Subjective meanings of masculinity: Fathers 'coming out'

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Abstract

Over centuries, same-sex and blended family systems have been, and continue to be, subordinated in relation to the nuclear family system. Within such family structures, gay fathers are expected to fulfil a specific role that is socially constructed, and contingent with heterosexual masculinity. Gay fathers therefore disrupt the heteronormative model of a father figure that pervades South African society, and thereby become vulnerable to social stigma. This has negative implications for both men that disclose their homosexuality in late adulthood and their family members. The qualitative study at hand aimed to explore what insights and experiences inform how the children of previously closeted men make meaning of gendered identities and family life after experiencing their fathers come out. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 adults that had experienced their fathers coming out whilst still married to their mothers. A thematic analysis approach guided the data analysis process. The findings confirmed that heteronormativity remains firmly entrenched in South African society through the privileging of the nuclear family system. However, this study also provided further insight as to how the participants perceived their fathers' attempts to construct their identities as gay men within a heteronormative climate. These fathers were perceived to be overtly aware of how their sexuality might impact upon the public's perception of their masculinity, and their alertness was reflected in how they distanced themselves from effeminate 'camp' behaviours. The findings ultimately suggest that the children of previously closeted men construct masculinities by synthesizing what they understand of societal expectations of gender roles, with what they experience personally within the realms of family life. Overall, the participants indicated that having a gay father has made them more cognisant of the intricacies of gendered identity formation and exhibition.

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Introduction

The democratization of South Africa has centralised the principal of equality across all spheres of the country's political, social and economic life, thereby problematizing various forms of discrimination on the grounds of sexuality (Cock, 2003). This has facilitated the process by which lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals of various ages 'come out' (Cock, 2003). As such, there are now more openly gay men living in South Africa than ever before (Cock, 2003). In spite of this political transformation, South Africa remains conservative in its heteronormative societal views, and continues to romanticize the nuclear family system (Msibi, 2009; Reddy, 2006). However, research shows that many men that come out in mid-adulthood are fathers to children of previous heterosexual partnerships, thereby rendering the study of 'non-traditional' family systems exceedingly relevant in contemporary South Africa (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004). Although plenty studies are available on gay couples that choose to become parents (Allen & Burrell, 1997; Anderssen, Amlie & Ytterøy, 2002; Clarke, Kitzinger & Potter, 2004; Lubbe, 2007; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001), few researchers consider the impact of fathers coming out from within nuclear families. Furthermore, there is a lack of research altogether on how their children might understand gendered identities. With this aim in mind, a focus on how fathers challenge or exhibit socially constructed forms of masculinity is essential in seeking to understand how children, both male and female, make sense of gendered identities. This qualitative study, located within a social constructionist framework, sought to explore the gendered identity constructions of children who grew up in what is known as a "traditional" family system (with a nuclear mother and father) and later had to adapt to new forms of family life. Several studies have produced information that make valuable contributions to this area of interest, including research on traditional family systems, the disclosure of homosexuality and heteronormative constructions of fatherhood. In the following section, this research will be critically reviewed in an effort to contextualize the study at hand.

Defining 'traditional' family systems

Colonial discourses motivate a "heteronormative moral panic" (Reddy, 2006, p153) in which 'traditional' family systems are privileged as the norm (Lubbe, 2007; Msibi, 2009; van Zyl, 2011). 'Traditional', or 'nuclear', families are made up of a monogamous heterosexual couple and their dependent children. They are socially accepted family units because they present an exclusive structure in which moral

superiority is fostered though conformation to heteronormative standards (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012). Such standards make the nuclear family inaccessible to LGB couples that choose to start families, thereby hindering their social acceptability (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012). As such, when the fathers of children born to heterosexual parents 'come out', a term used to describe the process by which a LGB individual reveals their sexual preference (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004), a transition is initiated from a traditional family system to an alternative one. It is possible that the implications of this process may evoke a change in the child's understanding of identities and gendered practices (Bartlett, 1984; Macklin, 1980).

There is consensus in the literature that traditional family systems do not lead to more positive outcomes in children than non-heteronormative family structures (Allen & Burrell, 1997; Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterøy, 2002; Lubbe, 2007). Stacey and Biblarz (2001) suggest that differences between children of homosexual and heterosexual parents are more accurately attributed to the *gender* of their parents than their sexuality. They argue that the children of homosexual couples witness their same-sex parents performing some parenting roles traditionally ascribed to a different gender. As such, they integrate typically male and female behaviour in their understanding of gender roles, creating a more equitable outlook that diverges from binary, societally constructed ones (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Moreover, they argued that children of non-heteronormative couples encounter social problems because they become victims of societal stigma (Clarke, Kitzinger, & Potter, 2004; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). This stigma frames gay parenting as a practice that is damaging to children. However, research has shown that the effect of a parent coming out is no more harmful to children than situations like divorce, or living with a "closeted" father (Buxton, 2006; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

Despite a lack of evidence proving that alternative family systems have detrimental effects on children, the privileging of the nuclear family has stigmatised same-sex families extensively (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012). Thus, many gay men remain in heterosexual relationships to avoid the negative consequences of coming out. The following section explores the process of coming out within a heteronormative family structure.

Disclosing Homosexuality to Children

Troiden's model (1989) separates the process of coming out into the following 4 stages; (1) an awareness of same-sex attraction; (2) a period of identity confusion

characterized by sexual experimentation; (3) assuming a homosexual identity; and (4) disclosing homosexuality to others (Bakeman & Floyd, 2006). Wives and children are considered the most difficult to come out to, particularly because each stage of this process is marked by an intense fear of rejection (Bozett, 1980). Lynch and Murray (2000), however, suggest that children are likely to respond to their father coming out in a manner that is sensitive to his insecurities.

Although the public realm invites judgment from others, the private realm within which families operate can be equally hostile. Bozett's research (1980) indicates that gay men come out later in life to maintain close relationships with their children. However, more recent studies (Bakeman & Floyd, 2006; Buxton, 2006; Johnston & Jenkins, 2004) have listed additional factors that influence why men postpone coming out. The internalization of self-hate prompts many gay men to deny their sexual preference, both to themselves and their peers (Buxton, 2006). However, meeting other gay men facilitates the process by which they are able to stop rejecting themselves and accept their homosexuality (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004). Although they might grow in their acceptance of themselves, gay fathers that come out run the risk of being rejected by their children, and the fear of potentially losing custody of their children is enough to keep some men 'closeted' for the duration of their lives (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004).

