Involving Fathers in Early Childhood Care and Development

by

Rosemary Hua

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Dr. Alan R. Pence, Supervisor (School of Child and Youth Care)

Dr. Geoff Potter, Faculty of Graduate Studies Member (University of Victoria)

Dr. Josiah Shindi, Benue State University, Faculty of Sciences (Benue, Nigeria)

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The study examines fathers’ role in early childhood care and development in Shanna Community, a Tiv tribe in Benue State, Nigeria. The study highlights the role of fathers and their involvement in child upbringing. It also examines the extent to which culture, beliefs and other influences affect fathers’ involvement in childcare.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to collect information through a focus group discussion by conversing with fathers in greater depth regarding their attitudes and their role in childcare. The results present information and opinions regarding the nature of childcare practices, their consequences and the strategies employed to deal with them. The results indicate that fathers’ beliefs on their involvement in early childcare and development are deeply rooted in their cultural settings. They also show that fathers’ roles have intergenerational family support with grandparents playing a major role. The care of children was and is still a communal role.

Another area deserving a further inquiry was also identified: to answer the question of whether the role accorded to men is actually being carried out fully by the men. Recommendations include development of a project to focus on fathers’ involvement initiatives in a community; formalized education training in the area of parent involvement; building a stronger rationale when developing an initiative that can be clearly articulated to the society; and, that such activities must move slowly, beginning by building a male-friendly environment that facilitates the culture of male involvement in the program, which is a long-term process.
Project Advisory Committee:

Dr. Alan R. Pence, Supervisor (School of Child and Youth Care)

Dr. Geoff Potter, Faculty of Graduate Studies Member (University of Victoria)

Dr. Josiah Shindi, Benue State University, Faculty of Sciences (Benue, Nigeria)
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In an article titled “Community Mobilization for Sustainable Living,” Hua and Johnson (1996) reported that very few fathers participate in most of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs being implemented in Nigeria. In contrast, it seems easy to involve mothers and siblings. Reflecting this gender difference, parent education programs are primarily directed towards women and teenage girls; there was very little on men. In Africa and also in the Western world, the society sees it as the responsibility of women to oversee young children’ matters and the activities that affect them. This situation is being created by cultural norms. This is the major part that creates the conditions in which men have little to do with young children.

Nyerere (1998) reported that cultural norms that affect fathers’ participation in childcare practices could affect development and the general well-being of children, including the quality of family life. The objective of this study is to investigate the current roles of fathers and explore ways to increase the involvement of fathers and other males in childcare.

In most Nigerian cultures, the responsibility of taking care of young children is seen as that of women rather than men. This indicates that bringing up children is regarded as a subordinate role, rather than a complementary one. During one of the training workshops in a community, one of the fathers made a statement that “caring for little children by men does not enhance the self-image of the man.” Furthermore, a caregiver in an ECD program in one of the communities reported that a lot of children who constantly absent themselves from the centre-based activities have been traced to
those with fathers who are less supportive of the program. This lack of support is also associated with lower developmental performance levels by the children.

UNICEF (1995) cited several studies that confirmed that both male and female children need the presence and interaction of both parents. In the same vein, Western-based literature indicates that when fathers participate in child upbringing, everyone benefits. This has also been shown to be true in Nigeria, but it is not well documented. Most of the cases available come from families that have been influenced by urbanization. The Federal Republic of Nigeria and UNICEF (2001) reported a study by Zeitlin (1993) that was conducted in Lagos, Nigeria, on the importance of fathers’ involvement in the upbringing of their children and how it affects the quality of development. The results revealed how fathers’ presence, commitment and contribution were associated with better child nutrition and stimulation.

This type of situation has led to growing popular support in Nigeria for empowering men to assume a role in childrearing practices, since children need the support of both parents. Such calls would then raise the question, “What roles should men have in childcare?” We should not seek to impose “foreign” concepts. (Foreign in this case can be referred to as concepts coming from another country or from the city to the village.) Instead we should first investigate indigenous knowledge and practices, the experiences that actually exist, by asking the people concerned (fathers and grandfathers) in order to determine their needs and beliefs.

This study seeks to investigate fathers’ roles as participants in child upbringing and whether these roles have intergenerational family support, with grandfathers playing roles as well. The purpose of the study is to assess the role of men in child upbringing.
How do men in this study describe their roles within the family and their attitude to childcare? The area of inquiry is the quality of fathers’ care received at household level. The research problem will explore fathers’ perception of the care they give children at household level and the nature of that care. The problem will focus on experiences, actions and behaviours on what they know and believe to be true in their situations. The findings will add to the baseline information and general knowledge regarding the experiences of families and communities that are non-Western oriented. Furthermore, local practices and attitudes that are being lost, often through urbanization, will be documented. This information will assist at a later time in developing programs to strengthen fathers’ role in child upbringing within a specific context.

The study will seek to answer the question “How and to what extent do fathers perceive their role in childcare?” The focus group discussion will be expanded to answer that question in an open-ended format.

Rationale

ECD experts such as educators and nutritionists believe that fathers can play an important role in child development. If fathers are indeed important resources to the successful life of the child and family, then it is only logical that people need to gain an understanding of the role of men in child upbringing. This is particularly true for childcare workers who, due to the nature of their profession, are constantly interacting with young children with the objective of facilitating their survival, growth and development at home, at school and in later learning. This understanding can lead to the improved holistic development of the child.
In the article “Fathers Matter Too” Smale (2001) pointed out that the Bernard van Leer Foundation’s main strategy in ECD programs is working with families to enhance young children’s well-being. In his report Smale (2001) pointed out that, unfortunately, in most of the approaches being developed, “families” stands for “mothers.” Smale’s (2001) report noted, however, that a recent survey confirmed that fathers have always been involved with their children. Furthermore, the report showed as far back as forty years when fathers’ activities had been measured, some men have always been reported as highly involved or as having close relationships with their children. Some fathers provide practical support around the time of birth and some have even said they feel deeply moved by the experience of childbirth. Many say they assume a parenting role when the need arises. Smale (2001) determines from these accounts that fathers have been involved but that the level of involvement depends on the different context. His study shows that the need to work with fathers is becoming relevant and is gradually coming into focus, and that childhood workers should study the role of fathers in the different contexts where they work, since the need of every community might be perceived differently.

UNICEF (1995) reported several benefits of men’s participation with children. For example, children under five years are less apt to behave in stereotyped ways and school performance is improved. Benefits to women include providing a better quality of life for mothers and all family members. Benefits to men include emotional satisfaction and increased confidence.
To develop a program for fathers, there is a need to understand the barriers that prevent them from participation. Also there is a need to preserve good behaviour and attitudes that are being lost due to urbanization and Westernization.

Coverage (Shanna)

The project was conducted in Shanna, a small rural settlement in a Tiv community in Benue State, Nigeria. It is a very small rural settlement with a population of about 7,000 people. It is located 10 kilometres off the inter-state road running from Makurdi to Enugu. Shanna has a homogenous population of Tiv people. The Tiv are the sixth largest tribal group in Nigeria, numbering about 4 million (1993 census). The Tiv people are predominantly farmers. The Tiv land lies in the Guinea Savannah zone of Nigeria. The climate is tropical and is divided into a wet season (April-October) and a dry season (November-March) each year. Temperature ranges from 80 degrees Fahrenheit to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The wet season has a high humidity of about 90 degrees centigrade.

The land occupied by Shanna lies in the river Benue valley about 600 to 800 feet above sea level. The geology is of sedimentary rock formation on top of which lie fertile soils. During the wet season there is surface water everywhere, which renders the 10 kilometres of dirt roads almost unusable. In the dry season the water disappears, leaving the road dry and dusty but motorable.

The soil supports crops like yams, cassava, guinea corn (sorghum), maize (corn) and rice, and timber trees like mahogany, etc. In spite of all these natural endowments, poverty is apparent everywhere. The people engage in subsistence farming.
The people generally practice polygamy, and large families are the norm. There is monogamy among the Christians. However, among even the Christian families, families with at least five children are commonplace and very normal to the Tiv.

Much respect is accorded to the man who has “plenty” of children. In this case plenty is apparently much more than five. The children are regarded as the man’s support in time of his old age. This is so much so that this children are jokingly referred to as the man’s “pension and gratuity” that is his “payment” after he retires from work. Sharing is also a very strong norm among these people. Farm work and social activities like marriages, burials, and feastings are all occasions to be shared by members of the immediate and extended families, and this might be as far back as ten generations. There is a popular maxim amongst this people, to “eat and give to your brother to eat too.” However, these people are not communist in nature at all but they are obviously good social democrats.

The people are a mixed group of Christians, traditional religion and a very few Moslems. There is a primary school, a community secondary school, and a market that is held every four days. The society is being changed from a totally traditional one to one that is warming up to change and is embracing new ways of doing things.

The mission of this project is based on improving the quality of parental care to lead to the holistic development of children using fathers’ enhanced participation, which will in turn empower families and communities for further child support. This will in turn provide a child’s right to income and nurturing from both parents and the right of men to develop their nurturing skills.
Objectives

The main objectives of the project are to explore the roles and beliefs of men regarding child upbringing in a specific community context. This will lead to establishing baseline information from a non-Western perspective on the experiences of families and communities. The project also intends to support positive attitudes and practices towards childcare that are being lost, often through Westernization, and to support fathers as they move towards the parenting role that they and their families, culture and societies determine they should have.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Smale (2001), when both parents bring up children, they thrive better. In early childcare programs in Nigeria, it has been observed that a small group of fathers participate in childcare, although in most Nigerian cultures, the responsibility of taking care of young children is seen as that of women and not of men. Similarly, the roles of raising children are clearly defined based on age and sex. Culturally and practically, men are seen and regarded as heads of their households or as bread winners/wage earners, while mothers are regarded as nurturers. With the changing trend of the Nigerian economy especially following Structural Adjustment Programs, unemployment and other hardships in the society have increased the responsibility of women, which includes additional feeding for the family through manual jobs and petty trading to raise income.

This literature review will explore what is theoretically said to be the role of fatherhood in the general context from different cultures. In doing so, efforts will be made to bring out a clearer understanding of specific frameworks of cultural expectations of males supported by findings from different cultures. The above will be further examined against relevant research to confirm what has been said in theory about the role of men in childcare. Finally, a description of some initiatives that can strengthen the father-child relationship will be explored in relevance to what has been said and reported in childcare.

