensure the welfare of children (Mungazi, 1996:30). Children were brought up to follow the pro-social ways of their elders. They were taught at an early age how to recognise these standards and to abide by them at all times because children represent the future and continuation of life. The entire community understood that the success or failure of the families and that of the community depended to a large extent on how well they discharged their familial responsibilities (Mungazi, 1996:22).

2.2.3 Women's and children's rights

South Africa, like almost all African states, while undergoing constitutional changes, had to make international obligations to guarantee basic human rights. The international obligations to eliminate discrimination against women and children are guided by The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations' convention on the rights of the child. These are mentioned under civil and political rights in the National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights (South Africa, 1998:132-133).

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing during September 1995, (United Nations, 1995) triggered a powerful shock wave in the transformation of the New South Africa. South African black women were also represented at the Beijing Conference. Government has adopted the Beijing platform for action for the advancement of women in the New South Africa. The new South African government has initiated mechanisms to give effect to its international commitments. It availed policies and legislation to address unfair discrimination. These policies and legislation were developed along different sectors or areas of concern, as indicated below:

Violence against women

The Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998, was promulgated and put in practice in 1998. Protection orders are issued in line with this act.

Women and health

- The choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act, 92 of 1996.
- Sexual harassment laws are in place, whereby women have rights to report husbands or partners for sexual harassment (Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998).

Women and economy

- Equal opportunity for women to engage in economic participation has been addressed since the conference of Beijing in 1995.

- Policy and service development in Welfare also focuses on children, youth and families, women and older persons as priority groups to be developed (South Africa, 1997).

Women's status and rights

- Recognition of customary marriages (Customary Marriage Act, 120 of 1998).
- Women in power and decision-making roles, for economic participation, are promoted through the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998.
- Right to participate, contribute to and enjoy cultural and political developments.

Children and youth

Policies and guidelines implemented by various government departments includes:

- Child Care Amendment Act of 1996.
- The Abolishing of Corporal Punishment Act of 1998.
- Domestic Violence Act of 1998.
- The Natural Fathers of Children Born out of Wedlock Act of 1997.
- Maintenance Act 99 of 1998.

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the rights of the child

South Africa signed the UN Convention in January 1993, and ratified the convention on 16 June 1995, and thereby committing itself to promote and protect the rights of children. The South African policies are guided by the principles of the United Nation Convention. South Africa is the first country to base its National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on this convention. Seven priority areas are outlined, namely food, children's health and the health of their mothers, water and sanitation, early childhood development and basic education, social welfare development, leisure and cultural activities and ways of protecting children (South Africa, 1998:132-133).

The issue confronting or challenging the relationship between men, women and children in black communities revolve around culture (which is of fundamental importance to the person's identity). The promotion of the rights of women and children exclude men as social partners in the relationship. The ideology of patriarchy dominance and traditionally defined roles among men, women and children versus the promotion of women's and children's rights are threatening and sensitive because it calls for change in culture and tradition.

Thin (1995:22) explains it as follows: "Rights entail not only relations, but responsibilities. The use of the male concept of rights to promote women's emancipation may be a double-edged sword. If women are to acquire men's rights and responsibilities, there needs to be a complementary move of men into women's domain." Thus the relationship between men, women and children in the black community needs men, women and children to discuss issues that jeopardise their relationship in relation to the culture and the rights of women and children. The rights of women and children exclude men as the important partners. Ignoring men puts them in crisis or predicaments. According to Philips (1991:166), men sometimes abdicate their responsibilities in what is now perceived as a woman's concern. The changes in women's and children's rights, which have undermined traditional masculine identities, can be dangerous if steps are not taken to intervene. For example, Castells (1997:136) have observed that individual and collective anxiety over the loss of male power is provoking increase in male violence and psychological abuse.

Although the predicament of women and children are thoroughly covered in research and literature (see for instance Church, 1994; Labe, 1997; Omarjee, 1997; Harrison, 1998; Mosiane, 1999; Callaghan, 1995), how males, more specifically black males, experience the issue of their relationship with women's and children's rights, has not yet been explored.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study qualitative research methods (Grinnell, 1998:223) were used. Data was collected by means of in-depth interviews (Bryman & Burgess, 1999:81; Fontana and Frey 1994:366) and personal letters (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:132). For the sake of consistency, the same stimulus question was given to the participants who wrote

personal notes/letters. The stimulus question was, "*what are the experiences of black men regarding women's and children's rights?*" The sample was selected purposefully from black men of the ages 18 years and above in the Brits-Bojanala district. The sample size was determined by saturation (Schurink, 1998:254). In the end 31 men participated. Data was collected between December 2001 and September 2002. As information was collected it was compared and evaluated. Triangulation was used to crosscheck data and interpretations (De Vos *et al.*, 1998:359). In order to reduce the voluminous data collected to categories, Tesch's approach (Creswell, 1994:155) was followed. In order to increase trustworthiness, member-checking, use of two groups at different places and peer-examination was used. The General Systems theory and a Christian perspective formed the basis for the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Age distribution:	18-19 YEARS	2
	Twenties	7
	Thirties	10
	Forties	7
	Fifties	4
	Sixties	1
		31 (TOTAL)
Marital status:	Unmarried	10
	Married (customary and civil)	16
	Divorced	3
	Widowed	2
		31 (TOTAL)
Employment category:	Unemployed	5
	Labourers	6
	Professional	14
	Self-employed	4
	Students/learners	2
		31 (TOTAL)

The information contained in Table 1 shows that most participants are in their twenties and thirties. The majority are married, although a significant number are single. Regarding employment, most men are working in a professional capacity.