Few studies focus on children who witness their fathers coming out whilst married to their mothers. Those that do, report that better reactions tend to come from children who have a close relationship with both parents and are raised to promote tolerance and acceptance (Bozett, 1980). Men who come out to their children may potentially relieve family tensions and strengthen relationships, but adverse reactions are also likely (Miller, 1979). In some cases, children sympathize with their mothers, who they believe have been deceived by their fathers (Buxton, 2006). Regardless of their reactions, it has been stated that having a gay father might make children vulnerable to social stigma (Walker, 2005).

The studies reviewed above are a reflection of the limited literature that currently exists in relation to the proposed study topic. They are out-dated, and rely heavily on the fathers' accounts of events. Moreover, they are conducted in the United States, and therefore show little resemblance to the South African context in which heteronormativity remains firmly entrenched, particularly where gendered identities are concerned.

Heteronormative Constructions of Masculinity

Heteronormative gender practices create and reproduce unequal power relations between men and women, as well as straight and gay men, thereby establishing hierarchal constructions of masculinities (Connell, 1992; Walker, 2005). Heteronormativity determines masculine norms of behaviour, making the uninhibited display of male homosexuality a threat to patriarchal gender relations and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1992). Because heterosexuality lays the foundation for patriarchy, it has come to play a pivotal role in shaping parenting practices (Walker, 2005). Gay fathers, then, are particularly threatening to hegemonic masculine norms of fatherhood (Walker, 2005).

A significant link between the behaviour of fathers and male 'norms' of identity places fatherhood at the center of masculinity debates (Dunne 2000; Strasser, 2012). Research on the father-son relationship has shown that identification with the same-sex parent is imperative to developing psychological adjustment and a conceptualization of masculinity (Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, & Keehn, 2007; Stets & Burke, 2000). Children generate an understanding of identities from observing how their parents interact and negotiate responsibilities to establish gender and relational norms (Milevsky et al., 2007). However, literature on the father-child relationship is limited in its representativeness, as few studies have focused on gay fathers and their children specifically.

Research suggests that 'traditional' fathers tend to conform to gender roles that are complicit with hegemonic masculinity, and are thus more likely to produce children who similarly practice this version of masculinity. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Reddy, 2006; Strasser, 2012). Alternatively, gay men tend to exhibit behaviours that do not reflect the norms of hegemonic masculinity, and their children are therefore less likely to internalize hegemonic practices (Russell, 1978; Walker, 2005). For older men, the process of coming out involves a re-evaluation of heteronormative constructions of masculinity (Dunne, 2000). Their children consequently observe a shift in family dynamics, which may be attributed to a range of factors, including moving out of the family home (Bozett, 1980). Although what the children experience during this transition period might have very little to do with the type of masculinity their fathers exhibit, these observations may potentially disrupt or elaborate upon how they, as the children of previously closeted men, understand gendered identities.

While the relationship dynamic between gay fathers' and children's understandings of gender roles and identities has been researched before, few of these studies involve children who experience their fathers coming out from within a traditional family system. In South Africa, where non-traditional family systems are becoming increasingly common, an understanding of how such children make meaning of masculinity is a relevant area of research that has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to existing knowledge of gendered identities.

Aims and objectives

Aim

The aim of this project is to understand constructions of masculinity among children raised in heterosexual families, whose fathers later 'come out' as homosexual. The relevance of this aim lies in the idea that when fathers come out, what their children know of family systems is altered, which may influence how they understand and construct gendered identities.

Research question:

How do children whose fathers 'come out' as homosexual from within a traditional, heterosexual two-parent household construct masculinities?

Sub-questions:

- What experiences, behaviours and insights contribute to their understanding of masculinity and femininity?
- Does a shift in family dynamics impact upon how these children understand gendered identities? If so, how?

Theoretical framework

This research study is located within a social constructionist paradigm. Social constructionism offers an approach to qualitative inquiry that assumes that knowledge is a product of societal and interpersonal interactions that are socially and historically specific (Burr, 2015). Moreover, social constructionism advocates for a critical analysis of taken-for-granted understandings of the world that are validated through observation and description (Burr, 2015, Gergen, 1985). In addition to concerning itself not only with how language is used, social constructionism also emphasizes the need to analyse how some discourses are favoured over others, dominating various

topics (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998; Raskin, 2002). This approach is relevant to the context of the proposed qualitative study, as discourses of hegemonic masculinity tend to dominate society's perceptions of what it means to be a man (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

When applied to the subject matter of this research project, social constructionism offers a valuable interpretation of masculinity discourses wherein gendered identities are not given, but rather represent behaviours that are repeatedly performed to comply with socially constructed sex-based norms. As such, masculine men and feminine women separate themselves into binaries at an early age (Burr, 2015). This approach explicitly separates gender from sex, and places one's social context, subjective understandings of the world and interactions with peers as central components of how gendered identities are formed. Familial interactions, in particular, make a meaningful contribution to how people construct their identities and situate themselves within their social context (Milevsky et al., 2007). Thus, social constructionism allows for an exploration of the role of familial interactions in relation to gendered identity construction, which is particularly relevant to the proposed study.

Methodology

Research design

A qualitative research design was selected for this study, as qualitative enquiry offers methods by which contributions to theoretical and conceptual knowledge of life experiences and their meaning can be attained (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The use of a qualitative research design granted the researcher insight into individuals' subjective understandings of identity.

Sampling strategy

This study necessitated the recruitment of subjects from a small sample- namely, people who are over the age of 18 and experienced their father coming out from within a traditional family system. Thus, purposive sampling was used. This form of non-probability sampling involves the intentional seeking out of participants who meet certain inclusion criteria and can therefore use their personal experiences to make valuable contributions to an area of knowledge (Tongco, 2007).

I recruited 8 participants in total through word-of-mouth and pre-existing familiarity. Five women and three men were interviewed. The use of Skype

interviews was necessary to reach participants living in different countries and provinces. While this may seem like a small sample size, the strength of this study lies not in its generalisability, but rather in it's potential to uncover subjective, individual-level constructions of masculinity that contribute to our understanding of an under-researched area.

Data collection

Individual semi-structured interviews, guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix A), were conducted in neutral venues (most often coffee shops) or over Skype. Semi-structured interviews comprise of a flexible framework within which a few open-ended questions evoke in-depth, rich responses (Piercy, 2004; Dearnley, 2005). One of the questions asked was "What does masculinity mean to you?", which aims to understand their personal sentiments on a deeper level, and therefore motivates for the use of individual interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Through an effective selection of questions, the researcher maintained focus in the interview, collecting relevant, valuable information that pertained to the specified topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The open-ended nature of the questions provided an opportunity for respondents to introduce new concepts and contribute valuable, authentic information that was found to be exceedingly relevant (Dearnley, 2005). In this study, for example, participants brought up their mothers, and how they perceive their mothers to be victims of their fathers coming out. Although this information does not speak explicitly to the focus of masculinity, it conveyed gendered undertones that contributed meaningfully to answering the research question.