*Equity in Families*

Bruce, Lloyd and Leonard (1995) described equity in families around the world. Several issues were examined, including how families are evolving; the cost of single
parenting; how gender roles perpetuate inequality; the cost benefits of male participation in childcare; how a number of international institutions have focused attention on the rights and responsibilities of all family members; and, initiatives that can strengthen the father-child relationship.

In the article, Bruce et al. (1995) observed that there was no equity in families and that men need to get involved, remarking that “it takes two people to bring the child into the world – and those people should be responsible for the child’s growth and development.” (P.1). Unfortunately, it was noted that single mothers are caring for too many children. The children grow up being denied the additional fatherly figure and the financial and emotional support they deserve. In this article, it was also reported how marriages dissolve and new family structures are evolving. As a result, women are carrying an increased share of financial responsibilities for their families in addition to performing the traditional female roles of childcare and housework even in families where men are present. Furthermore, the report described how children are socialized from birth to adolescence. Girls are to care for children and perform domestic chores, while boys are to be “providers.” Often girls are denied access to schooling as well as a chance for self-development, freedom for recreation and so many other things that will serve to improve her.

The publication explained that unless new roles are accepted and positive old ones reinforced for both men and women, boys and girls, equity in families will not be actualized.
Types of Single Parent Families

Bruce et al. (1995) reported on four types of single-parent families that are evolving. Marital dissolution encompasses three categories: divorce (which is common in the Western world and is beginning in the non-Western world), widowed women and temporary separation. Wars have left many women to care for their children alone. Polygamy, which is legal in most African countries, has also left many women to care for their children alone. Single parenting through migration and civil unrest includes migration for work and migration forced by civil unrest and wars. In Sri Lanka and the Philippines, more women are involved in outside work than men. As a result, remittances sent to children are not always enough. With this type of situation and financial burden placed on women, they are still relegated to the background when it comes to making decisions that affect the family. A woman is not regarded as the head of the home irrespective of the fact that she is the breadwinner.

The fourth category of single parenting Bruce et al. (1995) described is non-marital child bearing, which is somewhat common in parts of the Western world and is growing quickly in the western part of Nigeria. Non-marital child bearing leaves women economically vulnerable, often with an uncertain claim on the father’s earnings. Bruce et al. (1995) cited studies in Bolivia, Colombia and Paraguay which show that at least 10 percent of all mothers have given birth outside of marriage. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, non-marital child bearing represents as much as 45 to 55 percent of overall maternity. In countries like Botswana, the studies indicate the proportion of adolescents who give birth outside marriage before the age of 20 is more than 43 percent and 20 percent in Kenya and Liberia.
The Cost of Single Parenting

Bruce et al. (1995) examined women-headed household in Asia, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the United States of America where it was found that one quarter of the children were handled by one parent, usually the mother. Particularly in the United States, it was projected that most children are likely to live in a single-parent home by the time they grow up.

UNICEF (1995) attempted to do another analysis of women’s economic responsibilities. It was found that even in households where fathers are present, male unemployment and underemployment have contributed to making mothers the primary or sole source of income. Further analysis revealed that women earn less than men do but contribute a higher percentage of their income to promoting children’s well-being than men do. Studies in Brazil, Chile, Cote d’Ivoire and Guatemala have shown that mothers are more likely than fathers to use their income to benefit their children. UNICEF (1995) reported the effect of single parenting on children. Female-headed households are more likely to be poorer than those with two parents. They determined from this report that a single income is not always sufficient to support the rising costs of general facilities. A further finding in the publication indicates how women are generally employed in low-income jobs that offer little security and few benefits. As a result, poverty can affect the physical growth of children, slow down their educational development and increase chances of neglect and abuse. In another study, UNICEF (1990) reported on the cost of single parenting in Australia, Canada and in some Nepalese villages. The study shows that single-parent families are poor, particularly in Nepal, where 75 percent of out-of-wedlock children do not reach their second birthday. However, the study reports that in
some cultures, children living with their mothers alone appear to be better off than those living with both parents. In Kenya and Malawi, a smaller percentage of children in female-headed households are malnourished than in male-headed households. In Botswana, children in female-headed households receive more education than children in male-headed households. The report assumed that this is probably because women seem to give higher priority to children’s needs than do men. They concluded that when men are absent, women have control over their incomes and can allocate it as they see it fit.

*Gender Roles Perpetuate Inequality*

In order to understand how gender roles perpetuate inequality in the care of children, UNICEF (1995) examined a variety of economic, psychological and sociological factors that affect fathers’ ability and willingness to support their children economically and emotionally. The factors include employment status, relationship with the child’s mother, personal maturity and childhood experiences. The most powerful of the influences are cultural expectations and traditional stereotypes that limit opportunities for both sexes. The report describes cultural expectations that exist all over the world in which men are the providers and women the nurturers. These gender roles are assigned at birth and taught throughout adulthood. The report indicates that girls are particularly disadvantaged right from the earliest years; they are socialized to submit to others and are often kept away from school to care for their younger siblings and perform household chores. This study shows how gender roles are strongly embedded in African culture. The report described how gender roles could be embedded in schools; both textbooks and teachers perpetuate the traditional roles for males and females. The mass media further reinforce traditional stereotypes and inequalities.
Benefits of Socializing Children by Sex

The psychoanalytic theory of Freud cited in Berk (1999) described the benefits of socializing children according to gender. Children form a super ego or conscience through identification with the same sex parents. They take the parents’ characteristics into their personality and as a result adopt the moral and gender standards of conscience, painful feelings of guilt occur. Similarly, Erickson cited in Berk (1999), building on Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, explained that gender stereotype beliefs and behaviours are adapted in the same way as other social standards. For example, through identification with the same sex parents in early childhood, children adopt the same pattern of gender stereotype of the society. But the child needs more than gender identification to survive, develop and grow. In another report, Berk (1999) described a notion that children develop a sense of identity when they join their father or mother (same sex) to do a task and discover what they can do with the help of same sex parents. Thus, the societal gender role are learned by the children.

Mwamwenda (1995) cited (Bandura 1977; Grusec 1988) that the social learning theorist believes that children learn to act morally largely through modeling, by observing and imitating models who demonstrate appropriate behaviours. In another vein, Mwamwenda (1995) analyzed factors that influence social learning. He explained that people like to identify with parents of the same sex so that they can develop attitudes, values, traits and behaviours that are socially acceptable. This shows the value of being socialized by the same sex.

UNICEF (1995) concluded that to overcome gender inequality, roles have to be redefined. The article examines how a lack of preparation for fatherhood and a lack of
knowledge about children have hampered men’s involvement in many cultures. Furthermore, it noted the limited institutions that promote fathers’ role and participation and the barriers that prevent fathers’ child interactions.

In order to determine gender inequality in some cultures, UNICEF (1995) looked at some studies examining underlying attitudes towards children in their culture. In China it was found that both men and women believed that fathers are inherently incapable of handling infants. In some areas in West Africa, contact between fathers and a very young child is a taboo. As a result men feel incapable of caring for young children. Further findings reveal that of four-year-old children in 11 countries (Belgium, China, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Spain, Thailand and USA), on the average, children spent at least five of their waking hours under their mother’s care and less than one hour in their father’s care.

In this article UNICEF (1995) reports studies by Bruce et al. (1995) of families in India, Jamaica and the United States of America and found that the amount of caregiving provided by the mother is more or less the same regardless of whether she works outside the home or not. Mothers still hold 90 per cent of the childrearing load. However, with new expectations, UNICEF (1995) reported that boys need to begin to develop nurturing capabilities and share the responsibilities of caring for siblings at an early age, so that as adults they will be responsible and caring fathers. To promote gender equality in families, the report indicates mothers need to encourage both boys and men to interact with young children. Grandfathers, uncles and older brothers should also be encouraged to participate in child care.
Benefits of Men’s Participation

To gain insight into the benefits of men’s participation in childcare, UNICEF (1995) reported benefits to the child, the mother and the father. Benefits to the child include additional economic support that makes a significant difference in the life of the child, increasing his or her chances for improved nutrition, health and education opportunities. Furthermore, a secure emotional attachment to the father enhances the child’s emotional well-being.

The benefits of men’s participation in childcare as cited by UNICEF (1995) cross cultural boundaries. For example, in the United States, children under five years were less apt to behave in stereotyped ways. In Barbados a study revealed improved performance in school. However, contrary to the findings in Barbados, studies in Brazil found that children living with their biological or adoptive fathers were more likely to fail in school than those living without them. Benefits to women include providing a better quality of life for the mother and all family members with additional income and support from the man. Men’s benefits include emotional satisfaction and increased self-confidence. Also, fathers who have exclusive responsibility for a child developed their caregiving skills and childrearing confidence.

Bruce et al. (1995) reported on a number of initiatives that focused attention on the rights and responsibilities of all family members. They include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which protects the best interest of the child within the family and is aimed at ensuring the right to income from both parents, regardless of the parents’ marital or sexual relationship. Another initiative is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which affirms
the equal responsibility of both men and women in family life. This initiative affirms a woman’s right to support from her child’s father as well as gender equity within the family. Finally, the initiative will support a man’s right to develop his nurturing self and to enjoy warm, affectionate relationships with his children.

Gosh (2001), in his article “Involving Fathers in Community-based Early Childhood Development” discussed approaches that have proven successful. His report shows clearly that it was easy to involve both mothers and younger siblings in the implementation of the program. Fathers were not easy to engage. However, he found that a strategy of involving fathers by meeting them in their social settings and working with them to build a suitable intervention plan that meets their expectations and needs proved effective. The strategy helped fathers to be more involved in the project and each had started working in the various activities of the fathers’ club.

Gosh (2001) concluded that to involve fathers in any activity, one needs to recognize at the beginning that there are several barriers that must be overcome in order to succeed. Just as in any participatory approach, he indicated that planning appropriate activities with the fathers in a participative way could help meet their needs and therefore resolve the problem identified.