2.4 FINDINGS

The analysis of the data produced six categories. Figure 1 presents an outline of these categories. The discussion of these categories follows the summary of findings.

FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF BLACK MEN'S EXPERIENCES REGARDING WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

BLACK MEN ACKNOWLEDGE WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLACK MEN AND WOMEN	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLACK MEN AND CHILDREN
• Men view women's and children's rights as good if correctly used	• Men experience that women abuse their rights	• Men feel that children dishonour them
MARGINALISED BLACK MEN AND THEIR COPING STRATEGIES	CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERCEIVED ABUSE OF RIGHTS BY WOMEN AND CHILDREN	BLACK MENS' SUG- GESTIONS REGARDING WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
Black men feel marginalised and use fight, flight or passiveness as coping strategies.	Men experience women's and children's rights as another major cause of family disorganisation	Men suggested that there should be a platform for men and women to talk about their differences and types of power.

2.4.1 Men acknowledge the rights of women and children

Men view women's and children's rights as vital and good if used correctly. They realise that today's life requires empowered women to make an economic contribution and to be able to protect themselves against sexual and verbal abuse. Black men regard women's and children's rights as good but are concerned about how these rights are being practised.

Men pointed out that children's rights are good if correctly used and that these rights empower children whose parents are careless, especially in the case of small children. These men agree that corporal punishment was torture, an act of barbarism and nonsensical and express appreciation for people who saw the needs for these rights.

This finding indicates that the idea of rights is acceptable to these men and that they see it as a measure to protect women and children. It supports a traditional belief that women and children need protection. It is, however, also obvious that these men make a clear distinction between having rights and how rights are implemented.

2.4.2 Relationship between black men and women

Men experience women's rights as problematic when women exaggerate and abuse their rights, especially when they experience it as being done at the expense of men's dignity, or when women only want to serve their own selfish needs. The following grievances were brought forward:

- Women provoke men's anger by putting too much pressure on men or dictating to them, thus provoking men to abuse their physical power.
- They also feel that women have lost respect for men and thereby disregard men's human rights.
- Men feel that women understand equality to mean that they have a right to neglect household chores, abuse liquor, come home late or sleep out and that they do not have to tolerate discussion or criticism from anyone. Women have lost their traditional/cultural feminine roles, which are socially accepted in the African culture.

Women's behaviour was generally experienced as irritating, manipulative, reactive and explosive, wanting to put men in trouble at all times. Men feel it is expected from them to have to accept blame. One participant puts it as follows: *"Women are bosses or other kind of males."* Another participant remarked: *"As an African, I do not approve of Beijing rights – as far as women are concerned they regard themselves in the same footing as men, they have now lost respect to men."*

The concern here is women's behaviour towards men as a result of their interpretation of the rights. The resulting conflict draws men and women apart within the family system. Men still see only one option when they are under pressure, and that is the use of physical power.

There is also concern about women's rights and cultural or traditional relationships between men and women. According to the culture of black communities, women are the pioneers of respect and they nurture family relationships. They are caring. For women to be perceived as selfish and bossy is totally unacceptable to these men.

2.4.3 Relationship between black men and children

Black men perceive and experience children differently at their different ages or stages of development. They experience younger children as more co-operative and loving. Teenagers, on the other hand, are experienced as putting their rights above those of their fathers or male figures within the family unit. These men find it very difficult to give sincere love and support to their teenagers due to this behaviour.

Discipline creates problems to men, since teenagers regard discipline as another form of abuse. As a result, black men experience themselves as powerless and defeated. Consequently they fail to keep order within their homes. Men also experience children's abuse of their rights as a sign of lawlessness leading to crime, irresponsible behaviour that could encourage the further spreading of HIV/AIDS, thus causing heartaches for their families. Children are seen to be leading irresponsible life in the name of right-based freedom. One participant said: *"As far as teenagers are concerned, they are overdoing everything and do not want to listen to anybody. They demand, and are manipulative. If the father stands up for control or to maintain order, they run and report at the police station. Most of such men, who are reported, spend weekends or a day in police custody for nothing."*

The relationship between men and teenagers is being hampered by the perceived abuse of rights by children. This finding indicates that the normal parenting issues associated by parenting an adolescent is complicated by adolescent's interpretation of their rights. The fact that two of the subsystems in the family have protected rights seems to isolate and disempower the father.

2.4.4 Marginalisation of black men and their coping strategy

Men are afraid to express their emotions freely, as women and teenagers tend to misinterpret or accuse them of harassment, and of sexual harassment in particular if

they confront women or teenagers about behaviour like sleeping out. Men are concerned about being marginalised as a result of women's and children's rights. According to them the government listens to and trusts women at the expense of men, forcing men to accept the stigma of being perpetrators or enemies of women and children. These men feel that the government believes anything women and children say, with little or no consideration of men's interests. One participant expresses it as follows: *"Men are out of the picture. Is South Africa for women and children only?"*

Black men feel threatened in their roles as family leaders; they feel that they have lost control of their families. Black men are experiencing a sense of worthlessness as women are taking up responsibilities, which were traditionally allocated to men, and as women keep men away from the family leadership roles.