An advantage of using semi-structured interviews was that the researcher could ask participants to elaborate upon responses that were particularly relevant or interesting (Piercy, 2004). By doing so, the researcher was able to gather in-depth knowledge pertaining to the thoughts and lived realities of the participants. The researcher thus acquired a greater understanding of the contexts in which meaning is attributed to certain experiences, thereby complimenting the study's social constructionist framework (Piercy, 2004).

The face-to-face interviews helped to foster rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. Additionally, they enabled the interviewer to denote social cues and body language, ultimately allowing for the contribution of greater detail to the interview transcript (Louise Barriball & While, 1994; Opdenakker, 2006). Although

some of the interviews were conducted via Skype, the researcher ensured that the camera was on at all times, so that the participants' facial expressions could be noted.

An electronic voice-recording device was used to record the interviews, which lasted between 25 minutes and an hour. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher verbatim.

Data analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. Thematic analysis involves active participation from the researcher in both grouping and interpreting patterns that prevail across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis is concerned primarily with what is said, rather than how it is told or to whom it is said (Riessman, 2005). There are very few studies on the topic at hand, and for this reason a focus on *what* is said was deemed to be the most appropriate approach to data analysis. The importance of one's social context and the ways in which it informs understandings of identity and gender was centralized throughout the analysis to maintain the social constructionist focus of the project (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This necessitated the incorporation of societal views into the analytical process, and an emphasis on how these views manifest in subjective understandings of masculinity.

In accordance with Braun and Clarke's guidelines (2006), I started my analysis by familiarizing myself with the data. This involved transcribing the interviews myself and then reading over the transcripts repetitively. I then coded thoroughly across the interview transcripts to produce initial codes. Thereafter I searched for patterns of recurring codes across the data set, which came to form themes. I then reviewed the themes, making sure that they were relevant and well formed before defining and naming each one respectively.

Although this study has a focus on masculinity and gender, it aims to gain an all-encompassing, in-depth understanding of how one's experiences inform their ideas of identity construction, and for this reason I coded and analysed my data inductively. In so doing, I allowed for themes that were not directly related to my research question to emerge, in order to broaden my insight in to the participants' understanding of identity and family (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Four themes were found to be salient in answering the research question: Privileging the nuclear family system, Navigating masculinity as a gay man, Gendered perceptions of vulnerability and Reduced anger after coming out.

Ethical considerations

With the aim of upholding good practice, this study accounted for the ethical implications of each step of the research process. Thus, the following ethical implications were considered.

Prior to the commencing of data collection, ethical approval was granted by the Psychology Department's Ethical Committee at the University of Cape Town.

Informed consent

The researcher supplied each participant with detailed information about the purpose and process of the interview before it commenced to ensure that their participation was voluntary (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). There were no incentives to encourage participation in this study, necessitating an emphasis on the voluntary nature of participation. All participants that were interviewed face-to-face signed informed consent forms (see Appendix B) that explained the aims, procedures and confidentiality of the study. Furthermore, the researcher required verbal confirmation of their understanding. In the case of Skype interviews, consent was attained verbally after the interviewer read out the consent form to the participant. Participants were also reminded that they had the agency to withdraw from the research process at any time.

Privacy and confidentiality

Concealing the identity of participants in research studies of this nature is important as it communicates a sense of respect for the autonomy and dignity of their contributions (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). To this end, the researcher did the following: (1) met with each participant individually; (2) personally transcribed all the interviews; (3) used pseudonyms when reporting findings, and (4) stored the electronic transcripts in a locked file.

Harm to participants

The qualitative nature of this study involved the discussion of sensitive topics, which might have cause emotional distress. As such, the researcher ensured that participants understood that the depth of their responses to questions was entirely up to them, and that they may choose not to answer if they felt uncomfortable (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This is particularly important in the context of this study as some participants might have felt that the stigma attached to gay parenting may have jeopardized their relationships and jobs (Richards & Schwartz, 2002; Stacey &

Biblarz, 2001). The interviews took place in a secure, mutually agreed-upon setting, ensuring that no physical harm was caused.

Debriefing of participants

At the end of each interview, the researcher debriefed participants. This involved a participant's reflection of the interview, and the researcher's explanation of its purpose and assessment of its impacts. Contacts for organizations offering psychological support were supplied on the debriefing form (see Appendix C) in case the participants felt that the interview had evoked undue harm (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Limitations

Small, unrepresentative sample

While making a significant contribution to our understanding of subjective constructions of masculinity of the children of previously closeted gay men, this study is limited in its small sample size. Furthermore, the sample lacked demographic representativeness, as it was solely comprised of white, educated men and women. As such, we caution against the generalisation of these findings to broader society.

Reflexivity

The interrogation of historical and social contexts that constitute both how the participant frames their experiences and how the researcher interprets findings is vital, thus emphasizing the need for researchers to reflect on their role in the research process, and how their identity may affect or shape the information gathered (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Watt, 2007). Reflexivity involves a critical awareness of the researchers' subjectivity and contextual background; particularly pertaining to how these might influence the power dynamics pervading the interview setting (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

My identity as a young, educated, white woman, and the implicit assumptions participants may have made about me based on these traits might have influenced what information they shared with me (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). However, the sample of this study included white, educated men and women, and therefore it is unlikely that my outward identity induced a power discrepancy.

Participants yielded power in that they could choose what information they wanted to share with me, and how much of it (Greene, 2014). This speaks to the ways

in which power dynamics are constantly shifting throughout the research process. Although I influenced the direction of the study, through the use of an interview guide, it is the participants that decided what *content* to discuss.

As someone who has experienced the phenomenon under research, I have an invested interest in this research topic, and thus operate as both an 'insider', and an outsider researcher. My 'insider' status pertained to my familiarity with some of the initial participants, and the shared experiences that I had with them. However, I was an outsider in that I knew little about their personal experiences and subjective realities. The level of affinity I shared with the participants may have been both an advantage and a disadvantage. While my familiarity with some participants is likely to have enhanced their comfort, openness and depth in the interview process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Taylor, 2011), it was also disadvantageous in the sense that participants likely felt reluctant to share certain information that they expect might have affected our relationship (Greene, 2014). Furthermore, participants might have felt obliged to make contributions that aligned with what I communicated (Greene, 2014). Alternatively, participants might have communicated certain thoughts in an attempt to maintain a specific perception about themselves, or to embody the opinion they perceive to be the most socially 'correct' (Greene, 2014). This is particularly relevant in reference to the proposed study, which deals with a sensitive topic.

