CHAPTER 9

Men and children: changing constructions of fatherhood in *Drum* magazine, 1951 to 1960

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Introduction

Images of fatherhood have differed over time. The wide variety of ways in which fathers have been presented in differing media and at different times serve to remind us that the content of fatherhood is contested rather than fixed. In the last couple of decades, for example, there have been significant shifts in the understandings of fathers, with 'new dads' becoming a popular subject of magazines. The rise of the 'new dad', represented as a hands-on father who looks after the kids, changes nappies and takes his share of domestic responsibility in private and public, can be contrasted with a time not so long ago when such activities were considered to be the domain largely, or exclusively, of women in general, and mothers in particular. In this chapter, I show that this historical comparison is not altogether accurate. Representations in the 1950s of African men in *Drum*, a magazine with a huge, continent-wide readership, often portrayed men as fathers happily ensconced in domestic situations.

This chapter examines changes in the ways in which African fathers were portrayed in the South African version of *Drum*. I show that in the early 1950s black men were regularly portrayed as fathers in domestic situations. But this changed over the course of the decade as both verbal and visual images of men in *Drum* increasingly portrayed them either in work contexts devoid of wives and children or in the process of leaving wives and children behind on their way out of the home. These kinds of images were much more typical of the ways in which white men had, for decades, been represented in magazines aimed at white audiences. The period thus sees the images of black men produced by *Drum* converge with those produced for white audiences, showing parenting as women's work. The involved and nurturing father was, in other words, written out of *Drum*'s discourse on manhood over the 1950s.

Twentieth-century discourses around fatherhood

In the west, twentieth-century hegemonic discourses around fatherhood have seen a privileging of the role of 'mother' at the expense of that of 'father'. Played out on

an international as well as a domestic stage, these discourses helped shape the South African law that narrowly defined the rights of, and limited the possibilities for fathers while at the same time entrenching the rights and duties of mothers. It was (and remains) widely believed to be only 'natural' that as well as bearing children, it was also women's work to raise them, and that all women are born with an innate ability to nurture – or to mother. In early modern Europe, however, fatherhood – and motherhood – were constructed differently. '[I]t was the father who was considered to shape the child, to be the "natural parent"' (Lupton & Barclay 1997, p. 37). The changing role of the father has often been contested. In early nineteenth-century South Africa, male slaves in the Western Cape were denied any legal or social rights to their children. This became a source of friction and at least one slave rebellion was inspired by conflict between a slave owner and a slave man over the treatment of the latter's child (Van der Spuy, 1996). It was the legal and social recognition of 'fatherhood' that gave important content to 'freedom', following the emancipation of slaves in South Africa in 1834 (Scully, 1997).

Drum magazine

What has come to be known simply as *Drum* first appeared as *The African Drum* in March 1951. Funded, owned and edited by white men, the post-World War II society into which the magazine was born was one in which industrialisation and urbanisation had seen significant change in South Africa's racial demography. Census records indicate that there were more than two million black South Africans living in urban areas in 1951, compared to just one million in 1936 (Department of Statistics, 1980; 1.17, 1.13). Thus by 1951, the rural migrant labour workforce upon which white industrialists had previously relied had been supplemented by an urban black working class, a working class that was both 'settled' and 'permanent' according to the government commission of 1948 chaired by J.H. Fagan (SAIRR, n.d., p. 7). It was this ethnically mixed, urbanised and urbanising black population that was to become *Drum*'s main audience in the 1950s (Clowes, 2002).

Although it remained under the ownership and editorship of white men, the magazine's content and layout were produced almost entirely by black men, photographers such as Peter Magubane and Bob Gosani, and journalists who, through their writing, were to become household names in South Africa. In the early 1950s, Henry Khumalo – Mr *Drum* himself – was joined by Todd Matshikiza, Arthur Maimane, Can Themba, Casey Motsisi, Bloke Modisane, Ezekiel Mpahlele and Nat Nakasa, as well as many others. Together these men produced an enormously influential magazine that had, by the early 1960s, developed into five separate editions produced in five different locations around Africa. It was to become, according to one analyst, 'one of the most popular magazines in Anglophone Africa' (Mutongi, 2000, p. 1; Clowes, 2002).