Factors that Influence a Father’s Commitment to the Child

Engle (2001) reviewed a number of studies carried out in several countries on factors that influence fathers’ commitment to their children and theories that could explain patterns of commitment. The review concentrates on non-Western countries and culture. She reported major factors that determine fathers’ commitment to their children, such as cultural norms in the society towards a fathering role and the economic ability of
the father to support a family. She gave an example of patrilineal ethnic groups in Cameroon where fathers provide children with lineage connections but have little contact with them, while mothers have the responsibility of providing food and economic support for both fathers and the children. Engle (2001) reported the concern of many women that fathers should be much more involved in childcare and nurturing than previously, although actual change may be slow. That the economic ability that has resulted in a father’s responsibility has been less is also true in the Western perspective. Fathers’ commitment to their children has also been found to be associated with husband-wife relationships.

The review in the report offered a theoretical framework that supports the type of commitment that the responsibility to the child and the relationship to their mother are complementary. This shows that mothers play a prominent role in helping their husbands to be more involved in childcare. Engle (2001) concluded that there is very little knowledge on factors that could influence a father’s commitment to children. Although fathers in most cultures do not perform childcare activities, programs are beginning to recognize fathers’ responsibility.

The Role of Fathers in a Belgian Context

In a review of a Western perspective of men in childcare, Peeters (2003) conducted an analysis of childcare in the Flemish community of Belgium. He described the gender genealogy in the Belgian context of what fathers are expected to do. He cited Dr. Benjamin Spock’s childcare handbook, written in 1948, which was solely meant for women. The only role that was assigned to fathers was to teach their children how to ride a bicycle. His report indicates that a father of young children in Belgium was not
expected to do more than that. However, he reported that with new expectations, fathers were to take on the same responsibilities with the mother with respect to their infants. To be able to carry out this difficult task, Peeters stressed the need for the young child to have a role model. He said this was a problem because for many young fathers their own father was not a role model. Peeters (2003) reported that in 1993, The European Commission Network on Childcare invited experts from around the Western world to converge in Ravenna. The purpose was to share their thoughts on the subject of “men as carers.” The experts warned that any moves to involve men in childcare would have little effect if there were not male childcare workers employed at daycare centres. The underlying idea was that men would serve as role models for young fathers (and their children) in the daycare centres and thus a new culture of childcare would be created. This would enable future generations to be able to share household tasks and childcare more quickly. The effect would be positive in terms of providing equal opportunities for men and women throughout the entire society.

The Belgian study also reported the findings of Tavecchio (1979, cited in Peeters, 2003), who took part in the childcare research project. He reported that in all the daycare centres he visited there was not a single man to be found. Furthermore, he studied the legal texts on the subject and found out that only female personnel were to be employed to work with infants. He concluded from this that the time was more than ripe to motivate young men, as well as women, to take a job in childcare.

Lamb (1975, cited in Peeters, 2003) was the first to call attention to the contribution of fathers to the development of the child. Lamb’s studies indicated that if fathers were important for the rearing of young children, then professional childcare
needed male educators. To implement the new finding was difficult because the legal stipulation excluded men from childcare. This remained on the books in Flanders until in 1983 when the law was changed, allowing men to be accepted into careers in childcare. The report further states that in 1986, the effect of the new regulations was limited. The number of male employees within the Flemish childcare system remained negligible. Ten years later, another study was conducted by Fred Devin (1994, cited in Peeters, 2003) on the number of men employed in childcare centres in Flanders. He found out that only one percent of men worked in the centres at that point. Several studies were conducted up to 2002 and all still show very low percentages of men employed in childcare centres. The report confirmed that childcare in Flanders is still indisputably a job for women.

Cameron, Moss and Owen (1997, cited in Peeters, 2003) attempted to find out the concept of gender that a culture attributes to men and women. At the cultural level, childcare is performed based on gender identity through specific cultural constructions of the roles, tasks and manners of men and women within a specific context of their work in childcare. Furthermore, Peeters’ (2003) report indicates that gender components also play a role at the institutional level, which has an input on the historical and pedagogical understandings of why childcare exists, how it is constructed and organized, and what is gender appropriate – understandings which have evolved through practice and policy over time. He concluded that this was probably the primary reason for the limited number of men in childcare and probably also for the meagre involvement of fathers in daycare centres.

Peeters (2003) reported feelings of exclusion among male childcare employees in their narratives during a series of workshops in the Netherlands and Ireland. Their report
indicates that classic gender identity is constructed on the basis of differences based on the labelling of others as different, which means a man is different from a woman in every aspect. Services for young children were excluding fathers. Questions and information regarding young children were referred to the mothers.

In order to gain insights into the profile of men in childcare, Peeters’ (2003), gave an account of recent quantitative as well as qualitative studies conducted by Kind en Gezin (Child and Family) and by the Training and Resource Centre for Childcare (University of Gent). The result was discussed in the light of international literature on gender segregation in childcare. It was discovered that there were few men who have gone into childcare by training. Most had done something else and had only later realized that they really enjoy working with children. As a result of the profile, a campaign was launched to focus on youth to convince them that a job in childcare could be an attractive option for them and could also offer an interesting perspective for men.

The findings in the research show that some men were convinced and made a decision to take a childcare job. However, they had to put up with a great deal of opposition within their environment. Those who received education in a childcare training college describe the course as exclusively geared towards women. Two of the men cited an example in a biology class where the menstrual cycle was discussed but nothing about male sexuality. They concluded that childcare organizations should strive to avoid exclusion of men in childcare and need to get rid of the institutions that are based on one single identity – be it gender, culture or ethnicity. All these have emotional, cultural, ethical and historical foundations and all can be contested. They determined from this that each single identity could be discussed through dialogue and debate in a
participative way. As the result of the findings, gender-neutral policy was created in Pen Green Center, which had an equal number of male and female employees (Ghindi, 1995, cited in Peeters, 2003). In order to avoid excluding men it was concluded that co-workers in childcare centres would be role models for the fathers who bring their children to the centre and also make the centre more “father friendly.”

Furthermore, in the Flemish community of Belgium recently, the legislative context became more favourable towards men in childcare. The government approved new regulations concerning quality. As a result, active attempts were made to hire males as well as females and other female ethnic minorities’ as well childcare workers in staff functions. The public agency responsible for childcare changed the name of the profession from “childcare worker” to “daycare educator.” This expanded the gender-neutral perspective to include the educational aspect of the job by increasing the salaries in daycare centres by approximately 30 percent. There is at the moment a shortage of childcare workers in the labour market.

Men’s Contribution to the Family

In their report on men’s contribution to the family in a pilot study of early childhood development programs from the 11 Caribbean countries, Brown and Chevannes (2001) indicate that the care of children is, as in most countries in the world, a gender segregation job that is very significant from birth. Brown and Chevannes (2001) used a 1987 survey report from the Caribbean to explore the relationship of what mothers and fathers contribute to children. They reported that despite growing recognition and support of organized childcare programs around the Caribbean, on average 85 percent of children below the age of 4 remain at home in the care of parents and other caregivers.
The report also shows that parenting education efforts in the region were primarily directed towards women and teenage girls, that there was nothing on men and the family, which shows that women contribute greatly to the care of children.

Brown and Chevannes (2001) also examined men’s contribution to the family in Jamaica/Caribbean. The report indicates that a man’s obligation to his family is that of providing financially. There were very low expectations of fathers playing a role in raising children. Where a father is able to provide financial support he becomes the rightful head of the family and is expected to be a guide to his children.

The report indicates two factors that are significant in understanding men’s expected roles of fatherhood. The first factor has to do with socioeconomic support. The second factor includes getting a man to prove his manhood by fathering children. They concluded that self-definition of man is derived from paternity, although the ability to provide has very little significance in accepting paternity.

Additional reports on the survey findings described men’s participation in doing things like tidying, playing and reasoning with their children and helping regularly with their homework are perceived by both men and women as women’s work and are also not yet valued by men. Man is seen as breadwinner thus family head, which implies authority and decision-making status. Women expect their husbands to be the provider and protector of his family.

Other important issues identified in the Jamaican studies pointed to some lessons learned that men feel pain at their shortcomings as fathers and that their relationship with their children is highly dependent upon their relationship with the mother. The report indicates that women’s new partners know little about the quality of step-fathering and
that both men and women are calling for changes in the division of labour and responsibilities in the matter of childrearing.

The studies looked at the expectations in two societies of men’s participation in childrearing practices. From the studies we can conclude that economic and other factors influence the time men spend with their children. Cultural factors have the biggest impact; for example, in many societies, participation in childcare by fathers is limited by strongly held beliefs that close father-child relationships are not appropriate. One root cause of this, as confirmed by the studies, is gender stereotyping that children become aware of early in their lives.

*Getting Men Involved*

In an attempt to strengthen father-child relationships, Levine (1994) reported a number of initiatives. They include Fathers, Inc. in Kingston, Jamaica, established in 1991 with a membership of 80 men in their 20s and 30s. Members serve as role models in their communities and developed activities aimed at changing traditional attitudes such as volunteer work in government childcare homes, peer counselling training, a workshop on violence against women, and a proactive radio sport. In Cameroon and Kenya, Fathers, Inc. sponsored a major musical concert to mark Father’s Day. Four years later after the lunch, Fathers, Inc. has provided impact of the group to date in which they had sponsored an essay contest among schools, asking participants to state why their fathers should be named “Father of the Year.” Considerable media attention was given to this contest, which culminates on Father’s Day each year. As a result, the profile of the responsible caring fathers who have won each year has provided public models for the kind of fathers young men would desire to have.
Initiatives in the United States include the responsive father’s program in the Philadelphia Children’s Network, which teaches young men to become better fathers and spouses through counselling services and job search assistance. Participants are between 16 and 26 years and meet weekly to discuss childbearing, male-female relationships, the job market and self-esteem. As a result, men have been playing a more active role in family life.

A contest in Thai Binh province in Viet Nam has encouraged men to share women’s responsibilities in bringing up children. More than 17,600 people, mostly fathers and grandfathers, participated in the contest, which tested them on messages from Facts for Life. Participants in this contest surveyed their communities to observe family practices. A survey conducted two years later to evaluate the impact of the contest revealed that men’s knowledge has significantly improved regarding nutrition and health care of their children, grandchildren, wives and themselves.

Finally, in Argentina, a three-week general campaign in 1994 helped create public awareness of the need to share responsibilities between the sexes both inside and outside the home. These men now assist in the household chores. They ensure that everything is not left for women to do as it was previously.