Reflexive practice necessitated a critical awareness of my own past in an active effort not to project or incorporate my experiences and emotions into the interview process (Chenail, 2011). As such, I had to constantly reflect upon my positionality and subjectivity in relation to the research topic and the influence it might have elicited over the research process both during the interviews and throughout data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The study at hand sought to explore the ways in which children whose fathers 'come out' as homosexual from within a traditional, heterosexual two-parent household construct masculinities. The findings suggest that the participants' understandings of masculinity were shaped largely by their heteronormative societal context, within which traditional gendered stereotypes, behavioural norms and ideas of family life prevail. The following themes were represented in the data: Privileging the nuclear

family model, Navigating masculinity as a gay man, Gendered perceptions of vulnerability and The role of coming out in reducing anger.

Privileging the nuclear family model

This theme explores the extent to which contemporary society has idealized and normalized the nuclear family model, which is comprised of a heterosexual couple and their dependent children. This finding aligns closely with those of previous South African studies on family systems and social stigma (Msibi, 2009; Reddy, 2006). In the following extract, Stacey clearly portrays the traditional, taken-for-granted conceptualization of the father as a half of a heterosexual unit: "I think my dad coming out affected me hugely because he was my father figure and a father figure in my mind, how I had constructed it, is a father loves a mother**."** Stacey's construction of a father figure provides insight as to how fathers have come to be inherently associated with heterosexuality, thereby locating gay men outside of the social representation of the father figure.

For centuries, monogamous heterosexual partnerships have been exemplified not only as 'normal', but also as the 'natural' form of marriage (Folgero, 2008). This essentialist view of family life has shaped the nuclear family into an exclusive structure that is inaccessible to the LGB community (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012). The oppositional (and contradictory) ways in which the ideal of the nuclear father has positioned fatherhood and homosexuality implies that a father coming out from within a heteronormative family structure runs the risk of making other family members, who then become subject to scrutiny and stigma, socially vulnerable (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). This sentiment is reflected in Amy's comment below:

> *I was quite chuffed because I was like, I don't want to be there!*
> *Because I mean, obviously, it's an all-girls school. You know, we were*
> *seen as this great family […] Like, we're known in the school and then*
> *to have all these whispers around... I was so glad to be out.*

The idea that Amy's father coming out disrupted how they, as a family, were perceived is centralized in the above extract. Her use of past tense implies that her family is no longer considered 'great' due to their departure from a heteronormative model. Furthermore, Amy's gratitude for her absence from school when her father came out speaks to the ways in which homosexuality is framed as something

controversial and socially unacceptable in a society steeped in conservative expectations of the family system (Thomas-Jones, 2006).

Embedded in this assumption is the idea that fathers occupy a position characterized by certain identity traits and a particular form of masculinity that is inaccessible to gay men, therefore making alternative family systems somewhat illegitimate (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012). Research suggests that traditional conceptualizations of the nuclear father figure closely reflect the behavioural norms of hegemonic masculinity (Strasser, 2012). Heterosexuality rests at the very heart of hegemonic masculinity, rendering gay men incompatible with traditional hegemonic portrayals of masculine fatherhood (Connell, 1992). Jack draws on a typically hegemonic behaviour (namely being sport-orientated) to separate his heterosexual stepfather from his homosexual father, and to exemplify how his stepfather fulfilled a hegemonic masculine fatherhood role in his life.

> *My stepdad is very sport-orientated and that sort of a thing. So kind of, where my mom and my dad were more kind of, cultural and my dad, he obviously, he just like, he's kind of into sports but not conventional school sports and stuff… and um, in that front of things, my stepdad really fulfilled that aspect of a father figure.*

The nuclear family system is founded upon an adherence to gender norms in which the father is expected to fulfil the role of the masculine provider and the protector (Strasser, 2012). Hegemonic masculine expectations of fathers, and the ways in which gay men are positioned to fall short of them, are closely linked to the privileging of heteronormative ideals of family life (Strasser, 2012). The projection of heteronormative gender binaries on to homosexual relationships is one of the most explicit ways in which the nuclear family system is privileged over others in South Africa (Thomas-Jones, 2006).

> *They seem to have a relationship in which my dad is more… he occupies the more 'male' role and [his partner] occupies the 'female' role and it really works well for my dad. […] it's interesting to me the masculinity and femininity roles in a gay relationship um, you know…is my dad attracted to that because he was with a woman before and he finds those traits attractive in a male partner? (Amber)*

[my aunt's relationship] was a typical kind of lesbian relationships where she was the more feminine one, like doing my make-up, and she'd always have like "butch"- ja, well there's no other word- partners. (Julia)

In the above extracts, both Amber and Julia discuss their family members' homosexual partnerships in reference to the gendered norms of heterosexual marriages. This is known as 'theoretical sexism' (Dunne, 2000), and speaks to how gender forms the platform from which heteronormative expectations of parenting has emerged (Thomas-Jones, 2006). However, where Julia's projection of heterosexism onto her aunt's lesbian relationship is rather straightforward, Amber contextualizes and accounts for her adherence to theoretical sexism. By wondering out loud whether her father's choice to date a more 'feminine' man could be linked to his marriage with her mother, Amber attributes the gendered roles that she perceives of her father's relationship to her father's history. As such, Amber's theoretical sexism might be more accurately explained as a reaction to her father's unique past (in which he was married to a woman), rather than the simple projection, and expectation, of heterosexual gender roles in a gay relationship.

Nonetheless, the prevalence of theoretical sexism in Amber and Julia's extracts contradicts the results of previous research, which suggests that the children of gay men tend to have a more equitable outlook towards traditional gender-based behaviour and roles (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). On the contrary, by suggesting that masculine and feminine gender roles are observable in same-sex relationships, Julia in particular conforms to heteronormative gender binaries and consequent social expectations of behaviour and gendered identity. This may be due to the particular context in which Julia's father came out. Stacey and Biblarz's research (2001) provided an overview of various studies involving samples of (predominantly) surrogate or adopted children from white lesbian relationships in the United States. Thus, having grown up rather in a South African nuclear family, the sample of this study were raised in a vastly different social context, and it is therefore likely that Julia and Amber's attitudes might be more accurately reflective of the views of children from traditional family systems.

Theoretical sexism brings to the fore the ways in which the idealization of the nuclear family perpetuates binary gender roles. Heteronormative structures of parenting have come to be established as the foundation against which all other parental relationships are compared (Thomas-Jones, 2006). These two extracts indicate that even within gay relationships, norms of heterosexual relationship dynamics are perceived and perpetuated, suggesting a deeply ingrained privileging of heteronormative conceptualizations of family life, which ultimately heroes the nuclear family system above all others.

