

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Building the Capacities of Young South African Men in Responsible, Loving and Nonviolent Fathering

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Abstract

The absence of many fathers from their children's lives has been a long-term feature of South Africa and has had profound negative social consequences. It also means that young men grow up without being educated in what it means to be a father. This article reports an action research project which began by exploring the experiences of young men in Durban about being fathered and their attitudes concerning fathering. A training programme in responsible, loving, and nonviolent fathering was devised and carried out. Outcome evaluations were carried out soon after the training and then four years later it is suggested that positive changes in attitudes towards fathering occurred among the trainees.

Keywords: Nonviolent; fathering; corporal punishment; South Africa; action research

Introduction

It is no exaggeration to say that South Africa is one of the world's most violent countries. It had the fourth highest number of homicides (20 336) in 2017 and the ninth highest rate of homicides per 100 000 people worldwide (United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, 2020). In terms of gender-based violence, the country is often referred to as the 'rape capital of the world', with over 50 000 rapes and sexual assaults reported to police each year, and these are regarded as being just the tip of the iceberg. A respected estimate by Gender Links and the Medical Research Council (2010) is that as few as one in 25 victims report to the police, which suggests over a million rapes and sexual assaults per annum. South Africans live in a context of what Tani Adams (2007: 7) terms chronic violence, with violent attitudes and actions occurring across all facets of society. Chronic violence occurs where rates of violent death are at least double the norm for countries of similar income levels, where these levels are constant for five years or more and where recurrent acts of violence are documented across numerous socialisation spaces such as the household, the neighbourhood, the school, communities, and the nation-state (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2009: 18).

A recent review of the major causes of inter-personal violence in sub-Saharan Africa (Harris & Hove, 2019) includes several which seem particularly relevant to South Africa and this article. First, there is the patriarchal foundation of society and its associated masculinities, what men understand it means, in terms of attitudes and behaviours, to be a man. These foundations mean that the socialisation of young men into manhood in many African societies justifies and encourages the use of threats and violence as signs of being a man. Second, high proportions of South Africans are traumatised as a result of experiencing interpersonal and structural violence, much of it with roots in the apartheid system, which often manifests itself in anger and a quick resort to violence. This unhealed trauma is very likely to be passed on, directly or indirectly, to the next generation, who themselves continue the cycle of violence. Evidence from the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2008) on the nature of urban homicides in South Africa indicates that the vast majority of homicides occur as a result of arguments between young men which 'get out of hand'. Third, traditional conflict resolution approaches, which were typically based on restorative principles with the purpose of rebuilding damaged inter-personal relationships and thus maintaining community cohesion and harmony, have

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largely been replaced by western systems which call for retribution and deterrence and have little interest in rebuilding relationships.

There have been numerous attempts, both current and past, to tackle South Africa's chronic violence. This article focusses on building the capacity of young men to be responsible, loving, and nonviolent fathers in the belief that this will help their children grow up with attitudes which will promote a culture of peace. The first State of the World's Fathers report begins its executive summary with the following statement:

Fathers matter. Father-child relationships, in all communities and at all stages of a child's life, have profound and wide-ranging impacts on children that last a lifetime, whether these relationships are positive, negative, or lacking. Men's participation as fathers and as caregivers also matters tremendously for women's lives. And it positively affects the lives of men themselves (Levtov *et al.*, 2015a: 6).

The Report's comprehensive review of research found that positive involvement from a father is associated with a child's emotional and social development, including the development of empathy; cognitive and language development and success in school; protection from risky behavior and situations, and positive outcomes in adolescence and adulthood; and becoming gender equitable men and empowered women (Levtov *et al.*, 2015b: 224-227). The Report notes that while most of the research comes from Western settings, there is ample reason to believe that similar results occur across different cultures (2015b: 227). Among its seven main recommendations for promoting nonviolent fathering and parenting is one which fits closely with the research reported in this article, "to recognize pregnancy and fatherhood as a key moment for violence-prevention programming, and support programs to better prepare men for fatherhood within existing violence-prevention initiatives" (2015b: 218).