UNICEF (1995) reported government efforts in Australia that deducted child support payments from non-resident fathers’ wages as maintenance payments to their children. In Sweden, parents are supported through a policy financed by employers who provide paid leave for a total of fifteen months when a child is born. Both parents are allowed to stay home full- or part-time and receive benefits. This has increased financial benefits towards childcare and provides time for both parents to take care of the child.
Based on the research findings of VBJK-University of Gent, Peeters (2003) inspired a campaign for men in childcare in Flanders. Important partners from the childcare sector include governmental organizations, Kind en Gezin, and two experts on gender and equal opportunities. Devin of the Flemish Center for Population and Family studies who did a research study on this topic in 1994 was also called in.

The first objective was to create a campaign on the theme “men and childcare,” inspired by similar campaigns in Denmark. The report analyzed the impact of the Denmark campaign that shows more men in care of school-aged children and in the care of young children. Peeters (2003) determined from this that it is important to create an image of the male childcare worker that is different than the family image that is associated with caring for children. However, he did see the need to use objects like photos and texts to identify aspects of childcare professions that are attractive to men. During the recruitment of students for the training course, posters and folders were widely used for the campaign throughout the region of Flanders.

Peeters (2003) was of the view that the campaign, which began early in 2003 and ended in November of the same year, needed to stress to parents the importance of male educators, since the majority of parents had a problem accepting a man as a caregiver of their young child. He concluded that the campaign has so far successfully put the theme “men in childcare” on the agenda and is sensitizing policy makers, parents and childcare workers to the idea. The researchers hope that through the campaign an impetus could be given in allowing men to play an equal role in the raising of young children as fathers and as professional caregivers.
Although fathers in many cultures do not participate in childrearing practices, programs are beginning to bring equity into families, helping men to accept new roles and reinforce positive ones. Through such initiatives, men can become valuable resources as educators that can build stronger home-school partnerships aimed at strengthening family units that will help young children achieve success as they progress through the educational system.

Summary

In the theoretical framework, UNICEF (1995) reported on the effects of single parenthood on children. Female-headed households are more likely to be poor, with a single income which is not always sufficient to support the general cost of facilities in the family. This type of situation can negatively affect children’s well-being as well as the family’s and increase the chances of neglect and abuse. Also reported are the types of single parenthood families that are evolving: marital dissolution including divorce; temporary separation or widowhood from wars which have left many women to care for their children alone; polygamy; single parenting through immigration, civil unrest and non-marital childbearing. Some of the factors that influence gender roles which perpetuate inequality were also looked at. They include employment status, relationship with the child’s mothers, personal maturity and childhood experiences, and cultural expectations and traditional stereotypes that limit opportunities for both sexes. The article further reported the benefits to the child, mother and father of men’s participation. Benefits to children include additional financial support, which makes a significant difference in the life of a child.
In another report, Engle (2001) reports clearly that fathers in most cultures have little contact with their children and do not perform much childcare, although programs are beginning to increase fathers’ responsibilities.

Peeters (2003) did a study in order to gain more insight into profile of men in childcare and found out that most services for young children do not involve fathers. In another related study Brown and Chevannes (2001) show that care of young children was left primarily in the hands of women and girls. The result of the two studies agreed with what is empirically reported that in most cultures there are very low expectations of fathers playing a role in raising children.

**Conclusion**

From the review we can conclude that the view expressed by other cultures and societies is that fathers have to be encouraged to be significantly informed in the lives of their children. But then very little is known about the cultural differences, the impact of different religious beliefs and difference across cultures in paternal behaviour. The indigenous African knowledge and experience are not sufficiently available and even where they are, they are often filtered and interpreted by non-indigenous researchers. In Nigeria there are some good attitudes and practices among indigenous fathers that are being lost through Westernization but not documented. This project will set out to investigate the indigenous knowledge of men’s role in care of children in a community in Nigeria by discussing with the people concerned. This will add more information across cultures in paternal behaviour.
CHAPTER 3: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The study seeks to investigate fathers’ role as participants in child upbringing and whether these roles have intergenerational family support, with grandfathers playing roles as well. The purpose of the study is to assess the role of men in child upbringing. How do men describe their role within the family and their attitude to childcare?

Study Design

A brief description of the procedures adapted in the study will be discussed. This includes University of Victoria (UVic) ethics requirements, techniques used for data collection (i.e., interview techniques), description of the sample selected for the study, description of the respondents in terms of their characteristics (sex, occupation, age, location, etc.), as well as the strategy adapted for the analysis of data collected.

UVic Ethics Review

As the first step of the project, the project supervisor discussed with the researcher the expectations of the UVic ethics review process and what documentation was to be completed for approval by the university. The purpose is for the researcher to understand the rationale behind ethical research as a requirement for the researcher to undertake with the UVic before proceeding. Information on achieving informed consent includes a brief description and the process that will be followed in achieving informed consent. The method that will be used to collect the data was outlined and the copy of text that will be communicated to the participants. The title of the research and the purpose was also filled in the form. In the form were also completed participants’ part in the research and what they will contribute and why is it necessary. In addition how the participants will access a
copy of the final report. The completed form was forwarded to the ethics review committee for approval before the research was undertaken.

Sample Size

In the selection of the sample size, the theoretical framework chosen by the study was used to guide the selection. A total of 20 males, all fathers, were selected based on purposive selection and they were all willing to participate and contribute. The age of the fathers sampled ranged between 30 and 75 years. The selection was done as equitably as possible using a willing representative of each family group within a settlement who has not less than two children.

The village has 20 family large groups (also here called clans). Each clan was asked to submit two willing participants who have not less than two children. The 40 names were submitted to the research team, who further subdivided into smaller groups since the first selection was too large for a focus group discussion. For example, young fathers who are between the ages 30 and 40, medium group who are within the ages 45-50 and experienced fathers aged 60 and above who are ready to participate. Twenty members selected by the team were presented. The sample was made up of the three age groups described above. The assumption is that men aged 60 and above must have practical experience in terms of family life and childrearing practices and they will have the ability to provide rich information on the area of inquiry. They were viewed as experts by virtue of their roles. Again, the selection was done as equitably as possible as desired by the tradition to select a representative from each family group within the settlement who were willing to participate. The study group sat in a semi-circle by age, with the oldest to the right and the youngest to the left facing the team of facilitators.
All sample population resides in Shanna, which is a small Tiv community of about 7,000 people. They gathered together and chatted informally with one another to validate personal experiences and practices within the community. After the first day of the focus group discussion, two participants dropped out and only 18 men continued to the end.

Procedures

Because the study topic has to do with men’s role and the researcher is a woman, a local facilitator and a note-taker were drawn from the community into the field team; these were men who assisted in conducting the focus group discussion by taking notes while the discussion was going on. Their selection was based on the assumption that the men would be equally comfortable speaking with a male counterpart like themselves. It was important that the facilitator understood the language very well to guide the proceedings of the discussion and to gather information from the discussion, since the researcher does not communicate well in the language but understands it well.

A one-day training/orientation was conducted on the purpose of the study and how to facilitate a probe in a group discussion. The facilitator rehearsed on how to introduce the discussion, ask questions, ensure full participation and also how to ensure that participants who might not want to continue at any point in time or who wanted to decline the invitation at any point in time felt free to do so without remorse and fervour. A comfortable and secure environment for the focus group discussion was selected together with the participants.
**Questionnaire**

The researcher developed an open-ended questionnaire and this was used as a guide to conduct the discussion with the fathers (see Appendix I). The questionnaire consisted of sections on general perceptions of children, role and responsibilities of fathers in the family, attitudes towards childcare, and factors that are likely to encourage or discourage fathers from participating in childcare. Items in the questionnaire included description of the fathers’ roles and their changing roles as well as attitudes on the care of children of different ages and sex and the reaction of the society on fathers’ participation in childcare.

**Data Collection Method**

The data was collected through a focus group discussion. The purpose was to converse with fathers in greater depth regarding their attitudes and roles in childcare and how they describe that role. Information from the group discussion came from interaction among members of the group and their points of view. The group discussion was a rewarding technique to elicit information in that regard. The discussion assisted in eliciting information on actual knowledge and experiences. In addition, to facilitate accurate data collection and analysis, the focus group discussion was documented and recorded through note-taking by a note-taker and an assistant as well as by a video camcorder. The camcorder captured non-verbal expressions and these will be useful for future analysis. The videotapes were also used for analysis of data.
Informed Consent

The data collection began with an oral informed consent to ensure that participants understood the purpose of the research, how they were chosen to participate, that their participation was voluntary without any penalty for refusing to participate, and that they could quit in the group at any time without any penalty whatsoever. The leader of the group signed the consent documents on behalf of the others. This is appropriate in the Tiv culture. They were also told how long the data collection would last and informed of the data collection procedures using photographs, videotapes and notes. They were also told that a note-taker would write down opinions about what the group thinks during the sessions. They were assured that their true names and any other thing, be it personal or not, would only be recorded with their express permission and that a copy of the text would be communicated to the participants. The outline above was fully explained to the participants in their native language.

Discussion Protocols

Five to ten minutes at the beginning of the session were used to build trust and put the participants at ease. The facilitators, the note-taker and the researcher introduced themselves and described what the focus group was all about, further explained the purpose of the group and assured the participants that the session was for research purposes only. It was also explained that they should be free to share ideas. It was not a test, so there were no right or wrong answers. We assured them that we were all “brothers and sisters.”
Discussion Procedure

In conducting any form of discussion in the Tiv land, particularly in the Shanna community, a spokesman is chosen by the participants; this person is supposed to be well versed in the ways of the Shanna tribe. The spokesman leads in the discussion and any person who has a different opinion or factual information is free to discuss it after the spokesman has finished talking. Such a person will address the eldest person as of that time and seek permission to “take the floor.”

During the focus group discussion, however, since the issue of discussion was made, the discussants were told they did not need to rely on any spokesman. Everybody was free to indicate his intention to contribute. The spokesman opened discussion on the first person and invited anybody to contribute by offering their suggestions or information. A lot of probing and repetition of questions was done to understand some of the answers and to clarify any misconceptions. This procedure was followed to the end of the session as the study team urged the people to talk. At the end, the spokesman wound up by thanking the study team and the members of the focus group. He expressed the wish that the outcome of the discussion would prove beneficial to the community.