2.4.5 Threats/consequences of the abuse of rights

Men regard women's and children's rights as one of the reasons for increasing divorce. Men are scared to face women and children, as they feel misunderstood by them and undermined by the government system in the name of women and child protection. This also leads to family disorganisation and overloading of women. If men cannot participate freely within the family system, women end up raising children alone; children become undisciplined, thereby threatening the survival of nuclear family unit and social peace. Some participants remark as follows: *"The right of women make men loose interest in women and children."* *"If African women cannot do thorough introspection, they will find themselves alone, vulnerable to be abused by the very children while men will leave them alone."*

Some black men retaliate by using physical power, flight or leaving their families or shunning their responsibilities as fathers, brothers or uncles. This type of behaviour reinforces feelings of cowardice, failure and despair. A participant stated in this regard: *"If I fail to become a father or man at my home I would rather die or leave ... I cannot be controlled by women or children especially at home if their rights should over ride mine, they should leave the house or else (expect) trouble".*

2.4.6 Black men's suggestions regarding the approach to women's and children's rights

Men are of the opinion that a platform should be created where men and women should discuss issues that are empowering and disempowering to men, women and children. This will create a supportive environment for coping with the pains of change, rather than blaming men for women's predicament.

Gender equality programmes is another factor which men view as a legal way that could be enforced by the government to deal with issues relating to both women and men, rather than pushing women issues, giving them more opportunities above men as currently is the case. This will also orientate women regarding the correct usage of their rights.

The fact that men have no platform to air problems, create more problems to women and children regardless of their rights, and thus development becomes retarded. Men and women need to engage each other in matters affecting society, e.g. empowering rural women, more emphasis on issues affecting children and society, with less emphasis on own benefits. A participant expressed the hope that "*Maybe the man should start mobilising for their own special rights.*"

2.5 DISCUSSION

The findings of the research indicate that black men frame their experiences in terms of their traditional role as head of the family. They become threatened in the household if they experience their role is being tampered with. This argument is supported by Tallmam (as cited by Kost, 2001:500), who asserts that when a man's identity is connected to roles like breadwinner and leader, his ability to respond is influenced by the expectations of the community, as manifested in policies and programmes. Thus the construction of paternal or man's identity is a societal as well as an individual psychosocial endeavour.

In this research, black men experienced women's and children's rights as a cause of family disorganisation. In line with systems theory, the family is seen as an organisation where the whole is greater than the sum of parts and the whole is not

reducible to the individual parts. This unit consisting of parts (men, women and children) are interacting inside and outside the organisation. The interaction is regular according to a particular pattern (*cf.* Du Bois & Miley, 1999: 61-63).

Further, the Systems Theory is concerned with behaviour, which may be directed towards growth and development, even though it accepts that subsystems within the system may have different objectives from one another and from the system as a whole. The study points out that families in black communities had organised structure with a clear power hierarchy, as well as defined roles for men, women and children. According to the findings, this organised structure was challenged by legislature and the implementation of women's and children's rights. Black men in the study felt left out of the system with no specific rights for men or alternatives regarding which roles to fulfil in the domestic sphere. For survival in such an unpredictable and changing environment, black men use fight, flight or passiveness regarding their roles and responsibilities within family systems, as they experience that women and children abuse their rights.

Due to the experiences of women and children abusing their rights, these men indicated that the resulting pressure experienced becomes unbearable. They adopt the use of fighting, flight or passiveness as coping strategies. This is one aspect showing that men and women are not only physically different, but are also psychologically different from each other (*cf.* Gray, 1992). By understanding these differences relationships between women and men may be strengthened. In order to improve relationships between men, women and children, all parts need to be assisted with the development of new skills, so as to be able to assume new roles and responsibilities in today's social world.

Despite negative experiences, these men still view women's and children's rights as good if correctly used. This offers a message of hope, showing that black men are aware of inevitable change. This also indicates that culture, though very deeply rooted in a person's identity, is not static but changing continuously. Black men are prepared to be agents of change. According to Olson, (1982:69) women's and children's rights have triggered men's consciousness. Such change triggers fear, anger and other difficult feelings. Resistance occurs all along the way to a more just, humane society. He further posits that a new society does not come about automatically and that change never comes easily.

The findings indicated that even though there is information from policies and legislation on gender policies, there is still a need for the development of gender equality programmes to address the implementation and evaluation of developmental gender programmes, "... but there is a worrying lack of analysis of the reasons why available information about gender inequality is not translated into fairer practice" Goetz (1994:28).

2.6 CONCLUSION

The message gained from black men's experiences regarding women's and children's rights are that black men still view themselves as potential partners to the relationships between men, women and children. Hence, there is an outcry for a platform where men and women could share their differences as well as working on their issues concerning the implementation of rights as well as cultural issues, without blaming men or women. This indicated commitment and determination from the side of research participants (black men).

2.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The above discussion pointed out a need for opportunities for both men and women to be considered as part of support system programmes to enhance the potential for problem solving. A guideline for the development of appropriate service delivery is needed.