The idealization of the heteronormative nuclear family, and subsequent conceptualizations of fatherhood, has the potential to keep some fathers closeted for the duration of their adult lives. Those that choose to come out rather are faced with the challenge of making sense of their shifted identity and masculinity as gay men.

Navigating masculinity as a gay man

This theme describes the participants' perceptions of their fathers' efforts to retain or create a masculine identity after coming out in a conservative society. Through observing these efforts and behaviours, the participants gained a deeper understanding of how masculinity operates on a social level. This part of the findings cannot be understood in isolation from the 'camp' stereotype of gay masculinity and how its visibility and generalization elicits social scrutiny and stigma.

Some researchers have indicated that prejudice against gay men in South Africa has reduced in recent years (Cock, 2003). However, this study's findings show that there remains a negative social value attached to effeminate behaviour that is perceived to be 'typically gay'. In most cases, the interviewees emphasized that their fathers' behaviour diverted notably from socially constructed gay stereotypes of exaggerated flamboyance and effeminate behaviour (the 'camp' gay identity). Some efforts to do so were more explicit, and included behaviours that purported to conceal their homosexuality from the judgment of the public altogether. As such, this theme will be broken down into two respective sub-themes: Distancing from 'camp' identities and Covering up homosexuality.

Distancing from 'camp' identities: The 'camp' identity is founded upon the uninhibited, grotesquely excessive and performative exhibition of feminine traits (Butler, 1990). The participants interviewed in this study drew on stereotypes of camp behaviour to separate their fathers from typical representations of gay men. Furthermore, they indicated that the 'camp' stereotype is limited in its ability to

represent gay men on the whole. This sentiment is reflected in the following extract from Stacey's interview: "**[**My dad] gets so frustrated with people who stereotype gay men who look this one way, and act a certain way, dress a certain way."

Instead, the participants indicated that their previously closeted fathers behaved in such a way that their sexuality was not in any way observable:

> *When people see, like, gay people as being like, very feminine-well my dad's not like that at all. Like, at all at all. (Amy)*

> *It's not all that obvious with my dad. Um, he looks like a fairly normal sort of man, he's not over the top or anything. (Jack)*

From the above extracts, it seems that both Amy and Jack draw from the qualities of the effeminate, exaggerated camp stereotype to distance their fathers from this form of identity and to emphasize that their dads appear 'normal'. The stereotypical ways in which gay men are represented in the media, and consequently in popular thought, are contradicted by the participants' perceptions of their fathers, who they believe do not embody the behaviours that society typically expects from gay men. Their agenda in doing so might be to ensure that their fathers are excluded from the negative societal associations of camp gay men, such as professional incompetence and irrationality (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009).

However, by setting their fathers apart from the femininity associated with the camp stereotype, the participants describe their fathers as more masculine individuals that therefore adhere to society's expectations of father figures, at least in terms of their outward appearance and mannerisms. The following extract shows Mark's attempt to assert the masculinity he perceives of his father: "My dad, although he's gay, he is still very masculine and he's such a respectful man." Mark's comment sources from a heteronormative conceptualization of fatherhood and masculinity. Through the use of 'although' and 'still', Mark suggests that his father's masculinity is as such in spite of his sexuality, operating as the exception to the rule. This indicates that gay men have come to be inherently associated with femininity (and by extension, the camp stereotype) (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009). Thus, the fathers of the participants may have distanced themselves from camp behaviours in an effort to

assert their masculinity and consequently, maintain their respectability in a society in which effeminate men are frequently discriminated against.

Covering up homosexuality: This sub-theme explores how the fathers of participants behaved in ways that limited the exposure of their sexuality to the public eye. The need that some gay men feel to compensate for their homosexuality is indicative of the lack of social acceptability attributed to the LGB community (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2012). However, the reactions of these men to the immense social pressure of heterosexual fatherhood also hints at the strength of some gay men's internalized self-hatred, which stems from their sexuality, and ultimately stilts their ability to fully accept themselves (Buxton, 2006).

> *I could tell that [my dad] was still getting into his real personality because he was different with different groups of people. […] So say, if I had a sports match he would have to sit with, or he would…if we were at a braai with different families he would try be more like "macho man" in front of the men and try be more, I want to say masculine… more ja, more masculine. (Mark)*

In the above extract, Mark discusses how his father's masculine behaviour varies with his comfort level. Implicit in this observation is the idea that Mark's father was less comfortable in contexts in which hegemonic masculine behaviours (like watching sport and 'braai-ing') are brought to the fore. This may be due to the close link between hegemonic masculinity and homophobia (Connell, 1992). Both spectating sports matches and 'braai-ing' tend to be male-dominated activities in which hegemonic men create a group identity that is homogenized and heterosexualised (Reddy, 2016). Thus, the unease that Mark's father felt, and his attempts to behave in 'more masculine' ways, may well have been a reaction to a heightened awareness of his identity as a gay man in a heterosexual hegemonic masculine space. However, homophobic attitudes pervade a number of different settings. Mary's father, for example, attempted to mask his sexuality at work functions.

> *I don't know the reasoning behind this but often, I mean, for work functions, [my father] won't take [his long-term partner] with him.*

> *He'll take his ex-girlfriend with him. Um….and ja he- I think with*
> *work he has to conceal [his sexuality] quite a lot.*

Mary's father's behaviour speaks explicitly to the centrality of heteronormativity in the workplace. Dominant professional norms situate homosexuality as an opposing factor to professional capacity, leaving gay men in professional fields with somewhat of an identity dilemma (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009). The corporate world has been established throughout history as a masculine domain, which is hindered by certain traits that have come to be associated with femininity, such as emotionality (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009).

The manner in which gay men have become linked to femininity through widespread representations of the camp stereotype is thus problematic for some gay men, who then feel obliged to present themselves in such a way that their masculinity is not obscured by their sexuality. Mary's father's choice not to reveal his sexuality to his colleagues is indicative of a fear that his reputation and credibility as a professional may be doubted if he were to come out. Ultimately, Mary's dad's behaviour can be explained as a reaction to the prevalence and strength of organizational masculinity, which has created the myth that gay men are somewhat less masculine, and therefore lack the professionalism typically expected of a businessman (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009).

Lastly, it is important to note that the fathers of the participants were not alone in their fear of how they were perceived on a social level. In some cases, participants disclosed certain strategies that they themselves used so as not to draw attention to their fathers' sexuality. Jack provides an example of such a strategy: "I wasn't blurting out the fact that my dad was gay at Paul Roos because I knew that it might have some sort of a repercussion." Jack's choice not to disclose his father's sexuality to his peers at school is indicative of a heightened awareness of the heteronormative nature of societal views, which would position him as a target for social stigma (Walker, 2005). Jack's avoidance strategy suggests that he too, feels a sense of insecurity about his father's identity as a gay man. The irony of this is that by not 'coming out' to his friends about his father's identity, Jack essentially re-enacts or upholds the heteronormative lie that his father lived out whilst married to his mother.