The focus group discussion was held at a typical Tiv compound under a tree. The study group sat in a tradition circle according to age grades. Background information on each participant was collected with the participant’s informed consent before the discussion began. Each participant introduced himself orally to the researcher.

Analysis of Data

At the end of each interview, the facilitator gave a summary of what he thought he might have discussed with them to clarify any misconceptions. Data analysis began at the
end of each discussion session with the study team. Notes were summarized including mental ones; impressions about what each revealed about the study problem were also looked at. The research team made interpretations and tentative conclusions to the notes and new questions were formulated to observe in the next sessions.

On completion of the focus group discussion, the team met to write and organize notes into major topic areas. Key questions or topics from the discussion were written on separate sheets. For data that did not fit under those headings, new sheets labelled with appropriate headings were created. Organized notes were reviewed to see whether any emerging patterns could be identified that confirmed or refuted any of the assumptions about the research questions. Finally, summaries of major findings for each question were written, with some participants’ quotes supporting the findings.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The finding of the research will be presented by topics: how men view children, their contribution within the family, their opinion of childcare and how children would react to a change in the father’s role. The insights of what each topic means will be shared. All the names used in the study are fictitious so as to protect the persons involved, but all situations reported are true life.

Fathers’ View of Children

The results of the discussion show that the majority of fathers in Shanna community view children as the most necessary human resource that a man cannot dispense with. The fathers interviewed proffered reasons why children are invaluable. Children are seen as giving the guarantee of the preservation of one’s lineage. For example, when they survive the parents, they carry and maintain the family name. Mr. Swem, who is about 65 years old, said: “A man without children is like a farmer who eats all his corn without keeping some seeds. He will have nothing to plant next year.”

The group agreed unanimously that children provide invaluable farm labour. They assist in all domestic chores and go on errands. In their old age, parents rely on their children as their pension gratuity and social security. All the men said they look forward to being buried by their children when the time is right. Mr. Ker, a 55-year-old father of six daughters and one son agreed with the others on the need for children to bury their fathers. He said that when he had his fourth daughter in a row, he named her Nyieii, which means, “Who will bury me?”
It is generally held in the community that it is the duty of sons to bury their parents. This also illustrates the people’s need for having children in the preferred gender ratio of more boys to girls. According to the group, a man with a reversed ratio or no children at all usually marries more wives to improve his luck. The group agreed that such a man should go and seek for medical advice from a native doctor or a spiritualist to change the obviously unwanted situation. They all agreed on that because of the values they have placed on children. The childless widow usually produces children who are accepted as legitimate heirs of her deceased husband. According to the group, legitimate children must be produced to sustain the family name.

The discussion further revealed that villages are usually named after individuals who are survived by children. However, if a man dies childless, an institution or market (mall) can be named after him to immortalize him. The market “Bunaka” not far from Shanna is named after a childless man.

Most fathers in Shanna naturally accept and discuss children, according to them, if the issue at stake involves family affairs. A man and his wife or wives usually settle for exemplary minor discipline matters. More serious issues like marriage and death are community issues. Mr Tivkaa said: “Women are not allowed to attend such discussion meetings except they are expressly summoned to give information even if it were their children.”

Another man, Mr. Ityav, said: “When a girl in the community marries out, all the mothers in the community contribute foodstuffs and kitchen utensils for her to take to her new home.” In the same vein, the men all agreed that all the members of the girl’s community share the entertainment provided by the new son-in-law’s community. Except
for such entertainments, women do not attend discussions on children, except they are expressly summoned to give information.

According to the discussants, it is the man who will make decisions concerning how many children he would like to have and that a woman has no business with it. “A man marries a woman to produce children and things like cooking and cleaning are secondary.” A 50-year-old man, Mr Tsebo, said:

Even without a wife my mother cooked, washed for me and looked after me right from birth. But of course she could not produce children for me. The need for children is why I married a wife. A woman is expected to produce children until menopause.

Mr. Jagu, a 45-year-old father said: “My wife has no business with whether to continue or stop childbirth. I welcome all the children God can give me.” Even those with one wife still spoke in the same vein. A young father of 40 years, Mr. Jagu, who is a graduate teacher married with three sons and two daughters, had a different view. He said:

I had planned to have seven children but had decided to stop, because a medical doctor told me that after the fifth child, my wife could die if she had more children. Because I could not bear the thought of losing my wife, I agreed with her and so I have accepted to stop.

Despite the fact that all the fathers recognized the need to marry and the positive values of having children, a 70-year-old grandfather, Mr. Chintam, lamented openly that:
Without children you are the unhappy man. If you have them they can give you trouble. Having children is like keeping a beehive. You enjoy the sweetness of the honey but you must be prepared for the pains of the bee sting.”

Mr. Stebo agreed with the grandfather. He said:

Having children is like having and using firewood. You cook with the firewood and warm your bodies with it but must be prepared to involuntarily inhale smoke into your nose and take the smoke into your eyes. Having children is sweet and bitter, good and bad.

In summary, all the fathers interviewed agreed that while having children can be both good and bad, the good always outweighs the bad. Having children becomes bad, however, when the children defy correction, become morally bankrupt, involve themselves in anti-societal vices. The family and the immediate community groans and suffers.

Fathers’ Contribution Within the Family

All the fathers interviewed agreed that it is the father’s duty to protect the family against any harm, be it physical or the unseen (attacks by witchcraft practices). The man must provide adequate housing for his household. Each wife must have her own house (a native round hut) and kitchen. As the children reach puberty, separate housing for the boys must be provided to separate them from the females.

According to the group, the father prepares the farmland, plants yams together with his wife, and leaves it for her to tend and manage. She feeds her children and her husband from the proceeds of the farm.

A 54-year-old man, Mr. Ukegh, said:
A woman is also allowed to plant other crops like beans, vegetables, cassava, guinea corn which she can sell to raise money and buy household needs like soap, salt, kitchen ingredients and any other vegetable she does not plant. The father also provides clothing for his wife and children.

A 35-year-old man said: “A man who fails to fulfill his role as a provider demeans the integrity of a father in the community and is frowned upon.”

The discussion also revealed that the role of a father within the family includes discipline. He advises his children on the tribal tradition of doing things properly. This includes greeting elders and understanding the family lineage properly. Mr. Swem said: “We don’t want them to lose the traditional attributes. It is for this reason that we teach them our language and customs.”

All of the men agreed that the father teaches his sons how to farm. In the process the boys learn to use machetes, hoes and axes. The father also teaches them how to use spears, bows and arrows to hunt. In this way, the boys, when they become men, can properly use these implements to provide for and protect their family in the event of a physical attack. A 75-year-old man, Mr. Chintam, said:

I taught my sons how to sit in a group and eat. I ensure they are neither greedy nor too slow at eating. I taught them to wash their hands before starting to eat and at the end of the meal. I ensure that they do not talk while eating as it may cause choking and the community also considers it bad manners.

Among the discussion groups were men who were fathers but were recognized as grandfathers. These grandfathers in the community are fathers of course. They are the surviving custodians of tribal norms and cultural practices. They have their own roles in
the family and the community. According to them, because they are usually at home during farming periods, the duty of minding or looking after children who are too young to go to the farm market or even school is shared with the grandmother. Younger caregivers assist them. Mr. Ukaha, a 70-year-old man who is a grandfather, said:

When my father became older and could really not do farm work again, he started staying at home while others went to the farm or even market. It became his duty among others to look after or supervise the children left at home with me. He would sit in his hut and all the children in the compound would be brought to him. He would count them by names and numbers. To keep them occupied, he would tell them animal stories with morals, teach the history and the lineage. In the process, they would learn to sing tribal songs and proverbs within the community. If any child wanted to go to the toilet, he would assign an older child to accompany her or him and ensure that they come back safely and promptly. He and the grandmother would usually supervise the cooking of breakfast in his hut, usually boiled or roasted yams, and would equally share out the food while reserving some for the younger ones who might have fallen asleep. He taught them during that period how to love one another by caring for the younger ones and sharing out food, water and any other delicacy. This was done together with my mother. During the absence of the fathers and mothers he became the “sole judge.” He would receive all complaints, listen to both the complainants and the respondents, and then try to investigate the best he could and give a fair judgment explaining his reasons why.
Another grandfather, 65-year-old Mr. Songo, chirped in by adding that his father and his brother (both grandparents) who knew how to use the carving axes and could also weave mats usually occupied themselves during their stay at home by making hoes and their spare handles and weaving mats. In the process, the children would sit around and enjoy watching the evolving shapes. Those that wanted to learn would be allowed to learn the art.

According to the group, grandparents are considered the immediate earthly protectors of the family and its successors. Just like the grandfather has the duty of overseeing the welfare and safety of the family, the grandmother shares his duty with him in a lower capacity. Usually grandmothers stay at home with the children more than mothers, fathers and grandfathers. Even while they were mothers, society demanded that it was their duty to look after children and besides it was considered bad conduct for a woman to be seen wandering around too much. It is therefore the duty of a grandmother to oversee the welfare of her grandchildren. Grandmothers are the depositories of traditional knowledge about children’s sickness and grandma’s cure or first aid before the situation worsens and requires more serious treatment. While at home with her grandchildren, she closely observes them and takes note of changes of mood in them. Grandmothers always keep food delicacies, which are usually the first antidote to treat what appears to be the problem. Mr. Swem said:

An observant grandmother would call a moody child and inquire, ‘Are you hungry?’ ‘Do you a headache?’ ‘Is it stomach ache?’ ‘Did anybody beat you?’ She would feel the body for a rise in temperature. If this were confirmed she would know what herbal medicine to administer. Having observed children since
her motherhood days (which could have started at the age of 14 years), she would know what to do.

It was explained by the discussant that a good boy or girl who is close to his or her grandmother had a chance to learn what she knew. The grandmother who is a crafts person taught the same to her grandchildren. Some crafts, like pottery and weaving, were gender oriented. Pottery was a woman’s art and good little girls would start learning it by fetching the clay for the grandmother. She would be taught how to knead it into a smooth stoneless paste ready for moulding into the desired shape, depending on its intended use.