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CHAPTER 3

PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BLACK FAMILIES

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ABSTRACT

The new constitutional changes in South Africa recognise and promote women's and children's rights, leaving men with no special or exclusive rights. The implementation of these rights challenged most black men, resulting in rivalries between men, women and children in domestic sphere. This article proposes practice guidelines for improving relationships between men, women and children in black families. The results of a qualitative study, which was undertaken, point out the need for a platform for men and women to talk about their differences. The perspective on which the practice guideline is based is discussed below.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As a social worker at the Department of Welfare, Brits Office, the researcher observed an increase in office statistics regarding marital strife, alcoholism, non-maintenance and desertion of families by male partners. Domestic violence also increased, despite the promulgation of the Domestic Violence (Act 116 of 1998). About half the cases seen daily in the researcher's office involve marital conflict. Officials from shelters received frequent complaints of violence committed by men against their family members for victims of domestic violence and from officers at the local maintenance office. It is not only women and children who experience survival hardships, however: men also experience survival pressure.

While the constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) recognises the rights of women and children, men are excluded from special or exclusive rights. Measures are also in place to make women and children aware of their rights and as a result women and children increasingly claim these rights. This leads to a situation where the role of men in the family is being challenged. Therefore research was undertaken to explore the experiences of black men regarding women's and children's rights. Findings from this study indicated that men primarily experience women's and children's rights as negative in terms of the effect of these rights on family relationships. However they also indicated a willingness and a need to improve the situation. The following were found regarding black men's experiences:

- Women's and children's rights are good if correctly used.
- Women abuse their rights.
- Children dishonour their fathers, by putting their rights above their fathers.
- Black men are marginalised and use fight and flight as coping mechanisms.
- Women's and children's rights are a major threat to black men and a cause of family disorganisation.
- A platform for men and women to talk about their differences is needed.

The researcher is of the opinion that it could be dangerous not to take steps to intervene in men's current predicament. There is a desperate need for programmes to improve relationships, especially in black families. According to the White Paper for Social Welfare (South Africa, 1997:22) social welfare policies and programmes must contribute to the goal of achieving equality and equity between women and men in all spheres of social, economic and civic life. Furthermore, the National Draft Policy Framework for families (South Africa, 2001:1) regards the family as a potentially powerful agent for political, economic, cultural and social changes and is a potent vehicle for care and development of children.

In this article practice guidelines to improve relationships between men, women and children, based on knowledge about men's experiences of women's and children's rights, will be presented. The guidelines will be based on a developmental, family systems and

family preservation perspective and will be presented as micro-, mid- and macro-level interventions.

3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.2.1 Developmental social welfare

Practice guidelines for improving relationships between men, women and children in black families are formulated within the framework for developmental welfare service delivery (South Africa, 1997; South Africa, 1999).

The following principles were taken into consideration:

- **Family and community-centred services:** All services should be given directly to the family within their community context, to give people strength and capacity to cope.
- **Normalisation through participation and development:** Men, women and children should be encouraged to participate and develop, through exposing them to normal challenges, activities and opportunities appropriate to their situation.
- **Empowerment and participation:** Men, women and children should be encouraged to be resourceful and responsible members of society and to participate actively in any intervention process which may affect them directly.
- **Integrated services:** Services should integrate the social, cultural, emotional, cognitive and physical needs of families.
- **Restorative justice:** The service should strive to promote harmony, to restrain punishment and to support the protection of constitutional rights for all, including men.

Children, youth, women, families and older persons are seen as the most vulnerable groups in the South African society. Yet the findings of the research point out that those women's and children's rights negatively affect men as members of families and in that way also negatively effect families. Therefore, the practice guidelines focus on the family as a vulnerable group of which men form an integral part. Practice guidelines

are formulated on two of the four service delivery levels as stipulated by the financing policy for developmental social welfare services (South Africa, 1999), namely prevention and early intervention.

- **Prevention**

Prevention involves building strength, capacity and self-reliance of families. These include counselling, problem solving skills, teaching and networking in partnership with the family.

- **Early intervention**

Services delivered at this level ensure that the at risk or vulnerable family are assisted before they become involved with the law or legal actions, e.g. more appropriate levels to build support through case management, education and skills training as well as referrals to preserve the members of the family.

3.2.2 Family systems perspective

The practice guidelines are developed from a family system and ecological perspective. The ecological approach is an important guide for relating to the family as a systemic organisation. Parts of the system interact within the system and with other systems (Du Bois & Miley, 1999:383). The family as an organised and purposeful system has subsystems, boundaries, rules and roles - all-important characteristics of a system. The way members of a family system function influences and is influenced, positively or negatively. Any change in a member of a family produces change in other members because of their relatedness. These interactions provide valuable information about the family as a system. Its internal and external transactions and the inevitable change produced, provide important information for understanding the family.

The ecological approach capitalises on the following principles, as outlined in Du Bois and Miley (1999:383):

- **Client's strength:** Family members are seen as having capabilities or abilities through the roles they are playing in family life and through different experiences they had. Family members learn a lot through socialisation and observation and thus share the capabilities or strengths of other systems in which

they are embedded (intergenerational family systems). This means that families are considered to be competent in their own ways.

