In “Narratives of young South African fathers: redefining masculinity through fatherhood,” Enderstein and Boonzaier (2015) present qualitative research done on young South African fathers to explore their ideas on masculinity and fatherhood and to explore the identities they have created for themselves. These fathers attempt to balance being caring and emotionally invested with the more traditional role of a father.

In the chapter “Fatherhood” of his book *Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture*, Thomas Keith (2017) explores different theories of fatherhood. The identity theory says “that a person’s behavior is a function of his conception of, identity, which derives from the positions he occupies in society” (Keith 2017:146). The young South African fathers interviewed see fatherhood as an essential part of their identities. The choice to become a father is one that they take while facing considerable external pressures. The financial punishment of paying lobolo, or damages, to the family of the mother, the derision by family and religious communities, and often the dissolution of the relationship they had with the child’s mother (Enderstein & Boonzaier 2015: 515). In identity theory, an important distinction is made between whether an identity is “chosen… authentically… or simply the passive product of adopting the identity modeled by one’s parents” (Keith 2017:147). For these fathers, their identity is certainly an active choice.

This identity encompasses many titles: provider, protector, role model, and caretaker, and more. Providing is often seen as the unique role of the father, and those unable to perform in this way showed “reduced self-esteem and self-confidence” (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015: 514). This connection between labor and feelings of value in the family unit is similar to the point Nigel Edley’s (2017) makes observation in “Men and Work,” that men tend to tie much more of their self esteem and value for the family unit to being employed, and thus “unemployment tends to hit men harder than is generally the case for women” (Edley 2017:85). In some ways the negative relationship is cyclical, comma is not strong enough here, use a colon these fathers must work to feel of value to the family unit, but their devotion to work keeps them away from the family and implicitly puts them above the mother and children (as they are the burden that he bears, magnanimously).

The young fathers balance this element of their identity with a performance of more atypical roles, such as "bathing, feeding and changing nappies, comforting and playing with the child, getting up at night and taking care of them" (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015:522). These more active elements of parental involvement, as opposed to the parental investment of finances are often seen as the mother’s job (Keith 2017:148). For these fathers though, the performance of both roles are an important part of the construction of the version of fatherhood they want to be associated with. Wanting to have a different relationship to their children than their fathers had with them, often neglectful or abusive, is encouraging these young fathers to create an identity less steeped in hegemonic masculinity.

Even with the anecdotal evidence of the positive masculinities in the fathers interviewed, one must also keep in mind the point made by Shwalb and Shwalb (2014) in *Fathers in Cultural Context* that “(4) what does the 4 mean? diversity of fathering is universal within societies” and that despite any observable trend in these fathers, there are young fathers in South Africa abandoning paternal claims, maintaining a strictly provider role, or outright abusing their children (Shwalb and Shwalb 2014:3). Fathering, as much as it is social, is a series of actions taken by complex individuals and seeking any universal answers would oversimplify an extremely complex issue. (removing words like “very” and “extremely” will make your writing clearer and more direct). Very good connections here to other content.