Since grandmothers know children’s ailments and their cures, grandchildren close to her can be taught how to gather the correct herbs and prepare such remedies. Some grandmothers who do not find a good grandchild to pass on such knowledge die and leave with all their knowledge.

Having learned from their grandparents, grandmothers are the traditional birth attendants. They advise on the best local food materials which are good for expectant mothers and those that are good for the nursing mothers and those that are good for the infants.

Just like grandfathers are losing out to new times, grandmothers are not faring otherwise. The hospitals have taken over the role of midwives. They are also losing out to new entertainment programs or none at all. Grandchildren now have to go to school and have little or no time to learn tradition crafts at their grandmother’s knee.

The discussants lamented that the change is getting more drastic as educated parents are leaving the village with their nuclear families in search of jobs and better living condition in the urban centres.
The generality of the discussants however raised the observation that in their community, these things are no longer common practice. The need to raise more money to meet financial demands is forcing grandparents to go out in search of money. Though traditional crafts are still pursued, factory-made ones are now found to be more acceptable. Westernization is taking over and families are becoming more nuclear. Community, though desirable, is fighting the tide of change.

Another role grandfathers play involves the handling and organizing of marriages, birth and deaths. Under traditional role rites, as long as he is alive, a grandfather is the father of the family and still seen to protect and provide for his larger family. Whatever his immediate sons perform is done under his supervision and authority. A 60-year-old grandfather, Mr. Aber, said:

Whenever any of my three sons would want to get married, a girl would be identified by the spouse and will be informed. I will go to the family of the girl and introduce myself as the main suitor. If my offer of marriage is accepted, my children would then hand over to me the dowry, pigs, salt, mother-in-law’s cloth as demanded by the girl’s family. On the appointed day I will invite one of my own brothers, uncles or a male cousin to accompany me to the girl’s family with the items. The two families will sit and discuss the need for any objection to the union. If there were no objections, I would be asked to present the marriage items. After the items are accepted, the marriage is as good as completed. My family would depart without the girl. After a day or two, a delegation will leave my village to go and bring the new wife, usually in the night, with fanfare and singing
announcing the girls arrival as “my” new wife. The girl’s lineage will escort her right to her new husband’s house. I would then hand her over to my son.”

Mr. Swem, a grandfather, said:

This is done by practice because the tribe believes that a woman is like a tiger, leopard and a lion. You cannot determine what such animals are capable of doing. They must be “tracked” down before they can be killed and eaten. If a child does not involve the experiences of his grandfather or uncle to properly “track” down a woman for him, the child may end up marrying an untameable, uncontrollable wild beast for a wife and live an unhappy life.

After marriage, the next thing the society expects from a new wife is a child. The birth of a child is a sure sign of blessings from the people’s ancestors or their gods. Birth brings another role to the grandfather. Mr. Tsaga, a 54-year-old discussant, said:

The meaning of a name has a way of influencing the bearer. A child should therefore not be given a name carelessly. Children named Kuwua, Kehemba, Kukase, Kukange usually have death problem. By naming a child with the attributes of death, you are unknowingly praying death to take control of the child’s life.

The group explained that Ku means “death,” Kuwua means “death has killed,” and Kuhemba means “death is the greatest.” Children are also named with expectations of the best, such as: Torkwase (a queen), Aondoher (God will help him), etc.

Therefore it is the duty of the grandfather, well versed in the ways of life, to perform the naming ceremony of a child and give him a name that will pronounce blessings, progress and wealth.
Life and ultimately death and burial follow birth. Birth and death present to the
grandfathers a duty which they must perform, although they will certainly not like it.
According to the group it is considered bad luck if a grandfather has to bury his son or his
grandchild. But he must do it when it meets him alive. Mr. Swem said:

When death occurs, the grandfather must be informed. He would summon his
adult male children, his brothers, cousins and uncles, they sit together and discuss.
He will tell them the cause of death, the burial arrangements would be approved
by him.

The results indicate that the father’s duty is to protect the family against harm, be
it physical or attack by witchcraft practices. The father is also expected to provide food
and adequate housing for his households. He also disciplines and advises his children in
the tribal tradition of doing things properly. Grandparents are the surviving custodians of
tribal norms and cultural practices. They take care of children while parents are at work.
They teach stories, rhymes, poems, proverbs and the lineage history. Grandparents are the
depositories of traditional knowledge about children’s sicknesses and cure or first aid
before the situation worsens. They treat common illnesses with traditional herbs before
they refer them to a doctor for modern medicines.

The results show that as long as the grandfather is alive within a family, he is the
head of that family and is actually in charge of major decisions. Even where his son is
married and has children, the grandfather influences most of the decisions.

*Other Roles Assigned to Fathers*

On the question of the additional roles of fathers, the oldest participant, 75-year-
old Mr. Chinyam, said that since tradition had specified roles for the two genders he did
not need additional roles. Besides, as the head of the family, he is the one that assigns roles to people so therefore he does not need anybody in the house to assign any role to him.

A young father of 36 years, Mr. Mbayiman, made a contrary statement. He said: Though tradition has segregated roles, I have willingly taken on the roles that were for my wives. I have learned to wash and clean up my babies the way my wife would if my wife were at the market or she was to travel. I have cooked simple meals for my family if my wife is not around. I could do more if the need arises.

Because he is a Christian, he has one wife, but traditionally some fathers in Shanna community could use such a reason to marry additional wives. On who should take other identified roles, most of the people in the group agreed that women and children are there to contribute their quota.

On stepfathering, it was agreed that it is common in the community when an elder brother dies and leaves a widow with children, a younger brother or close relative of the deceased marries the widow with her children. Such a stepfather cannot take the woman and reject the children. Mr. Shaaga, a 70-year-old grandfather, said: “This is so because you do not grind on a millstone with only the lower half; you must use the upper and lower half together.” According to him, the stepfather must show the children love and concern just as if they were his biologically. The men agreed that this love and care situation is made easier because the stepfather is caring for children who are his kin and kith. He has to hold them in high esteem. A widow who opts to marry away from her late husband leaves the children with her husband’s people. If she takes them with her
because they are too young, as soon as the children can eat solid food properly, she returns them to her late husband’s people. A stepfather who is not a relation of his children happily hands them over to their biological relatives. However, if the children stay under the stepfather who is not a biological father, he must care for them according to the tradition. The degree of care is dependent on the love and respect between him and his wife (the children’s mother).

Most fathers agreed that tradition has already segregated roles so there is no need to assign other roles to men, although the young fathers agreed that they have taken women’s roles of caring for children while their wives are engaged in other duties, and they could do more when the need arises. The results also show that in stepfathering, when an elder brother dies and the younger brother marries the deceased’s wife, he takes over the widow with all her children. The stepfather is expected to show the same love as though they were his children. In stepfathering children who are not his relations, according to tradition he is expected to take care of them. The degree of care depends on the love and respect between the man and the children’s mother.

*Changing Roles of Fathers in Shanna Community*

Since nothing is constant in itself, fathers’ roles are changing in Shanna community. All the fathers agreed that roles like storytelling, especially by moonlight, teaching of handicrafts, preparing, making and weeding of farms, and community discipline of young children are no longer followed. Even the roles of being the breadwinner and of selecting a husband or wife for their daughters and sons are no longer the exclusive preserve of the husbands. Wives do not only care for the households doing their feminine chores. The fathers confirmed that in the community there are many
women breadwinners. If not solely so, they contribute heavily to the family’s food and other needs. In some households, the women contribute more than 50% or up to nearly 100% of the family household bills. Most of the roles of fathers have been handed over completely to the mothers and children, especially girls. When asked the source of the women’s economic power and change in behaviour, various reasons were proffered. Mr. Tsebo, a 50-year-old, said:

The advent of Western education has given women a chance to get qualifications and jobs like teaching, nursing, agricultural officers and other jobs in administration, etc. These employments give them good salaries, at times higher than their husbands can ever earn from farm work.”

The fathers agreed that the freedom of women to move and mix with other women at church, markets and meetings puts women under peer group influence to act and demand far more than traditional society ever permitted. As a result of this, some women are doing more in the area of discipline, choosing of husbands and wives, and even naming children. The situation is worsened by the absence of fathers who are in search of employment that will give them more money than their regular farming. This has left mothers alone to care for their children. Furthermore, while the children are at school, they cannot be at home to learn handicrafts to go to farm with their fathers and mothers.

Fathers’ Opinions of Childcare

When the group was asked for their opinion about what mothers should do for their children, one discussant said women should recognize the position of fathers in the family and impact that to the children to emulate and follow. It was agreed that mothers
should cook food for the family, fetch water, gather firewood, watch and report sickness conditions in children to their fathers, bathe the children, wash their clothes and see to their general well-being. However, when asked whether the mothers did what they were required of them, the men said generally this was done, but a few women did not do so. This failure was for reasons given as the women’s absence from home due to engagement at office jobs, market activities, farm work, etc. The fathers said they too are busy trying to find jobs and money to meet their obligations and so cannot take over the roles, because they are traditionally roles for women. When asked who should then do the chores, a 50-year-old man, Mr. Stebo, said: “Since they are women’s roles, the mothers must find time to do them.” A younger father, 34-year-old Mr. Abaagu, said: “The fathers could assist by choice but not by compulsion, if the women respect them and if and when it becomes absolutely necessary.”

When fathers were asked if their roles in relation to childcare were gender related, it was unanimously agreed that from birth till the children were five years old, it was the mother’s duty to closely watch over the children’s welfare. Between the age of five years to puberty, mothers take over the watching and directing of their own daughters’ activities. This was also unanimous. Girls are taught food preparation. They are taught feminine hygiene, and how to take care of their siblings. The mother teaches her daughter how to behave like a respectable woman. The mother teaches her how to keep, feed and look after the poultry. The girl follows her mother to the farm and learns how to harvest and preserve different crops. All these she learns by doing with the mother and also by watching and imitating her and other women in the community. By the time the girls turn 9 years old, they are almost as competent as their mothers in carrying out these duties.
Girls are also taught how to respect and recognize elders, especially fathers, uncles, elder brothers and relatives. They are taught how to serve their elder brothers. Mr. Songo said: “A girl learns the craft of motherhood and how to be a good housewife to her brothers and father.”