- **Partnership:** Family members are seen as partners to work together in partnership with the social worker to provide goals that could produce change in the family environment (resources).
- **Natural helping networks:** Families need to be acknowledged as resources and support networks. As they gain life experience, informal skills, through growth, development and socialisation, are developed. The intervention process should engage family members to define their problems, natural resources, survival skills and competencies.
- **Methods of intervention:** Because of the partnership between social workers as agents of change and family members, different strategies or methods of intervention are recognised. Training, education, information giving, and advocacy are appropriate strategies to bring about change in the functioning of the family members and their social environments on which they depend for resources.

The Family Systems Perspective blends together with the ecological approach to provide a systemic view of families, their members as well as their relationships, and interaction with various complex environmental systems. Furthermore, it provides perspective on needed adjustments or adaptation for growth and development.

3.2.3 Family centred service and family preservation services

Family preservation services are strength-based programmes. These services focus on the whole family, with the aim of building strong capacities for families, using the families as potential partners and resources in enhancing family functioning within the family system and between the different and complex environmental systems with which the family interacts on a daily basis (Du Bois & Miley, 1999:395; Miller & Bentovim, 2003:57; Thomlison, 2002:33).

The programmes, according to this approach, use intersectoral teams in partnership with families or community groups. The resources are drawn from different social networks

to provide support to families, e.g. counselling, skills development, support networks, case management and family as a resource. Community resources are also used in terms of awareness campaigns and information giving, using various methods and mediums.

The services are offered within reach of the home or within the community and are meant to be accessible to families. Services are usually short term but intensive. These services are aimed at helping the family members to develop coping skills. Resources like support from the family members and support networks are utilised. These resources are identified by the family or jointly with the social worker.

The services include:

- education on various issues impinging on family functioning and about life issues in general. Intersectoral teams can teach communities through campaigns, through the media or can teach groups of families or individual families;
- counselling individuals, families or groups;
- advocacy on behalf of individual, family or group, community, organisation, etc.;
- skills training for home or community based organisations;
- referrals – self to community-based or professional help from experts, etc.

Du Bois and Miley (1999:395) spell out the following important principles for family support and family preservation:

1. The preservation of the family should be the prime concern of service provision that must keep the family as intact as possible.
2. Service providers are to see and work with families as partners in identifying the needs of family member(s) and to plan resources and a process of change with them.

3. Services are accessible and provided at home or in the community settings, and programmes are planned in such a way as to give the participants time and opportunity to attend, and in a way that cultural and community differences are acknowledged.
4. Services should be flexible and use a holistic approach and networking through referrals to other community-based services or structures, depending on the needs.
5. Services should take place within the community with the full participation of families and community members in the planning and delivery of the service.

The experiences of black men in the research show that the implementation of the rights of women and children has threatened or challenged family stability. Therefore there is a need for family intervention mechanisms on different levels.

3.3 INTERVENTION ON MICRO-, MID- AND MACRO-LEVEL

3.3.1 Micro-level intervention

On the micro-level change is directed at the functioning of the smallest unit or its parts. Families are viewed as self-governing units attempting to maintain a balance (Goldberg & Goldberg, 1998:36). Changes taking place in black families have their roots in the wider values of social order. Denmark and Paludi (1993:103) view culture as a shared belief system determining stereotypes or beliefs. In the past a range of beliefs, roles and rights were ascribed and defined culturally. Men, women and children in black families were acquainted with their social order. The following can be useful guidelines in dealing with transformation in black families.

Counselling

To strengthen the capacity of individuals, families or groups, focus should be on family adaptation. According to Bell and Wilson (2003:62) adaptability "encompasses flexibility in family management including role sharing, shared leadership and democratic discipline". Black families need to be helped to understand the importance and benefits of flexibility as a function of adaptation. Men and women could be helped

to realise gender differences and similarities and to start focusing on solutions to improve relationships. This is important, because the emerging values differ from traditional cultural values.

Problem solving

Problem solving enhances family capacities, knowledge to become responsible and independent in meeting their needs like improving interpersonal relationships (Bell & Wilson, 2003,62). Cultural sensitivity and beliefs, thoughts about gender decision-making, strengths in collaborative participation, responsibility sharing, access to social networks outside the family setting should be considered in the problem-solving process. Sangster (1990:12) proposes that a normalisation process must be encouraged to improve relationships. In the process men, women and children may develop new strength to enhance functioning as a family and to constitute a new family lifestyle.

3.3.2 Mid-level intervention

The family depends on the services offered by formal organisations for survival needs and professional support. These include government and non-government sectors such as social services, health, education, correctional services, justice and NGOs. Change at this level is focused on service delivery to the community (Miley, Omelia & Du Bois, 2001:11).

According to Elliot (2000:162), service delivery may be affected by anything from staff, e.g. the arrival of a new employee, procedure and practices, new policy and legislation and new management structure. Intervention strategies to effect service delivery include networking, advocacy and training.

Networking

Networking is considered a strategy used to bring together groups or organisations to exchange information, especially for resource development and service delivery gaps. The welfare developmental framework (South Africa, 1997) highlights the family as a vulnerable group and as such service providers should be encouraged to increase opportunities for men to participate in various welfare programmes and activities relating to families, as apposed to focusing on women and children only. The use of

fight and flight by the majority of men who experience women as abusing their rights and children as dishonouring their fathers by putting their rights above their fathers', necessitates services like mediation and group work to be established to help resolve conflict. The services are to focus on building positive behaviour and responsibility rather than to focus entirely on punishment.