Ultimately, the participants perceived the process of creating a cohesive identity as a gay father to be complicated by the strength of heteronormativity and the

socially constructed association of homosexuality with femininity. The negative social value attributed to men exhibiting feminine behaviours is indicative of the manner in which the public is expected to conform to conservative gender- based roles and norms of behaviour.

Gendered perceptions of vulnerability

This theme deals with the ways in which participants presented their mothers as victims in their family situations, and emphasizes how this perception plays in to traditional gendered stereotypes that denote women as particularly vulnerable. Previous studies have indicated that relationship dynamics within a family, such as this one, are highly likely to influence how children understand their parents' identities, and by extension, gendered identities (Dunne, 2000; Russell, 1978). Central to the relevance of this theme therefore, is the idea that the participants perceive femininity as something constructed in relation to masculinity. This grants us greater insight as to how the participants make sense of what it means to be a woman in a man's world, and how this influences their feelings and sensitivities towards their parents after their fathers come out.

Many scholars criticise the centrality of masculinity in most gender-based conversations (Schippers, 2006). Amber, in the below extract, problematises the influence and power that men yield over expectations and constructions of femininity, thereby emphasizing that femininity is best understood in relation to masculinity:

> *I guess my immediate reaction towards femininity is not that positive,*
> *simply because I think that a lot of the time femininity is decided by*
> *men. It's about what men want and not necessarily what women want.*
> *I mean I don't know if women would've decided that certain traits are*
> *seen as feminine and certain traits were seen as masculine if they had*
> *the choice. I think in general, society sees femininity as like, weakness*
> *and…and you know, all the little like, be kind, be gentle and quiet and*
> *you know… suppressed. To me, femininity sounds like suppression.*

Amber's perception of male-domination over femininity provides a deeper level of understanding as to why long-standing constructions of the feminine figure have wrongfully associated women with compliance, emotionality and passivity, ultimately limiting the opportunities available to them on both an economic and social

level (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). By equating femininity with 'suppression', Amber lends her support to the feminist notion that women are oppressed by the fixed nature of societal expectations of traditional femininity, which associates women with domesticity, subservience and motherhood (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). When family disputes inevitably occur, mothers are thus perceived to be the ones that take on the most stress, and are consequently framed as vulnerable to situations of conflict in the home (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987). The mothers of many of the participants in this study reacted as existing research findings suggested they might upon discovering that their husbands are gay, namely with great shock, confusion and sadness (Buxton, 2006).

> *I ended up being a massive crutch to my mom. And my mom would call me in floods of tears, absolutely distraught. […] I couldn't handle my mom, my mom talking to me about absolutely everything, and crying, and being distraught, and then being angry at my dad.* (Sophie)

> *It's not easy to talk about [the divorce] to my mom because she's very, very emotional. Um…ja she's, she's not in the best space.* (Amber)

Sophie and Amber's perceptions of their mothers are steeped in a sense of emotional vulnerability. Feminine stereotypes represent women as more emotional than men, especially when it comes to expressing sadness, fear and vulnerability (Timmers, Fischer & Manstead, 2003). Therefore, Sophie and Amber's understandings of their mothers' emotionality correlate with the idea that women, by virtue of embodying 'feminine' traits, are somewhat more vulnerable in divorce situations than their fathers appear to be. This gendered perception of vulnerability runs the risk of causing the children of divorced couples to frame their mothers as vulnerable victims, and their fathers as the perpetrators. Consequently, some of the participants felt obliged to take their mother's 'side', as research predicted they might (Buxton, 2006). In Sarah's extract above, she touches briefly upon the resentment she feels towards her father as a result of her mother's apparent despair.

Sarah's attitude is reflected, perhaps more explicitly, in the following extract from Julia's interview: "It is very unfair what [my dad has] done to my mom, and I will still always take my mom's side*."* Julia's anger with her father manifests in a tendency to defend her mother, who she positions as the victim of an "unfair"

situation, once again reiterating that women are perceived as somewhat more vulnerable in divorce situations. Julia's extract mirrors an opinion upheld by a few of the participants that found themselves unable to look past the idea that their mothers were wronged by their fathers. Implicit therein is a lack of insight in to their fathers' struggle with their sexuality, and the difficulty associated with coming out in mid adulthood.

Literature shows that men that come out later in life feel a deep sense of fear and self-centeredness for their actions, and many struggle to weigh up the consequences of being who they truly are and feeling immense guilt for what could be perceived as a 'selfish act' that lets their family down tremendously (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004). The internal struggle that these fathers are likely to have endured whilst closeted in a nuclear family system was largely overlooked by the participants, who focused instead on their mother's vulnerability. Julia's emphasis on 'taking sides' in the wake of the divorce suggests that by acknowledging their mothers' vulnerability and pain, their fathers' experiences are side-lined, or at least perceived to be less damaging.

Furthermore, by recognising their mothers primarily as victims of their fathers' sexuality, the participants ran the risk of negating the possibility that their mothers exercised their agency in remaining married to gay men. Bozett's study (2006) on the spouses of gay men found that approximately one third of the sample she tested tried to 'make it work' after their husbands disclosed their homosexuality by staying together. Of this third, a half of them never divorced, choosing rather to make an alternative arrangement (such as allowing the gay spouse to see other men in secret), whilst maintaining a heterosexual smokescreen (Bozett, 2006). The other third of Bozett's sample stayed together for up to three years in an attempt to decipher what family arrangement might be the most suitable for the children when they do inevitably divorce (Bozett, 2006). However, the participants of this study showed a lack of consideration for the idea that their mothers may have played a role in their fathers' decisions to remain closeted for a substantial period of their lives. Thus, the possibility that the mothers of the participants were complicit in maintaining a 'nuclear family' front might be a factor that was too quickly overlooked or negated as a result of the participants identifying their mothers primarily as helpless victims of their marital circumstances.

Although majority of the participants drew their understanding of feminine subjectivity from traditional feminine stereotypes, it is important to note that there were some interviewees that contradicted this portrayal by presenting their mothers as strong, brave individuals rather than helpless victims. When asked about his mother, Mark responded: "It was courageous for my mom, the way she coped with my dad coming out. It was very courageous to see how well she dealt with it. And also, how well she's doing now." In this extract, Mark repetitively uses a trait typically associated with masculinity (namely, courage) to explain the manner in which his mother has handled their family situation. In so doing, Mark reverses the gendered dynamic that has played out throughout this theme by emphasizing his mother's resilience over her 'feminine' vulnerability. The overall effect of this portrayal is that Mark's mother contradicts the behavioural expectations of the limited stereotype of traditional femininity, drawing attention to how these representations operate to silence and subordinate women. Rather, Mark's mother is empowered by the way her son perceived her ability to carry herself with courage.