According to the discussion group as from the age of 5 to puberty, the father takes over the training of the sons. He follows his father to the farm carrying his farm tools. He is taught how to safely kindle a fire in the farm. The fire is used to roast yams and or cassava to feed people on the farm. If he is not roasting the yams, he watches his father and learns how to weed the farm, make ridges and heaps. At home he is taught how to look after livestock, usually goats and sheep. When he is over the age of ten, he is introduced to feeding and caring for pigs and cows, if the father is rich enough and has them. It is the duty of the father to teach him handicrafts if he knows how to make them. The discussants agree that the boys are taught their genealogy. Since the woman changes her family at marriage, she adopts the genealogy of her husband. According to the group, a husband should and must teach his wife her new genealogy. It was also found that the knowledge of genealogy up to ten generations or more is proof that you have no slavery blood in your family. The boys are also taught the use of cutlasses, spears, bows and arrows, and hunting knives, which would later serve as his weapons to defend himself, his family and community when and if the need arises. Fathers also spoke on additional tasks that the boy child is taught by his father. This includes the building and roofing of traditional huts with local materials.

The upbringing of children in this age bracket is gender based, mothers to girls and fathers to sons. Mr. Jagu, a 40-year-old man, said: “Where a man has only girls as his
children he has to teach his girls the same as if they were boys so that they will meet his needs at an old age.”

This illustrates that culture and tradition play a major role in children’s upbringing in relation to gender equality. Children belong to the mother from birth until they become five years old. Between the ages of five years to puberty, mothers continue the upbringing of the “girl child” while fathers take over the care of boys. Children learn by doing things, by observation and by imitation. The older fathers agreed that changing roles will reduce their self esteem, but the younger fathers agreed that it is possible to change roles in the cities but not in the villages for fear of their colleagues looking down on them.

*Attitudes Toward Changing Roles*

On the issue of reversing roles between men and women, the older fathers interviewed spoke of their displeasure in discussing such an issue. Mr. Uke, a 54-year-old discharged soldier, said:

In past times, such an issue could not have arisen. This would have been totally unnecessary to put such a question before an adult male folk for discussion. Since roles are completely gender specific there is nothing like changing roles. The man who takes up any female role does it in secret. Most women will not allow their husbands take over their roles. If the other women get to find out in the community, they will castigate her by calling her derogatory names. A man who accepts role reversal will dare not allow his peer group see it or mention it to them. He will be considered a ‘sell-out.’
The younger fathers agreed, however, that it is possible to have role reversal in the cities but not in the village because that would demean a man’s image among his colleagues. The older fathers said that most of the men who took on female roles would not admit it in public. None of them admitted it even though it could be and is secretly done.

*Specific Caregiving Options*

Despite the resentment in role reversal between the men and women, most of the men interviewed in the group agreed that they could bathe and dress young children. For girls, they could only bathe and dress them if they had not reached puberty. They could take the children in search of medical needs, provided the child’s mother follows the man. This is done so that they would walk faster by taking some load off the mother.

*The Effects of Fathers’ Changing Roles*

Fathers interviewed spoke of some benefits of changing fathers’ roles. Most of the fathers see the benefits to children if the role of fathers were to change. Mr. Orkaa, one of the young fathers, envisioned a greater development as a result of changing roles of fathers:

We want our children to be good citizens. If both parents care, a child is better off than the one who is only assisted by one of his parents. That type of child will be a law-abiding citizen any time and anywhere.

Another father, Mr. Tsekar, said:

Our fathers taught us boys together with my sisters goat and sheep herding and all of us have been doing it well. My sister now keeps a big piggery in her husband’s
house. She earns a lot through that venture and feeds the whole family and the extended ones.

These illustrations show the fathers’ positive attitudes towards men’s changing role and their satisfaction in seeing children becoming better citizens if fathers’ roles were to change. They all agreed that children could be better citizens if both parents care for them.

In summary, this study shows that the care of children in Shanna community has existed since the community came into being about 100 years ago. Parents, grandparents and older children were all involved in the care of children. Men have always been essential partners in childcare and have very clear defined roles, based on the age of the child. The responsibility of young children is seen as belonging to the mother, while the father is usually characterized as head of his household, protector providing for the family, and disciplinarian and guide to his children. Mothers carry the burden of caring for young children. Most of the educated fathers and the young fathers who have lived in the city have seen the need for them to change since their wives are also occupied with the search for greener pastures for their families. With the changing times, Western education and socioeconomic variables, female and male involvement have undergone changes thereby making fathers passive players in the upbringing of children. While the majority of men in the discussion described some of the activities that they could assist the women in doing, such as bathing and dressing young children and taking the children in search of medical needs, men perceive these tasks as primarily women’s work. The results also show that mothers play a significant role in helping fathers to be more involved. Grandparents are being deprived of the joy and companionship of their
grandchildren. The people’s traditions and culture are being replaced by foreign ways.

The population is no longer traditional. It cannot and has not completely changed. The new ways of doing things may be good, but on their own, they cannot be the best that the people need. There is need to work towards introducing the new and marrying it to the traditional to create and maintain a more balanced situation.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study is to gather information on the role of fathers in childrearing practices in Shanna community, Nigeria.

The results of the study have shown that the attitudes of fathers, their beliefs and actions have affected the growth and development of young children in Shanna community. However, despite the fact that the fathers in Shanna place a great premium on children, the fathers beliefs are consistent with their upbringing in which males and females are taught their roles in life from the beginning. These teachings affect children’s growth and development. The study results did not really show the direct relationship between growth and development (although fathers’ beliefs do govern their actions which affect their children’s lives). The responses given by the fathers during the discussions indicated that they assumed that their type of care is enough to give adequate quality care to the family, including children. This shows, however, that very few fathers associated poor quality care with their actions. They feel it is adequate and appropriate for the need of culture because they are only looking at the cultural norms rather than the individual child in terms of “caring.” Looking at the number of fathers interviewed, it might not be very much but, given the context, the researcher finds it quite disturbing. This is so because most of the men are aware of the fathers’ changing role and yet can do nothing about it since they do not know the implications. The most commonly expressed belief has to do with the cultural practices and expectations that limit opportunities for both sexes. This was reported in another study as well. UNICEF (1995) describes cultural expectations that exist all over the world with men being providers while women are
nurturers. It also shows how girls are particularly at a disadvantage right from the early years.

Another finding shows that bringing up children in Shanna community is a responsibility shared by family members and the community at large. These groups of people share the necessary skills and tasks and pass on their society’s values and culture.

With the fathers’ changing role in the community, most of the traditional systems have broken up and have been replaced by the Western type of education, which sees traditional cultures as no value to the local society. The content of Western type of teaching differs. Children learn things that their grandfathers do not know anything about such as computers, the internet, cellular phones and so on. Families have little or no knowledge of what is being taught. Furthermore, the methodology of imparting knowledge in the traditional system differs from the Western type or school system. Tradition emphasizes practical aspects, imparting skills and preparation for future adulthood and roles from a very early age. This process can be adapted to prepare children as future parents with the best traditional training. The approach is informal, home- and community-based. Children learn by observation, doing and sharing experiences with others. A number of authors (Kenyatta, 1979; Gelfand, 1973; Hammond-Tooke, 1974) as cited in Mwamwenda (1995) described the traditional education in Africa, which occurs through observational learning. Boys observe the activities of their fathers and older siblings while girls pay particular attention to the activities of their mothers at home or outside the home.

This was reported in another study by Berk (1999), who described the cultural influences of the African-American extended family, which is traced to the African
heritage of most black Americans. She reported on the effect of the extended family. The report indicates how the extended family system can bring emotional support, sharing income and essential resources; it also helps to reduce the stress of poverty and single parenting. The report further indicates that the extended family system helped with childrearing practices. The presence of a grandmother in the households of many African-Americans protects teenagers and infants or babies from the influence of an overwhelmed and experienced mother. According to her report, the African-American extended family plays an important role in transmitting cultural values to children compared to African-Americans who live in nuclear households. This practice has a lot of similarities with the Tiv in Shanna settlement.

Durojaiye (1976, cited in Mwamwenda, 1995) states the benefits of African childrearing practices are of educational value, especially the way a child is being brought up during his early years:

A child is born into a warm, affectionate and welcoming culture where he is completely accepted regardless of economic or domestic strains in the family at the time of his arrival. In the early months in life, the child receives the constant attention of his mother, grandmother and other members of the extended family (p. 22).

In another vein, during the discussion with the fathers it came to light that socialization of children from five years to puberty is gender specific. Fathers and other male relatives assist in socializing male children, which shows gender inequalities in child upbringing in the community. This has been reported in another study as well. UNICEF (1995) indicates that the care of children is, in most countries in the world, a
gender-segregated job that is very significant from birth. This type of socialization should not be discarded completely. It has some benefits attached to it, although the negative aspects outweigh the positive ones. Berk (1999) described this benefit in the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Erickson. She also discussed social learning theory, in which people like to identify with parents of the same sex so that they can develop attitudes, values, traits and behaviours that are socially accepted. This theory argues for the value of being socialized by the same sex.

UNICEF (1995) reported the effects of gender inequality, including how girls are at a particular disadvantage right from the earliest years and how they are socialized to submit to others and are kept away from school to care for their younger siblings. This shows how gender roles are embedded in both African and Western culture.

The parents in Shanna community teach their children according to their children’s sex. The study shows the type of skills being imparted to the children by their parents. Fathers teach relevant life skills to the male children such as caring for livestock, usually goats and sheep; handicrafts; and the use of bows and arrows for hunting and for the defence of the family if the need arises. Boys are also taught to construct buildings and survival equipment. They are seen as special and given more attention; therefore, they will be more assertive and more confident as individuals and in groups. Girls are taught skills that give them power only within the home. The subordination of women in Shanna community begins in early girlhood with the division of household labour by gender. Girls assume domestic responsibilities as early as the age of six. They share the mother’s tasks of cooking, cleaning, fetching water, getting firewood, caring for younger children and gardening. These are tasks that consume most of every day. Girls lack time
and leisure. The consequence of this type of care, that is, fathers holding the wrong belief, is that the girl-child will be disadvantaged in so many ways and may lack survival skills. This has also been reported in another study as well (UNICEF 1995). Again, this type of upbringing can affect boys’ nurturing capabilities at an early age.