Advocacy

Advocacy can involve speaking, writing, acting or arguing on behalf of others (Adams, 1996:5). Since there is an underlying idea that cooption is built on affiliation, organisations could network to support families by becoming involved with issues concerning policies, service delivery, practices and establishment of appropriate mechanisms to help families understand the African background as integrated with new social policies as well as the interpretation and implementation of those policies. The implementation of rights need not be uniform across societies and communities. The implementation of rights requires that rights should be informed by African cultural values and traditions.

Training

The goal of changing the mindset of service providers should focus on instilling in service providers the belief that they have the capacity to manage and support families. What is crucial to address in training is the underlying assumption that it appears that blacks are caught between the need to change and the desire to reflect the culture and traditions of the past (Mungazi, 1996:xxiv). The conflict and confusion in the lifestyles of black families may be reduced by training which focus on legislations impinging directly on the families, e.g. The Domestic Violence Act, customary marriages, Maintenance Act, human rights and women's and children's rights. To provide effective services, service providers need to keep abreast with legislation and policies, and the implementation thereof.

Secondly, blacks or Africans have their own non-Western philosophy about the family, its functions, roles and lifestyles which constitute healthy lifestyles. Training and in-service training should have the goal of improving understanding of black culture in general. The focus should be on how culture used to function traditionally in terms of the family, extended family relations, roles, power and authority in managing family

tasks and the disciplining of children. Respect for cultural beliefs and practices is important, even if these practices are outdated in the light of emerging values. Contesting inappropriate or unacceptable beliefs and practices should still be done with respect. The knowledge of the legislation and policies as well as important highlights on African culture would give service providers better insight and enable them to deliver more effective and relevant services. This would also help service providers to realign their programmes using policies and culture to complement each other, rather than to look at women's and children's issues only ignoring men's concerns. Training of service providers ensures meaningful and effective service delivery, if it is based on what could be helpful or if it is solution-based.

3.3.3 Macro-level of intervention

Macro-level practice offers practitioners the opportunity to facilitate change at community level with communities participating in change efforts. Strategy is the critical element of macro practice (Netting, Kettner, McMurtry, 1993:18). The research findings point out changes in relationships between men and women in black families. Seemingly the emerging radical changes as a result of women's and children's rights threaten values in traditional African culture, as they still exist in most black families. Key strategies and techniques serving as guidelines for intervention are networking, programming, education and media appeal.

Networking

According to Seed (as cited by Trevithick, 2000:147), a network is a system or pattern of links which have a particular meaning. Networks are either formal, such as planned support groups like the church and community based organisations, or informal, natural supporters or carers who support each other such as family members, neighbours and friends. Improving black family relationships is the responsibility of various organisations or groups in the community. In response to the findings of the research, a positive step would be collaborations with the organisations in the community. It is important to strengthen the existing links in the community, as it is believed that intensified community support services could increase support resources to families (Netting *et al.*, 1993:242). Networking is also used to negotiate access in the community, as described by Weyers (2001:122). Community leaders are involved as

part of the network system as well. The creation of networks is imperative, as it harnesses services and draws in new relationships within and outside the community setting. Networking draws all the community activities together to build new networks and to sustain or change existing networks.

Programmes

Social workers and volunteers may use various programmes to facilitate better relationships between men, women and children in black families. Different structures of the community could be useful in the facilitation of these programmes. Community structures like religious organisations, early learning centres, non-governmental organisations may be empowered to run community programmes on issues like family life, African culture, tradition and stereotyped roles ascribed to men and women culturally, legislation focusing on the family, how and when to use it.

These programmes would serve as family support systems that empowers and builds positive bridges of relationships between black men, women and children and also help them to gradually assimilate new emerging roles for the family. Group work is seen as having considerable potential for empowerment and capacity building of members (Weyers, 2001:27). Weyers (2001:27) outline the following typology of groups which may be helpful to guide programmes facilitators:

Table 1: A typology of groups used in community work and group work

CHARACTERISTICS	TYPES	PURPOSE	FOCUS
Capacity building	Growth	To develop members' insight, potential and awareness	Individual growth through the group experience
	Socialisation	To increase communication and social skills	Participation, involvement and experience
	Education	To educate through presentations, discussions and experience	Individual learning and mastery of skills

(Weyers, 2001:27)

Different types of groups may be formed where different programmes may be run, e.g.:

- Men and women groups may serve as a platform for black men and women to discuss their differences etc.
- Children, programmes could be run through early learning centres and primary schools to foster the development of empowering attributes without reinforcing those behaviour and beliefs reproducing gender differences (*cf.* Roopnarain & Roopnarain, 1999:48).
- Teenage support groups may help to encourage them to change their behaviour and beliefs and to improve their relationships with their families, especially adult males.

Education

Learning forms part of skills acquisition and knowledge expansion (Miley *et al.*, 2001:321). Knowledge about the implementation of women's and children's rights and associated responsibilities, as well as secularism in terms of diverse belief system (religion) with reference to African socialisation, should be taught or explained to people. This information would help families to make informed choices regarding integration of culture and legislation.

Weyers (2001:175) views education as an integral part of South African Community Work Practice. Education in its widest form has been seen as the most powerful tool used to access knowledge to shape one's destiny. Community members increase their knowledge and the skills that give them better understanding and insight to maximise their social functioning. Knowledge through education is also a preventative measure.