In 2003, South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) began a major research study titled The Fatherhood Project; the main research outcomes of which were reported in Richter and Morrell (2006) and Swartz and Bhana (2009). Men were found to be self-absorbed and concerned with their own interests and careers and many occasionally or regularly used violence against their partners and children. High proportions of children did not know their biological fathers, and many did not have the protection and care of a substitute father. There is little reason to believe that the challenges of promoting positive fathering in South Africa has changed to any extent since that project was carried out. In the words of a recent report from the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR), "Many of South Africa's social ills can be attributed to problems relating to the lack of a stable family environment" (SAIRR, 2018: 1). Similar findings were reported in subsequent reports from the South African Institute of Race Relations (Holborn and Eddy, 2011). In 2009, 48 per cent of South African children aged naught to 15 had an absent but living father, up from 42 per cent in 1996 (2011: 6). Some 41 per cent of children aged naught to 17 lived with their mother only, three per cent with their father only, 35 per cent with both parents, and 21 per cent with neither (SAIRR, 2018: 3). Put a little differently, a third of South African children live in the same household as their biological father, another third live in a household with a man who is not their biological father, and the remaining third in a household where there is no adult male (Southern Africa Catholic Bishops Conference, 2019: 2).

Three points can help interpret these stark figures in a more positive light. First, non-residency by a biological father does not mean that he has plays no role in the child's life. Second, there are many men who are not biological fathers who nonetheless play a positive role in a child's life. The colloquial term for such men is *BoMalome*, a northern Sotho word meaning uncle. Third, children in South Africa experience a wide variety of connections with men as fathers, be they biological or *BoMalome*. However, the fact remains that many have very little or no connection at all. Taking the forgoing into account, it seems reasonable to conclude that many young South African men have had little if any role modelling of what it means to be father during their upbringing. In addition, many of those who have

had such a role model have been educated in ways which promote indifference, patriarchy, and violence. There is a high likelihood that such attitudes will be passed on to the next generation and so shape young men's attitudes and behaviours when they themselves become fathers.

The aim of this research project was to examine whether the attitudes towards fathering among a sample of young men in South Africa could be positively influenced by a carefully designed training programme. Its specific objectives were:

- To explore the experiences of being fathered and the attitudes towards fathering among a sample of young men in Durban.
- Based on the exploration, to design and implement a training programme aimed at building more positive attitudes towards their own fathering roles.
- To evaluate the short and medium-term outcomes of the training programme.

Methodology

An action research approach was adopted for the project. Action research has been well explained elsewhere (Reason and Bradbury, 2008; McNiff and Whitehead, 2011; Kaye and Harris, 2017), but two features deserve particular mention. First, action research emphasises that change does not occur simply as a result of a better understanding some problem or as a result of listing policy recommendations at the end of a research report. Change is more likely to happen when action is undertaken with the specific intention of bringing about change. Second, action research places strong emphasis on the participation of those affected by the problem and efforts to redress it. The researcher may play an important role as a catalyst, but the participants are central in the implementation of the project.

Action research projects normally include the following components, each of which is subject to a great deal of reflection by the participants:

- Exploration of the problem
- Planning an intervention
- Implementation of the intervention
- Evaluation of the short-term outcomes.

It must be admitted that the young men in the present study were either important sources of information, which was used in designing the training, or were trainees. None had a significant role in planning the training programme. The research was approved by the university's Institutional Research Ethics Committee on July 2, 2014 (2014/44x). Data collection began with a survey of the experiences and attitudes of 120 male students aged between 16 and 22 years from four high schools in Durban which were chosen using convenience sampling. Almost three quarters of the students were African, a quarter were Indian, and a handful came from other ethnic groups. The surveys took place between August and October 2014 and comprised a mix of closed and open-ended questions about their experience of being fathered and their attitudes towards fatherhood. A summary of the key results is presented here. The responses of this urban sample painted a far more positive picture of fathering than that provided by the national data reported earlier:

- Some 80 per cent lived with their biological father and half said that their biological father was the most important male figure in their upbringing.
- Almost 60 per cent said that corporal punishment was never or hardly ever used, and another quarter said its use was infrequent.
- An impressive 86 per cent said that their father (whether biological or a father figure) was basically loving to them in terms of providing for their needs, their safety, or their happiness.
- Forty-five per cent said they would follow in their father's footsteps in the way they fathered their own children, although a similar proportion said they would modify some aspects.