The political context into which the magazine was born was one in which the Nationalist Party was beginning to implement its plans for separate development or apartheid after winning the election of 1948. The times were characterised by the growth of authoritarianism and political repression alongside rapid economic growth. These racially charged conditions touched the lives of both producers and consumers of *Drum*, helping to infuse both black and white notions of sex and gender and informing the particular images of manhood and masculinity produced by the magazine over the next few decades. This chapter, however, focuses on the early period of *Drum*'s history, in which I suggest that black males were initially portrayed through their relationships with other people – through parents, grandparents, wives, siblings and – most importantly – children. How and why this changed over the course of the 1950s is the focus of the discussion that follows.

Fatherhood in the early *Drum*

In marked contrast to images elsewhere (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Chopra, 2001; Davidoff & Hall, 1987), the 'nurturing father' was a crucial component of the adulthood portrayed by the early volumes of *Drum* magazine. In contrast to magazines such as *Outspan* and *Femina*, aimed at white South African audiences, *Drum* represented fatherhood as central to manhood, privileging men's relationships with children, particularly their sons, in a variety of ways. Articles about important men foregrounded their role as fathers, photographs emphasised the proximity of fathers and children, and even advertisements accentuated fathers' concerns for their offspring. The early *Drum* emphasised male identities in which being both father and son were important. But over the course of the 1950s images emphasising these kinds of identities slowly disappeared. By 1960 such images were scarce and texts, advertisements and photographs that featured children located them alongside 'mothers' rather than 'fathers'. As the 1950s wore on, the images in *Drum* grew to resemble more closely those in *Outspan* and *Femina*, with 'father' increasingly narrowly constructed to embody the primarily financial obligations of the stereotypical western middle-class nuclear family.

In the early to mid-1950s interactions between fathers and children were presented by *Drum* as an unremarkable part of a man's daily life. The members of a man's family were, for example, very clearly foregrounded in an article about retired black cricketer Oom Piet Gwele, which began:

> We found the Gwele family cuddled around a glowing fire on a chilly evening: parents, children and grandchildren. Mama Nancy Gwele had a bad 'flu, and eldest daughter Edna Mnguni had left her boxing promoter husband in Germiston to nurse her – and contracted the 'flu too. (November 1954)

The *first* mention of Oom Piet, the supposed subject of the article, only occurred in the *second* paragraph. In other words Oom Piet, the man, was constructed *through* his children and his children's achievements. And in framing the text with photographs of Oom Piet's children and grandchildren, *Drum* surrounded him, both metaphorically and literally, with evidence of his fatherhood and grandfather-hood. Fatherhood, in other words, was central to *Drum*'s representations of Oom Piet, the man.

This kind of reporting was commonplace in the early *Drum*, with articles regularly conflating the notions of 'father' and 'man'. Stories about men frequently saw their children claim centre stage. Israel Alexander, for instance, hailed by *Drum* as 'South Africa's richest African' was photographed with his daughter, Joy, at work, and with his family at home (December 1954). It was Jake Tuli's children who were fore-grounded in *Drum*'s coverage of the boxer's fights. After losing the Empire flyweight title in 1954, *Drum*'s headline declared that 'Jake loses crown, kids comfort him', while two of the three pictures published alongside the text featured his children (December 1954). In an article in which his mother loomed large, King Edward Masinga (the first black radio broadcaster to be employed by the South African Broadcasting Corporation), was portrayed with his two daughters and a niece (April 1955). Even political and traditional leaders – as the coverage of future Botswanan president, Seretse Khama, his wife and children made clear – were portrayed against the backdrop of their families. At the other end of the social scale, it was 'husbands' and 'fathers' rather than 'men' who were the victims of homicide attacks (July 1955; June 1955).

Articles in magazines produced for white audiences tended, in contrast, to downplay white men's identities as fathers, constructing children as the responsibility of housebound white mothers. Even on those rare occasions when white readers were promised something more than a simple account of a man's public life, they were disappointed. Despite promising that it would 'tell you about the man very few people really know', *Outspan* focused almost exclusively on the professional career of national cricket captain Dudley Nourse, effectively eliding his identities as both father and son (May 1951).

Advertisements in *Drum* in the early 1950s also clearly conflated the identities of father and man, in contrast to advertisements aimed at white audiences. Perhaps constructing the black male breadwinner as guardian of the family purse, advertisements (usually placed by white-owned firms) tapped into notions of black fathers' pride in their sons. A variety of advertisements featuring black men and babies, but not mothers, clearly privileged the role of father, suggesting that at least some advertisers believed the route to a man's pocket lay through his male offspring. 'Your baby is a fine healthy son', declared a female nurse to a solitary man in an advertisement for the antiseptic liquid, Dettol™. 'How happy a father feels when he hears those words', commented the text (September 1952), while another

advertisement for Dettol™ erased both the female nurse and the mother who had given birth, portraying one man congratulating another on 'a healthy childbirth – and such a fine baby' (October 1952).