During the discussion it came to light that babies and young children in Shanna are seen as belonging to their mothers and other women; fathers are perceived as distant figures, even when living in the same homes. Most of the fathers reported that mothers should bring up young children. This was also shown in a report by Brown and Chevannes (2001), that parental education programs in the Caribbean were primarily directed towards women and teenage girls, which shows that women contribute greatly to the care of children. Again, in a review of Western perspective of men in childcare, Peeters (2003) described the gender genealogy in the Belgian context of what fathers are expected to do. He cited Dr. Benjamin Spock’s childcare handbook, written in 1948 and meant solely for women, that the only role a father was expected to do is to teach their children how to ride a bicycle. His report indicates that a father of young children in Belgium was not expected to do more than that.

Although most of the fathers said they begin to socialize with children as early as from the age of five and above by sex, the report shows that fathers in Shanna have changed whereby women have taken over their “jobs.” This shows that mothers are bringing up children in the Shanna community alone. Unfortunately, time was not enough to find out what is regarded as the socioeconomic status of these mothers. That would have enabled them to improve their lives and the children’s future opportunities. Women are therefore found to influence the condition of children in Shanna community.
What is expected of the men in this community is to provide, make decisions and protect their families, while women are nurturers. These roles are culturally assigned to them at birth. There was very low expectation from fathers in raising children. The terms of reference in this study did not permit us to find out whether the fathers actually provide for their families or otherwise. Could it be in theory or in practice? Their response shows that women have taken over their roles of providing for the children, which means they apparently do not provide for their families now and maybe not in the future. Nquina (2001) explained in a workshop that his father instilled in him that he was to be the provider and the protector of his family, and that cultural tradition played a major role in his upbringing in relation to gender equality issues: “I was never taught to be a caregiver; my sisters were the caregivers. I was the provider” (p. 12).

Husband-wife relations, peer influence, and economic ability of the father are significant factors that determine fathers’ commitment to the care of their children in the community. Most fathers interviewed are willing to cooperate in the care of their children if their wives duly respect them. Peer pressure is another important and very significant factor in fathers’ commitment to their children, which is influenced by the cultural norms of the society. This was shown in a review of a non-Western perspective (Gosh, 2001). The results show clearly that mothers play a significant role in assisting their husbands to be more involved in childcare.

The results show that a small group of respondents participate in childcare. They interact with their children up to a certain extent. Those fathers were between the ages of 30 and 40 and have worked in the cities before retirement and are now at home. These fathers might have been influenced by education, Christianity and urbanization although
our data did not bring out the effect of the interaction on the children, we are sure that in the community we already have role models who can one day educate men in the community about the benefits of their actions and encourage other men to take their share of work.

The discussion further revealed that the role of fathers in Shanna community has an intergenerational family support, with grandfathers (parents) playing a greater role. Elderly parents and mothers are consulted for first aid treatment of headaches, stomach aches, colds and any unusual children’s elements before they are referred for further treatment. The treatments are not gender oriented.

The fathers agreed that times are changing and so are practices. However, because the fathers live in a village community, where the traditional view of fathers’ role is still rampant, they are finding it difficult to change (given the community-supported traditional view of men’s role). Individually, some are quietly adapting to the new approach of parenting roles. The present apparent reluctance to adapt to the new approach of sharing childcare roles may increase stress in the family and thereby reduce the chances of survival and quality of care for the children.

The fathers of Shanna might have perceived their changing roles differently and responded more positively against cultural practices that hinder early childhood care and development if they have been made aware of the situation. Could it be that their actions are out of ignorance? The Ministry of Education data (2001) report a high rate of dropouts from schools, particularly primary and secondary levels among the girls. It could be due to the type of care and practices that affect the girl-child more.
This type of interview was the first time the fathers’ attention was being drawn to the issue of changing roles. However, all hopes are still not lost!
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The survey was conducted in Shanna community, but the findings reflect what is also apparent in other places: that men’s failure to relate with their children is not something that is inherent in males but in the culture and norms of that society. The study has revealed fathers’ beliefs and attitudes about their involvement in early childcare and development. Early childcare workers should note that these beliefs are deeply rooted and important in their cultural set-up even if they appear appropriate to outside observers. It also shows clearly that these roles have an intergenerational family support with grandparents playing the major role. The care of children in the community was and is a communal role. It is clear that the roles of fathers are changing in different ways. Some of these changes are detrimental to the well-being of their children and indeed to the general well-being of their families. These roles would have been more understandable if during discussion we had focused on the practice of men’s role as providers. Future research might shed more light on whether the roles accorded to men are actually being carried out fully by the men. Most of the young fathers have already begun assisting mothers in the care of their children and have expressed their desire to continue on the condition that the mothers are engaged in other activities. Such fathers could act as role models to other men.

One of the striking issues found in the study are the skills taught by parents and grandparents of the same sex. Boys are taught how to take care of livestock such as pigs, goats, cows, etc., while girls are taught how to look after poultry (chicken, ducks and any birds). In most Nigerian cultures, these skills (including the raising of poultry) are only taught to female children. Another finding is that weaving clothes in the community is
taught to male children while in most tribes in Nigeria weaving is common only among female children.

Overall, the study findings suggest the need for a range of interventions to target the key socializers of young children: fathers, grandparents, mothers, and older children. Such interventions should address the different ways in which cultural roles can erect barriers to men’s participation. Before an intervention program is put in place, a relationship of respect and trust between the males and the observers must be cultivated.

Because of the small size of the Tiv tribe sample and the methods by which it was drawn, the above results cannot necessarily be generalized to other Tiv populations. The findings are intended to be the basis for a preliminary hypothesis to be tested in a more intensive investigation. Particularly since the Tiv tribe in Nigeria is the sixth largest tribal group, numbering about 4 million, an attempt to picture the situation necessarily involves multi-size investigations of the different Tiv clans and races, which are made up of Senkara, Jeechira, Kwande, Jembagh and Abeetse.

With this, the ECD workers can do much to improve on the parental skills of those who have direct contact with children by recognizing the experiences of families and building on their natural capital. It is our hope that the deeper understanding of fathers can be strengthened.
CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall the research findings suggest the need for a range of interventions to target father-child relationships. To increase male involvement in children’s lives in Shanna, several initiatives are suggested:

1. Share the findings of the study with other early childhood workers and other investigators on childrearing practices.

2. Encourage the development of projects focused on fathers’ involvement initiatives in the community, and work with parents to maintain and implement the projects.

3. Most early childcare workers have received little if any formalized education or training in the area of parental involvement. Parents would benefit if early childcare workers were to have a greater understanding of the issues affecting fathers’ involvement in care practices to successfully communicate best existing practices and the value of maintaining them.

4. As revealed in the study, one of the barriers to men’s participation is women and the society itself. Support from these groups is critical to the success of parent involvement initiatives designed for men. Program officers need to build a strong rationale for developing such initiatives – a rationale that can be clearly articulated to these groups in order to gain support.

5. Most of the early childhood care workers are female, since men are labelled as “different” and the services for children at home exclude fathers. There is a need to train female workers to acknowledge and build
upon the unique strengths that men bring to the parenting realms and to be sensitive to differences in the ways in which men and women approach parenting and interacting with young children.

6. The study also indicated that mothers in Shanna community are the “gatekeepers” for children in relation to their fathers and other significant role models. Mothers need to be aware of why resources are being put into developing these activities/initiatives and how they and their children would benefit. Eliciting the support and involvement of mothers in developing such initiatives could help ensure the initiatives’ success.

7. As in any other initiatives, the activities must proceed slowly to encourage male involvement in a program, beginning with building a male-friendly environment that facilitates the culture of men’s involvement in the program, which is a long-term process.

8. Develop information and communication materials reflecting responsible fatherhood and reinforce positive images that make parenting the responsibility of both men and women.
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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FATHERS

*Focus Group Questions*

How do men view children?

1. What do they know about children?
2. How do they describe the negative and positive aspects of having children?
3. What do they believe is the purpose of having children
4. To what extent do men accept and discuss children?
5. Whose decision is it to have children: father, mother, both?

How do they see their contribution within the family?

1. What do you think is your contribution within a family?
2. What other roles do you believe should be assigned to men?
3. Other roles, who should be assigned those roles?
4. What are the roles in step-fathering by women with new partners?
5. How is different from being a biological father?
6. Are fathers roles changing in your community? If so, how?

What are fathers’ opinions of childcare?

1. In your own opinion what are the important things mothers should do for their children?
2. What are some of the important things that fathers should do for their children?
3. Do most mothers do those things?
4. Do most fathers do those things?
5. Do fathers assume different caring roles for children at different child ages?
6. What are some of those different roles?

7. What do you do and how do you do it?

8. What do you think others will react to you if you were to become more involved as a care giver of young children?

9. What type of additional care giving will it be safe for you assume?

How might children be different if the role of fathers were to change?

1. How do you describe your current practices regarding care of young children?
APPENDIX II: ORAL INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

**Name of Research Study:** Involving Fathers in Early Childhood Care and Development in Shanna Community, Benue State, Nigeria.

**Principal Investigator:** Rosemary Hua

**Reasons for the research:** This focus group discussion is for a research study that is being done by Rosemary Hua, the project coordinator of early childhood programs in Benue State, in partial fulfillment of her MA programme with the University of Victoria, Canada. The purpose of the study is to gather information on the role of fathers in childrearing practices in Shanna Community.

**Your part in the research:** About twenty each of young, experienced and older fathers between the ages of 25 and 60 years will take part in the research. Participants will meet together in a group and dialogue about the roles of fathers in child upbringing in their community. They will engage in a three-day conversation of two hours each day. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty. Names obtained and responses given by participants are done at will by them and only with their permission can they be used elsewhere. You may decide not to answer any question on your own if you wish. Also you may quit being in a group at any time. In case they have any problem, they should contact the principal investigator, that is Rosemary Hua. In addition, the focus group discussion will be audio-recorded and video-recorded. Note-takers will write down opinions about what the group thinks during the session. A copy of the text will be communicated to the participants.

**Compensation:** They will be given snacks per session for taking part in this research.
Note: Every part of the research outline above has been fully obtained in the native language (Tiv language).

Name and Signature                                  Date

(of person obtaining consent)