With respect to their attitudes towards fathering, more than 90 per cent agreed that fathers and mothers should share the various tasks of bringing up their children; that when children come along, it is time for the father to stop drinking with his friends and put more time into bringing up his children; that it is important for fathers to hug their children; and that it is important for fathers to spend time with their children, helping them with their homework, taking them to church, taking them to the beach etc. Only three per cent agreed that it is acceptable for a father to slap a mother and a third that a father needs to use corporal punishment in order to bring up good children. The survey results were used to develop questions for three focus group discussions (FGDs) held with young out-of-school men, some of whom were already fathers. The FGDs comprised an average of 10 participants and were recruited by calling for volunteers from churches based in the township of KwaMashu, inner-city Durban, and Engonyameni, a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Umlazi, another major township in Durban.

The viewpoints expressed in the three FGDs were broadly similar. The discussion questions were designed in accordance with the research objectives of the study and were progressively introduced during each FGD: What responsibilities, if any, does a father have? What do you think being a loving father involves? What disciplinary role does a father have? and What sort of relationship, if any, should a father have with his children's mother? These discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed into English. The attitudes and opinions of participants derived from their own experiences of being fathered and from a mix of tradition, modernity, and religion. Participants with positive personal experiences of being fathered may well want to father in their own father's footsteps. However, attitudes which derive from tradition, modernity, and religion may be subject to reassessment and the FGD experience might, by posing questions which had not previously been considered, prompt such re-thinking; this was not, however, an objective of the process.

Main Themes

Analysis of the FGD data utilised thematic content analysis, as explained, for example, by Braun and Clark (2006) and Nowell *et al.* (2017). The questions asked in the FGDs were important determinants of the four major themes identified but had a lesser influence on the various sub-themes and explanations. In reporting the results, the researchers have included representative examples of what respondents and participants said, unless otherwise stated.

Theme 1: A responsible father

All of the FGD participants were adamant that the first responsibility of a father is to provide for the physical needs of his children. The following comment from a young Congolese refugee emphasised this, although there are also hints of responsibilities beyond meeting physical needs alone:

A responsible father is the one who feeds, dresses, educates, sends children to school and protects them from any problem. If he is unable to do that, he is not responsible. My father and my mother divorced when I was 12, making my father not to be involved in any way concerning my life. I last saw him when I was 19 after completing my schooling. The only thing he does is to wish me a happy birthday but does not send me money or ask about my schooling. Instead, my mother is responsible, not my father. (FGD participant, Durban)

Theme 2: A loving father

FGD participants identified two main aspects of loving fatherhood, namely meeting the needs of his children and being present in their lives. An important sub-theme was that love means active effort in the tasks associated with bringing up children:

In my understanding, a loving father involves the father's presence i.e., he should be there. I did not have a father who showed that love to me as a child. It affected me because I saw my friends being fetched from school by their fathers, while I had to walk home alone. I saw how my fellows were happy leaving school with their fathers and going home (FGD participant, Durban).

Participants recognised that loving involvement in the children's lives could be more difficult if the father was employed and lived elsewhere for reasons of his work.

Theme 3: A nonviolent father

Nonviolence in this context means dealing with the inevitable conflicts involved in fathering without the use of verbal or physical force. A typical explanation from the FGDs is as follows:

He is the one that keeps peace in the family. He does not intimidate and shout; instead, he talks and solves the problem that arises. Punishment is allowed but it requires that he does it in a way that the child feels guilty of his mistakes. Punishment must be there to build the relationship and to correct mistakes without verbal or physical violence. If he does not do that, then he is a violent father (FGD participant, Durban).

The FGD participants saw a role for corporal punishment, and they were less committed to its use than were the survey participant. A higher call to be nonviolent in general seemed to influence the participant's views, although this was not well articulated, and they did not seem to link corporal punishment and violence by husbands against their wives.

Theme 4: A father with a peaceful relationship with the children's mother

FGD participants felt strongly that respect and attention between mothers and fathers was essential to develop, in the words of one, a "healthy and peaceful household":

Both men and women must know their place and duties. If the relationship is not good enough, it will likely affect children. And for the children to grow in a safe environment parents need to solve problems without fighting or shouting because children will be traumatised (FGD participant, Engonyameni).

The opinions of FGD participants concerning responsible, loving, and nonviolent fathering were in broad agreement with those expressed by the younger survey participants and provided some evidence that the data were trustworthy. Fathers need to provide economically, be involved in their children's lives, and treat the mothers well. It is accepted that these insights cannot be regarded as representing those of young South African men in general, but they were still valuable for the central part of the study as well as the design and implementation of an intervention in the form of a training programme.