This theme provides insight as to how family dynamics attach meaning to both masculinity and femininity, thereby aiding our understanding of subjective conceptualizations of identity. The overriding focus of this finding is the way in which vulnerability and emotionality have come to be generally associated with women, thereby framing the wives of previously closeted men as the victims of an unjust situation. Consequently, some of the children of gay men 'side' with their mothers, ultimately overlooking the suffering that their fathers have endured and continue to live with. However, further factors can be drawn upon to explain the nature of the participants' relationships with their fathers. One of such factors is the children's perception that their fathers' behaviour changed after coming out. Reduced anger is a positive example of one of such factors.

The role of coming out in reducing anger

This theme accounts for the reduced anger and greater self-acceptance that participants perceived in their fathers after they came out. The process of coming out initiates a re-evaluation of one's identity and behavioural norms, thereby making it likely that they might be subject to change (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004). Why anger was noted and what it signifies will be explored in relation to masculinity and the role of the father figure. As discussed earlier, Troiden's model (1989) characterizes the process of coming out into 4 distinct steps that are emotionally taxing to the person

going through them, and may elicit intense stress. Moreover, other studies have emphasized that the stress of living a heterosexual lie as a closeted gay man is likely to induce intense emotional outbursts (Johnston & Jenkins, 2004). Rage is one of such emotional outbursts.

> *My dad had a lot of anger issues. Um so, ja he's just, easily could*
> *jump between really aggressive for things that didn't seem big but uh,*
> *it was probably that he was stressed in his head that made it feel worse*
> *[…] His aggression did go down from when he was, well ja when we*
> *were still like, the nuclear family. (Martin)*

Martin's analysis of his father's rage shows that he has insight as to how his father's behaviour operated as a manifestation of a greater problem: an internal conflict. A previous study found a strong link between a man's expression of anger in the family home and masculine gender-role stress, which occurs when men feel that their masculinity is being challenged, or that they are failing to fulfil the requirements of hegemonic fatherhood masculinity (Copenhaver, Lash & Eisler, 2000). Martin's father's rage can therefore be explained as a direct product of the stress associated with remaining closeted, upholding a form of heterosexual masculinity and essentially, living a lie. Mary too, in the following extract, suggests that her father's anger is directly linked to being 'in the closet': "He used to have quite a few outbursts of […] rage. Um…where he would just completely lose it. And since [coming out] he's a lot more chilled, he's a lot calmer. I think he's just happy, you know?"

Both Mary and Martin emphasize that since their fathers came out, their anger management problems have subsided, or at least improved. Thus, both participants bring forth evidence for the idea that denying one's true identity and sexuality has detrimental effects on one's emotional wellbeing. Copenhaver, Lash and Eisler's study (2000) on anger and masculine gender role stress provides greater insight as to how this rage might be linked to the pressure of conforming to the hegemonic masculine norms of fatherhood, which center around heterosexuality (Strasser, 2012). Coming out is therefore described as a liberating process that allows gay men to accept their homosexual masculine identities, and in so doing, relieve themselves of the stress and emotion that arises from living a lie.

By coming out, most of the participants perceived their fathers to be more comfortable, free and accepting of who they truly are: Amber, for example, said that "[Her dad] was more free in his acceptance of himself." And Mark said that: "I could tell that [my dad] became more comfortable in his own skin. And he almost embraced- embraced being- embraced [being gay]." Amber and Mark's comments are reflective of the final phase of coming out, according to Troiden's model (1989), which involves a whole-hearted acceptance of one's sexuality and the public exposure thereof. This final stage ultimately liberates men from trying to conform to the norms of traditional heteronormative fatherhood, and allows them to pave their way forward as gay fathers.

However, some participants did not perceive any behavioural changes in their fathers whatsoever, as can be seen in the following extract from Julia's interview: "I don't think that [my dad] changed his way, which is why the masculine/feminine thing… that's just always how he has been. He didn't come out and change." Through this response, Julia challenges the social construction of a gay man as a certain form of feminized masculine identity by stating that her father's identity and behaviours remained unchanged in the wake of him disclosing his homosexuality. By emphasizing that his behaviours, which she linked to expressions of masculinity or femininity, stayed the same, Julia ultimately problematises the social expectation that society upholds, which is based on the flawed assumption that all gay men act in a more feminine manner than heterosexual men (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009).

The theme of Reduced anger ultimately emphasizes how a father's actions convey huge meaning to their children. Coming out was perceived to be a liberating process that increased the comfort and acceptance that the participants' fathers felt. Previous exhibitions of intense rage were attributed to an inner turmoil that was central to the process of living a 'lie' as a heterosexual father. The above-mentioned perceptions of fathers' stress and anger makes significant contributions to the subjective meanings that participants attached to masculinity, and consequently, how gendered identities are constructed and understood.

Summary & Conclusion

The children of gay men who come out later in life represent a population group that is overlooked in most areas of research. In addition to dealing with a shift in their fathers' sexual identities, these children adapt to a change in their family system.

Thus, they are well positioned to make a valuable contribution to existing understandings of how identities are shaped in response to certain life experiences. This study aimed to address this gap through the use of qualitative methods that uncover how the children of gay men construct masculinities. The findings ultimately suggest that the participants constructed masculinities and understood gendered identities by synthesizing societal views with their subjective opinions, observations and personal experiences as the children of previously closeted gay men.

The findings of this study confirmed that heteronormativity remains firmly entrenched in South African society, thereby problematising gay-headed families. The nuclear family model is used as an ideal standard against which other family systems are measured, essentially de-privileging blended family systems. Within traditional families, feminine and masculine gender roles have come to be expected (Strasser, 2012). This study found that many of the participants' understandings of their family life are founded upon gendered roles that elicit a heteronormative expectation of their fathers as the masculine figures of the family.

By coming out, many fathers fell short of this expectation. As such, the process of constructing their identity as a previously closeted gay man involved a re-evaluation of their masculinity and how it is presented. The majority of the participants emphasised repeatedly that their fathers made an effort not to embody the effeminate 'camp' behaviour of gay stereotypes. Implicit in this observation is the idea that the fathers of the participants are more masculine than stereotypical portrayals of gay men suggest. Furthermore, in some cases, the fathers went to great lengths to conceal their homosexuality altogether, suggesting a heightened awareness of heteronormative social stigma, and the centrality of one's sexuality in upholding a masculine identity.