While advertisements for baby foods in both *Outspan* and *Femina* portrayed only white women with babies, those in *Drum* often employed images of fathers and sons. It was father, rather than mother, for example, who appeared to be holding the baby in an advertisement for Incumbe™ baby food in April 1952. The manufacturers of Nutrine™, another baby food, employed the racialised hierarchies so familiar to South African audiences to tap into local working-class aspirations of upward mobility. In one of these advertisements, Stanley Msomi, a skilled mechanic is confronted by his white male boss. 'You used to be a good worker Stanley, now you stand around doing nothing. What's wrong?' Msomi explains that 'I'm worried about my little boy. He's thin and weak and always crying.' The supervisor's response is also to identify with him as a father: 'My son was thin and weak too till Nutrine made him strong. *You* should try Nutrine.' The next frame shows Stanley telling his wife Rose that 'we must get it', followed by the penultimate frame in which Rose informs us that '*Nutrine* certainly is nourishing. It has made baby fat and strong in only three months.' The final frame presents the reader with a smiling Stanley Msomi who 'works better than ever now' (November 1952).

These kinds of images were not to last, however, and as the 1950s drew to a close advertisements tended increasingly to depict babies and children with housebound mothers. Likewise articles and features about important men contained fewer details and photographs of their offspring. Although men were often acknowledged as husbands, they were seldom recognised as fathers, let alone as sons or grandfathers. And even if these kinds of biographical details were revealed, the chances of pictures or texts exposing the ways in which men shared their lives with children and parents diminished. It was increasingly the office – rather than the home – that was the place for a man to be seen in the pages of *Drum*.

The late 1950s

Emblematic of these changes was *Drum*'s three-part biography of black South African cricketer, Basil D'Oliveira, in 1960. Apart from one brief mention of D'Oliveira's father (in his capacity as his son's first cricketing coach), not a word was said about other members of D'Oliveira's family and both the text and the images more closely resembled that of *Outspan*'s article about Dudley Nourse in 1951 than they did *Drum*'s article about Oom Piet in 1954 (June 1960; July 1960; August 1960). Coverage of politicians, too, now frequently separated them from their families. Where much had been made of Sir Seretse Khama's children in 1955, not a word was written about the family of Hastings Banda, future president of Malawi, in an account of Banda's achievements in March 1959. And in terms of more ordinary

men, anonymous children and unnamed wives might be the justification for the demand for higher wages which 'would bring immense benefits to a majority of below breadline workers' and let 'the black man…stand on his own two feet'. But this was a construction that, like those in magazines aimed at white audiences, emphasised an identity built around purely financial commitments (July 1960, p. 33). Similar trends were evident in advertisements. By the mid-1950s, black fathers had disappeared from advertisements for Dettol™ and baby foods, even as the range of baby foods advertised increased. Instead, like advertisements placed in white magazines, it tended to be black women (presented as mothers) or white males (presented as experts) who exhorted mothers, rather than fathers, to purchase such products.

Explaining change

While pictures and texts elided the identities of father and son, images of adult males continued to appear in the magazine in the late 1950s. These images, however, increasingly located black men outside a home that contained women and children. In other words, the magazine increasingly located black men as solitary bread-winners for the archetypal middle-class nuclear family. But if this was the image, the reality was a little different. Although the first half of the twentieth century had seen rapid urbanisation of both men and women, with some urban couples 'remarkably western in form', and 'living "in family circumstances"' by 1950, these were primarily working-class families (Bozzoli, 1991; Bonner, 1988). Few black wives and mothers could choose to stay at home. But the growth of nuclear, let alone middle-class, households was curtailed over the 1950s and 1960s. The period saw the 'number of men living with their wives and children in urban areas…drastically reduced,' according to one commentator (Wollheim, n.d., pp. 6,8). The consolidation of influx control, pass laws, forced removals, job reservation, the Group Areas Act and so on, after the election of 1948, both limited the opportunities for black men, women and children to live together in towns, and saw increasing numbers of children raised by grandparents in the rural areas. The images produced in *Drum* could not, therefore, be a simple reflection of socio-economic change, and explanations need to be sought elsewhere. Such explanations also need to take into account that the advertisements featured in the magazine were generally drawn up and placed by white men, while articles, stories, investigative journalism and photographs were written, produced and edited primarily by black men.