Planning and Implementing of a Training Programme

The training programme took place between July and September 2015 and consisted of three sessions, each scheduled to last 2½ hours. The sessions involved one group in each of the three areas and participants were recruited via local churches and word of mouth; none had participated in the FGDs held previously. The KwaMashu and Durban groups were very largely still students, with an average

age of 18.9, while the Engonyameni group were mostly out-of-school youth, with an average age of 24.3. A third of this last group were already fathers and their greater maturity was evident in their comments in the group discussions. In total, 40 attended the first session and 35 attended the second and third.

In a pre-training questionnaire, participants were asked “When you were growing up, did you have a good relationship with your father (or father figure)?”, 27 of the 40 answered yes, eight answered no, and five reported a mixed relationship. The three modules were communication, the father-mother relationship, and responsible, loving, and nonviolent fathering practices. A month separated each session. A participatory approach to learning was used, with interaction between the trainer and the participants being encouraged and breakaway discussion groups frequently used. The training programme was designed by the first author.

Module 1: Communication

The aim of the communication module was to help participants develop the skills of speaking and listening and to use these in their daily lives. Two important themes emerged during the sessions, conflict arising from misunderstanding, and communicating in order to de-escalate conflicts. Conflicts have the potential to become violent, but actions can be taken to de-escalate them. Accordingly, participants were trained in the use of value of ‘I-messages’ designed to make one’s position clear but without inflaming the situation. A hypothetical (but clearly not extraordinary) example of such a conflict was given as follows:

It might happen that I am taking a beer in the pub and one of my friends comes and grabs the bottle of beer without prior permission from me. It might happen that I react with violence to fight for my right. But I can use an I-message by telling my friend: “I think you should have asked me to share with you the beer instead of taking it by force” (Training group participant, Engonyameni).

The ensuing discussion focussed on the likelihood that friends around the table might consider the lack of retaliation as showing weakness and whether this was a price worth paying. Another hypothetical example of conflict suggested by one participant resulted in much discussion, which suggested it was a challenge which many young men faced:

I agree that there is a possibility to resolve our conflict by making sure that we deal with the main causes of it by talking. But what will happen if you have a girlfriend who does not listen to what you tell her? What if your girlfriend beats you readily and does not listen to anybody? What if you use very nice words but every time you meet, she seriously beats you? (Training group participant, Engonyameni).

An immediate suggestion was that the boyfriend could phone her and try to resolve the conflict at a distance. Finding a more lasting solution, the group agreed, required an understanding of the source of the violence. Is the beating of the boyfriend related to particular issues that they don’t agree on, or does it have deeper roots? The majority opinion was to give up the relationship immediately.

Module 2: The father-mother relationship

The aim of this module was to consider practical ways of improving the relationship between the husband and wife/boyfriend and girlfriend and how this connected with fathering. In his popular book, *The five love languages*, Gary Chapman (2009) suggests that each individual has one main ‘love language’ and that if they use this language, their partner will feel loved. In practice, individuals find it

easiest to show love using their own love language, even if this is not the love language of their partner. The five love languages are explained as follows:

- Words of affirmation, like “You are wonderful”, “I love you very much”, “You do [some task] very well”.
- Quality time – undivided attention, quality conversation, doing things together.
- Gifts
- Acts of service – cleaning the house, cooking meals,
- Physical touch – holding hands, hugging, sexual intercourse.

In the ensuing discussion, there was a good deal of focus on quality time. The following is a typical example:

I remember that I took my wife and child for quality time at Mega City [a shopping centre 20 km away]. We had good time because we ate cow stomach and took some soft drinks. We sat for quite long at Mega City and it showed my wife that I love her (Training group participant, Engonyameni).

Participants found the concept of love languages interesting and helpful in showing how men and women can ‘miss’ each other in terms of showing and receiving love. They were able to connect the quality of this relationship with their role as fathers. An obvious act of service, for example, would be for the father to take on tasks concerned with the children. One participant from KwaMashu noted how much more the mothers of South Africa did for their children compared with the fathers, which led into the third module. More philosophically, they identified the importance of demonstrating to their children how a man should love his wife.