Post-divorce family dynamics were discussed as a prominent contributing factor to understanding the roles of mothers and fathers (and the gendered norms attached to them). In particular, stereotypes were found to be pivotal to how the participants understood their mothers' subjectivity in the divorce situation. Drawing from narrow traditional stereotypes of femininity, the participants tended to frame their mothers as vulnerable victims. This seemed to fuel tensions in the participants' relationships with their fathers, and enabled the participants to overlook their fathers' respective struggles and hardships, which likely made them vulnerable too.

Lastly, the participants observed that their fathers' anger reduced when they came out, suggesting that it sourced from the stress and social pressure of conforming to the heteronormative standard of the masculine father figure in a nuclear family. Additionally, the participants perceived that their fathers seemed to be more comfortable and accepting of themselves since disclosing their sexuality, suggesting that the process of coming out liberated them of their internal identity conflict.

The findings of this study provide insight as to how subjective experiences and perceptions of gender contribute to the participants' understandings of gendered identity. The participants' constructions of gendered identities were partly influenced by how they viewed their family life in relation to societal norms of masculinity and femininity. However, the role of gendered social expectations featured prominently throughout the interviewing process. Therefore, this study found that the children of previously closeted gay men constructed gendered identities in accordance with what they had observed and experienced in relation to social norms and societal expectations of men and women.

This study is limited in its generalizability by the small, unrepresentative sample that was used. Due to the difficulty of identifying and recruiting participants that met the necessary criteria, only 8 white, educated students were interviewed. However, the subjective understandings of masculinity that emerged from the study are useful in developing an idea of how the children of previously closeted gay men construct masculinities. It is hoped that this realm of research might pave way for the expansion of existing discourses about gender and particularly, constructions of 'manliness' in contemporary South African society.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. What does 'gender' mean to you?
2. What does 'masculinity', specifically, mean to you?
3. Can you tell me about your family life before your father came out?
4. Did anything change after your father came out, in terms of family structure and relationship dynamics?
5. Did your father's behaviour change after he came out to you? And if so, how?
6. Has your father influenced your idea of what a 'masculine' man is?
7. Do you think your understanding of masculinity changed in response to your father coming out? If so, how?
8. Do you think your understanding of femininity changed in response to your father coming out? If so, how?
9. Do you think your life experience, as the child of a gay man who came out later in life, has contributed significantly to how you view gendered identities as a whole?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Children's subjective meanings of masculinity: "Fathers coming out"

1. **Invitation and Purpose**

   You are invited to take part in this study, which aims to explore if and how fathers coming out shapes their children's understandings of masculinity and femininity. I am a student researcher from the Psychology department at the University of Cape Town.

2. **Procedures**
   - If you decide to take part in this study I will interview you about your experiences of growing up with a father who comes out in mid adulthood, asking you to share your experiences of your family life and understandings of gendered identities both before and after your father came out. By interviewing you I hope to discuss how your ideas of masculinity, particularly, have been constructed and any other aspects of identity and sexuality that you wish to add to the discussion.
   - The interview should take between 45 minutes and an hour; however, you are free to speak to me for a shorter or longer period.
   - Participating in this study is voluntary. You are free to end the interview at any time with no penalty or any other consequences.

3. **Risks, Discomforts & Inconveniences**
   - This study poses a low risk of harm to you.
   - Speaking about your experiences of your childhood could bring up sensitive issues and could potentially be emotionally distressing. However, you will decide what you would like to discuss in the interview and you will not be obligated to speak about anything you do not feel comfortable speaking about.

- If you would like to contact a counsellor to further discuss your experiences, you can contact the organizations listed on the referral list.
- You might be inconvenienced by having to give up an hour of your time.

4. **Privacy and Confidentiality**
    - Interviews will take place in a private room.
    - Any information you share is strictly confidential. You will remain anonymous throughout the research process. You have the right to request that any information you have shared be removed from the study.
    - A tape recorder will be used to record the interview. If you would like the tape recorder to be switched off at any time you have the right to request this.
    - No one but myself will listen to or have access to the tape recordings.
    - This research will be written up as an honours research project that will be presented at a colloquium in November 2017.

5. **Contact details**

    If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study please contact Georgia Macleod on 0790258768 or Dr. Mandisa Malinga at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town (UCT) 021 650 3429. If you wish to contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee please contact Rosalind Adams at the University of Cape Town at rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za

Signatures

{Subject's name}_____ has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures described above including any risks involved in its performance. He or she has been given time to ask any questions and these questions have been answered to the best of the investigator's ability. A signed copy of this consent form will be made available to the subject.

_____   _____

 Investigator's Signature   Date

I have been informed about this research study and understand its purpose, possible benefits, risks, and discomforts. I agree to take part in this research as a subject. I know that I am free to withdraw this consent and quit this project at any time, and that doing so will not cause me any penalty or loss of benefits that I would otherwise be entitled to enjoy.

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Date

I know that this interview will be audio-recorded and that I am entitled to ask for the device to be switched off at any given time. I am aware that this research will be written up as an honors research project and that it may be published in an academic journal.

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Date

Appendix C

Debriefing form

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how the children of fathers who come out in mid-adulthood, evoking a transition from traditional family systems to alternative ones, understand masculinity. Throughout this interview process, questions were asked with the aim of gaining insight as to how your experiences have positioned you to construct and perceive gendered identities. The findings of the interviews will be used to compile a research report that will be presented at the University of Cape Town on the 17 November 2017.

Referral List

If you feel like you'd benefit from support or counseling, below are a list of organizations you can contact.

PFLAG South Africa

An organization offering support to parents, families and friends of lesbians and gays

Services:

Face-to-face peer counseling

Suicide prevention

Email support & resource desk

Helpline 8am-4pm

Support group (meets once a month)

Intervention and support when facing homophobia

Contact

E-mail: samelovefamilies@gmail.com

Telephone: 084 700 2536 (9am-4pm weekdays)

Payment

All services are free of charge.

Triangle Project

Triangle is Cape Town's oldest LGBTI organization.

Services:

They provide a helpline and support groups for family members of LGBTI individuals.

<u>Contact</u>

Address: 2nd Floor

                Leadership House

                Corner Burg and Shortmarket Streets

                Greenmarket Square, Cape Town

Telephone: 0812576693

Helpline: 0217126699 (1-9pm)

E-mail: info@triangle.org.za

<u>Payment</u>

Counseling is charged on a sliding scale according to income.

For students, counseling is free.

<u>Contact</u>

Address: 2nd Floor

                Leadership House

                Corner Burg and Shortmarket Streets

                Greenmarket Square, Cape Town

Telephone: 0812576693