Since change is inevitable, so is education. Changes in the African culture, social order and shift in gender relations are all reasons requiring education. Weyers (2001:176) identified certain factors responsible for suggesting the use of community education. The underlying impact of social change and gender relations are motivations for community education. Community education, in the form of awareness campaigns, may address legislation and policies, as well as psychosocial issues relating to

relationships, e.g. belief-systems and cultural sensitivity. According to Netting *et al.* (1993:252), empowerment makes people aware of their rights, teaches them how to exercise rights and enables them to exercise control over factors affecting their lives. Black families need education on rights, the usage thereof and the associated responsibilities. Churches, schools and other public places can serve as venues for education. Ministers of religion and other volunteers may be trained to run these programmes. Education is a cost-effective tool which helps to influence psychosocial potentials in a more supportive environment through formal and informal networks (Weyers, 2001:175).

Media appeal

Netting *et al.* (1993:254) refer to media appeal as the development and release of newsworthy stories for the purpose of influencing communities. A newsletter may be developed and community members and organisations can be encouraged to provide noteworthy stories about relationships, resources and family activities in communities. The media, if correctly used, may serve as an informative and self-esteem building tool, giving community motivation and hope.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Black families seem to be caught between conflicting loyalties. Their culture and tradition are in conflict with modern developments. There is often a desire and tendency to revert to culture when it best serves one's interests.

This research reflected on black men's experiences as a result of women and children's rights. The points raised by these black men highlighted the problems they experience as a result of the manner in which women and children claim their rights within the family context. The research pointed out that there are problems within the family system as a result of the approach to focus on the rights of women and children without acknowledging the rights of men in the family. Men feel the direct impact but women and children are also negatively impacted upon in an indirect way. Therefore it can be postulated that the government is failing to implement the rights of women and children effectively.

The problem lies with new legislation, which focuses on women and children, increasing their autonomy, without involving men. This tends to frustrate men and thus contributes to instability in black families. These instabilities necessitate new arrangements as to how men, women and children may live together in black families. Both men and women need to make adjustments to address the dynamics of the black families and their process of socialisation. Societal norms and values provide guidelines for acquisition of status. These norms and values changed and there is a need for an appropriate structured debate directed at the re-evaluation and replacement of values.

Men are of the opinion that a discussion platform for men and women should be created, where issues such as gender differences, culture and tradition, and empowerment/disempowerment can be addressed. Furthermore, to deal with issues relating to both women and men, government should enforce gender equality programmes. Thus a supportive environment for coping with the pains of change, rather than blaming men for women's predicament, should be created. This will anchor the sinking boat of the nuclear family system that threatens social peace.

The opportunity to have men provide information about their experiences was seen as vital, as the constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1998 provides for the right of freedom of expression – freedom to impart information or ideas. The findings of this study will help practitioners to evaluate, strengthen and realign their implementation approaches where necessary. Furthermore, it will help them to advocate for changes in policy, service delivery and practices in order to establish mechanisms that contribute to black family life in a manner that is respectful to black cultural integrity.

3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need for the review and evaluation of the implementation strategies regarding women and children's rights, so that other strategies could be sought to obtain the co-operation of women, children and men to work together in effecting change.
- More gender-related research is needed on issues relating to men, so that their voices could be heard as well and policy and legislature could be challenged.

- A government-supported and an enforced strategy is needed through which men and women can be helped or guided through gradual transition from African traditional culture to the multicultural tradition, which is guided more by legislation, technological development and global economy. Women, men and children need support to lessen the strain and stresses that undermine human dignity and worth.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 SUMMARY

The study explored the experiences of black men regarding women's and children's rights. It aimed to discover how black men experience their relationship towards women and children in the context of their specific rights.

Thirty one black men participated in the study. These men were from the Brits-Bojanala District in the North-West Province of South Africa. Demographic characteristics included marital status, employment status as well as age distribution. Data was collected through individual interviews and personal notes/letters. All participants responded to the stimulus question: "What are the experiences of black men regarding women's and children's rights/how do black men experience their relationship towards women and children in the context of their specific rights?"

The General Systems Theory and a Christian perspective were used as approaches in the study.

Practice guidelines to improve relationships between men, women and children in black families were developed.

4.2 CONCLUSION

The research reflected on the challenges facing black men as a result of women's and children's rights.

The points raised by the black men in this study highlighted two main issues. Firstly, black men experience problems regarding how women and children claim their rights in the family setting. Secondly, black men proposed the creation of platform where men and women could discuss issues of change challenging their survival, e.g. policies, legislation, status, position and power, culture and tradition.

The type of platform for discussion could serve as a support base to empower men, women and children, as well as to give them the opportunity to realise new roles and to exercise rights without bias towards men.

The consequences of excluding men from specific rights and promoting or advancing women and children are of great concern, as the greater impact is to a large extent felt by women and children.

4.2.1 Conclusions regarding Aim 1: To explore black men's experience of their relationship with women and children in the context of women's and children's rights

This aim was achieved in that the analysis of the data produced six categories. The findings indicated that black men:

- experience that women and children abuse their rights;
- experience women and children as another major cause of family disorganisation;
- view women's and children's rights as good if correctly used;
- feel marginalised and use or adopt fight and flight as coping strategies;
- feel that children dishonour them, as they perceive children's rights as above those of their fathers'.
- suggest that there should be a platform for women and men to talk about their differences and types of power.