Module 3: Responsible, loving, and nonviolent fathering

This was the core part of the training, and its purpose was to allow the participants to reflect on these critical aspects of fathering. Participants were asked to suggest the relevant isiZulu words and came up with *ubaba onakekelayo* (caring father) and *ubaba owondlayo* (a providing father).. As noted, the concept of being a responsible father is connected with various fathering tasks. A responsible father loves, cares, provides, and protects but also is said to be physically and emotionally present for the well-being of his children. To try to link theory and practice, the following scenario was presented for discussion:

Temba and Tandekile have a young child but live separately. Temba is a keen soccer player and is also very committed to his work. He also coaches a junior team and all his Saturdays are devoted to soccer. Tandekile works during the week and looks after their child as well. She asks Temba to be available for a few hours on Saturdays to mind the child. He is torn between his love of soccer, his wife, and his child. How would you advise them?

A range of responses were generated of which the following are representative:

- Temba and Tandekile could discuss other times when he could mind the child, which might be on days other than Saturday
- Depending on the age of the child, Temba could take the child to the soccer
- Temba could arrange and pay for child minding on Saturdays
- Temba could change his lifestyle in order to be involved in the child’s life; being a father means he cannot be committed elsewhere all the time.

In devising these alternative means of dealing with the problem, the young men suggested discussion and alternative thinking for the mother and father to reach a decision. The responses suggest that participants felt it is the father’s duty to be there for the family. Work is what generates income for the

family to survive and cannot be given up. While there were attempts to find a way which would still allow the father to engage in soccer for all of Saturday, there was an acceptance that having a child meant that some, if not all, of the day should be given to the child; some accepted this with more reluctance than others.

Nonviolent fathering, the participants reasoned, included abstaining from verbal and physical harshness but also meant acting in ways that meant the underlying causes of violence are weakened. Nonviolent fathering would result in children who are respectful of others, whereas violent fathering would inculcate violence and aggression in them. It was felt that while traditional fathering practices may have included harshness, there were also fairly strict guidelines on these practices. Participants had varied experiences of corporal punishment as they grew up and two broad opinions emerged. Some who had received it generally approved of it: "I can say that my father used to hit me when I did something wrong. I am happy with what I have become because of him" (Training group participant, Engonyameni). By contrast, another "... became very scared of my father. Even from the way he talks, you feel like he wants to beat you" (Training group participant, Durban). It was recognised that the degree to which verbal and physical violence was used by fathers towards their children was similar to that used towards their wives. Participants felt that they had little knowledge of nonviolent forms of discipline and expressed a willingness to learn these.

Evaluation

Short-term outcomes, 2015

It will be recalled that the aim of this research project was to examine whether the attitudes towards fathering among a sample of young men could be positively influenced by a carefully designed training programme. The evaluation of the short-term outcomes involved comparing responses from a pre-training questionnaire completed by each participant with those from post-training completed two months later. The questions focussed on their experience of being fathered and their own fathering practices (actual or intended) and, in the post-training questionnaire, what they felt were the most important things they had learnt during the training.

Pre-training results

The pre-training enquiry focused on finding whether or not participants grew up with their father, and if so, whether they have a good relationship with the father or father figure. Further, the enquiry sought their opinion on how a father shows love to his children, how men show they are responsible fathers, and if they think that the use of corporal punishment by fathers is necessary to bring up good children. The trainees were given a list of five ways in which a father might show love to their children and were asked to say whether any of these were important or not so important. Three ways were selected by almost every respondent across the three sites, namely spending time with their children, telling their children that they love them, and helping them with things. On the last point, informal discussions suggested that the respondents were thinking of their schoolwork and sport, whether formally or informally organised. Hugging their children and giving them gifts were selected as important by about half the trainees. Four ways of being a responsible father were presented. While all were supported by a majority, two responses, spending a lot of time at home and respecting and supporting the children's mother, were very strongly supported. Sharing household tasks and providing economically were supported by a majority of trainees. Half of the participants said that corporal punishment was not necessary to bring up children, although this result was influenced by very high numbers from the Engonyameni group.

Post-training results

The participants completed a post-training questionnaire some two months later. The questionnaire was designed to facilitate comparisons between pre-and post-training opinions and attitudes but also

to allow for some explanation of these attitudes, given that they now had some experience discussing these matters. In addition, trainees were asked to indicate the most important thing they had learned and to reflect on this. A change was identified if a participant changed their response from important to not very important, or vice versa. This, it must be admitted, is a very basic measure of change and, in hindsight, it would have been more useful to have asked for a numerical score between say one and ten, which would have allowed the extent of change to be measured. The post-training results for the question “What will you do to show love to your children?” were consistent between the three sites. The three main ways in which the participants intended to show love, time, helping, and telling, were confirmed while gifts and hugging become more important to around a fifth of the respondents. Concerning the nonviolence question, “Do you accept the use of corporal punishment to bring up good children?”, there was no change in the results from the Engonyameni group which, it will be recalled, was already strongly against the necessity of corporal punishment, but there was movement in the other two groups from yes (it is necessary) to partly yes/partly no and from partly yes/partly no to no (it is not necessary).

Overall, those who regarded it as necessary fell from half to a third of the trainees. A strong driver of this was the awareness that the use of corporal punishment was passed on from father to son; “I want my children to be nonviolent. If I use it, they are going to do it to their children” (Training group participant, Engonyameni). The changes reported here are encouraging but are subject to important limitations. First, there is the selection bias which occurs in studies involving volunteers. That is, the participants may well have had a predisposition to be better fathers and the training may have made little difference to them. Second, while attitudes are likely to influence behaviour, it is by no means certain that reported attitudes will in fact result in more loving, responsible, and nonviolent fathering. Third, assuming the training had positive outcomes for the trainees, these will be felt not only in the first few months but more importantly in the years and decades ahead. The second and third of these reservations can perhaps be ameliorated by another outcome evaluation held well into the future and such an evaluation is reported in the next section.

Medium-term outcomes, 2019

In September 2019, four years after the initial training, the trainees were invited to a follow-up session involving all three groups. From the 21 who attended, three categories were identified: nine were ‘old fathers’, who had already been fathers at the time of the training; four were ‘new fathers’, who had become fathers since the training; and eight were ‘yet to be fathers’. It was very apparent that the participants remembered a good deal from the training sessions. Old and new fathers focussed on the main challenges of fathering which they faced, particularly the hard work of raising children and their relationship with the child/children’s mother. An old father from KwaMashu, for example, said that he had been “... alarmed by the responsibilities [of fathering] and the conflicts [he] had with [his] partner after having had the child”. A new father, also from KwaMashu, put it this way, “I came to see how hard my parents must have had it raising me and also how much we actually don’t know about our partners and baby mamas” (New father, KwaMashu).

The key point from the four new fathers was the value the training had for their new role and the realisation that they could be responsible fathers even if they did not have money. In the words of one, “Simply, I learned to be responsible as a father. ... I realised that even if you are unemployed, you need to be available for your kids” (New father, Durban). Another confirmed this sentiment, saying that he had learned the importance of being present in his child’s life and that this was not dependent on having money. “There was a time when I took [my children] out for a picnic and they were very excited. It was the best experience of their lives.” (New father, KwaMashu). The eight yet to be fathers, some of whom were married or in a relationship, focussed on what the training had taught them about the mother-father relationship and the importance of fathers being responsible and present for their children. All expressed their intention to be positively involved in their children’s and partner’s lives and five said they would father in the same way as their fathers did.

Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing, it is tempting to conclude that attitudes towards fathering among this sample of young men were positively influenced by the training programme and that the effect continued into the medium-term. That said, it cannot be argued that the experience and attitudes of this sample represent those of young South African men in general. Urban young men seem much more likely to have a father or father figure in their lives than their rural counterparts and this sample's experience of being fathered was much more positive than expected. There is also the matter of selection bias, a point perhaps reinforced when the medium-term evaluation attracted half of those who attended the initial training sessions years earlier. In addition, there is the interplay between the encouragement provided by the training and the many pressures facing individual young men in a violent society. Overall, the researchers believe that the research has demonstrated the potential positive contributions which these young men can bring to fathering, three aspects of which deserve particular mention. First, the participants seemed to genuinely enjoy and value the opportunity to think about the issues involved in being a father. This suggests, among other things, the possibility of establishing father's clubs where fathers can share their experiences and support one another. Second, there was an understanding that being a father involved responsibilities and challenges but that it was a project in which they could play a significant role. Many of the fathering contributions which they could make, they realised, did not require them to be employed and to have money. Third, they recognised an important linkage between being responsible, loving, and nonviolent fathers and the building of more positive relationships with the mother of their children.

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