The findings of the research indicate that black men frame their experiences in terms of their traditional role as head of the family. They feel threatened in the household if they experience their role is being tampered with. Black men experience women's and children's rights as a cause of family disorganisation. The study points out that families in black communities traditionally had an organised structure with a clear power hierarchy, as well as defined roles for men, women and children. According to the findings, this organised structure was challenged by legislation and the implementation of women's and children's rights. Black men in the study felt left out of the system,

with no specific rights for men or alternatives regarding which roles to fulfil in the domestic sphere. For survival in such an unpredictable and changing environment, black men use fight, flight or passiveness regarding their roles and responsibilities within family systems, as they experience that women and children abuse their rights.

Due to the experiences of women and children abusing their rights, these men indicated that the resulting pressure they experience becomes unbearable. They adopt the use of fighting, flight or passiveness as coping strategies. Despite negative experiences, these men still view women's and children's rights as good if correctly used. This offers a message of hope, showing that black men are aware of inevitable change. This also indicates that culture, though rooted very deeply in a person's identity, is not static but changes continuously. Black men are prepared to be agents of change. The findings indicated that even though there is information from policies and legislation on gender policies, there is still a need for the development of gender equality programmes to address the implementation and evaluation of developmental gender.

It can be concluded that black men still view themselves as potential partners to the relationships between men, women and children. Hence, there is an outcry for a platform where men and women could share their differences as well as work on their issues concerning the implementation of rights and cultural issues, without blaming each other. This indicates commitment and determination from the side of the research participants (black men).

4.2.2 Conclusions regarding Aim 2: To identify guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes

Based on the information about men's experiences of women's and children's rights, a guideline was suggested using the systems model of micro-, mid- and macro-level intervention. The micro-level emphasises the use of counselling and teaching of problem-solving skills to black families, focusing on adjustment and adaptation of individuals, families and groups. There is conflict and confusion between values in traditional African culture and the emerging values as a result of women's and children's rights. This should be resolved.

The mid-level intervention looks at effecting change at organisational level. Training is regarded as crucial for service providers. It is suggested that there should be focused on improving the knowledge of service providers regarding African culture and tradition in general, and of the new legislation which impacts directly on family functioning. The families need support to understand how to implement their rights and how culture can be useful in effecting change.

At the macro level change is facilitated at community level. Networking, programmes and education are seen as feasible mechanisms to help black families go through the transitional changes in family structures, setting, roles, etc. Communities need to be helped to realise that change is inevitable and that knowledge is the power that could empower people to realign and adjust psychologically and socially.

The challenge and emphasis of the practice guidelines is to help black families work through ways that could help them to evaluate culture and traditional practices and to learn about new legislation impinging directly on family structure and functioning, so as to make informed choices in managing family tasks and adjusting family lifestyles. The idea is to find ways that could allow traditional and legislation systems to complement each other rather than to create confusion and crisis.

4.2.3 Conclusions regarding the aims

In this study the aims were achieved as follows:

- Black men's experience of their relationship with women and children in the context of women's and children's rights were explored.
- Guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes were identified.

4.2.4 Conclusions regarding theoretical statement

The theoretical statement was confirmed, namely that the exploration of the experiences of black men regarding the rights of women and children offered an understanding of the phenomenon of family breakdown in the black community. It was also possible to develop guidelines for appropriate service delivery programmes for social workers.

4.2.5 Additional conclusions

The opportunity to have men provide information about their experiences was seen as a vital step, as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1998, provides for the freedom of expression which entails freedom to impart information or ideas. The findings of this research provided insight into how black men cope with the pressure of change brought about by women's and children's rights in the family setting. According to the findings men use either physical power or flight.

The findings also indicate that subjective experience plays a significant role in relationships and are useful to tap into by means of research. Dialogue is one of the solutions to demystify misunderstandings. Lack of understanding creates tensions, resentments and conflict.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings pointed out problems concerning the way in which women's and children's rights are implemented. There is a dire need for a platform for men and women to discuss issues of their differences. It is recommended that:

- The approaches to the implementation of women's and children's rights should be reviewed and evaluated. Social work practitioners, various government departments as well as partners in civil society could evaluate these approaches.
- Further research should be done with a more representative sample of men of different races. Broader demographic characteristics must be included, e.g. ethnicity, educational status, marital status, employment status etc. Behaviour patterns of men regarding women's and children's rights should be explored, as well as the influence of these on family relationships.
- Programmes have to be developed by social workers that address adaptation to and coping with changing family structures. Men, women and children, as families, should be encouraged to participate.
- Education, through teaching and information dissemination as well as training of service providers and the community at large, should focus on coping and

adaptation to new changes brought about by new legislation. The implementation should be clear and service providers should be able to show how the traditional values and legislation approach differ and how they could complement each other. This would serve as important empowerment and support to black families.

- Programmes through community-based strategies should be developed by social work practitioners and welfare departments in order to develop more self-reliant communities using community members (community participation). These programmes should address issues of policies and legislation, culture and tradition and all groups, whether men's or women's groups must get some understanding of the content of the programme.

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