Changes in advertisements could be attributable to changes in the South African advertising industry. In the 1950s, the industry was beginning to recognise the growing significance of the urban black market, and to professionalise. These elements were combined in research projects exploring the relationships between black consumers and the advertising industry and reinforced through the recruitment of black men into white-owned advertising firms. Thus the late 1950s saw Nimrod Mkele hired as head of the newly created African market division of

J. Walter Thompson, while a year or so later, ex-*Drum* staffer Dan Chochco, was appointed first as adviser and then as manager for the new African Research Division of another local agency (*Selling Age*, March 1960). Overall, attempts to tap into the black market over the 1950s seem to have produced a consensus amongst advertisers that advertisements aimed at black customers would be more successful if they reflected the values, structures and relationships portrayed in advertisements typically aimed at middle-class white consumers (Burke, 1996).

Explaining change in the material produced by *Drum* itself is more challenging. To begin with, as de Kanter (1987) notes, there are multiple meanings to the term 'father'. A 'father' might be an individual whose role was simply to provide the biological material that generated a child. On the other hand, there may be no biological relationship between a father and those who are perceived to be his children. In some societies, kinship and blood relationships play a role in signifying fatherhood. The brothers of a biological father are also understood to be 'fathers' to their sibling's child in some southern African societies, for example. While not constructed as 'father', the brother of a mother also has a particular and significant role to play in a child's life in these societies. These kinds of relationships tend to be unrecognised and/or misunderstood in the west, where the praxis around child-raising has, during the twentieth century, increasingly marginalised the role of male parents.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, western baby and childcare manuals have increasingly addressed women with advice about how to raise their offspring. This coverage has generally been located in women's magazines or in the women's pages of other media. The assumption that children were women's business also underpinned global policy documents. Just three years before the first edition of *Drum* was published in 1951, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* had not a word to say about fathers and fathering. Despite constructing the autonomous human subject as male, and despite stating that 'the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society', the *Declaration* makes absolutely no mention of 'fatherhood'. In privileging the role of 'mothering', in reflecting and establishing 'nurturing' as something of which only women – and all women – are capable, the *Declaration* concurrently denied such roles to fathers. In South Africa, as van der Spuy has noted (with the exception of Clingman's 1998 study of Bram Fischer), 'any form of domestic relationship is profoundly silenced' in twentieth-century biographies of local male political leaders (Van der Spuy, 2002, p. 9). It is, I suggest below, these understandings of the role of 'father' (which has only recently begun to break down) that shaped the twentieth-century discourse which lay as a backdrop to the changing images portrayed in *Drum* in the 1950s.

With the exception of Henry Khumalo (and later on Ezekiel Mphahlele), none of the black men hired by *Drum* had any experience of writing or publishing. And yet, in the struggle to establish the magazine in the early 1950s, these writers were apparently given a great deal of leeway in constructing their stories. Anthony Sampson, the white

editor imported from England in 1951, recalls allowing his writers to write what they liked. My 'ignorance' he recalls, 'had its advantages. I had to let the black journalists tell their own stories with a vigour and freshness that broke all the rules, but that expressed the true spirit of the townships' (Sampson, 2001, p. 13). So it is possible that the black producers of *Drum* were relatively unfamiliar with these western discourses. Indeed it is more than likely that they drew on constructions of manhood that were closely tied to African understandings of masculinity in which, for men, full adulthood was tied to marriage and fatherhood, and where 'fatherhood' meant a great deal more than a simple biological connection. If this is indeed the case, then why did these representations change? Perhaps it is no more than a coincidence that the first signs of change corresponded with Sampson's departure and his replacement as editor by a series of highly experienced white South African and immigrant English journalists who may have adopted a far more hands-on approach (Clowes, 2002).

It is more likely that black journalists themselves subtly adapted their writing to embrace the 'modern' (i.e. western) narratives of individualism that, even within the nuclear family, treated men as isolated, autonomous and independent of both women and children. Stuart Hall is one of those who have argued that the very idea of modernity and its celebration of 'civilisation', 'progress' and 'rationality' is predicated on difference (Hall, 1992). At the same time, scholars have argued that discourses of colonialism are characterised by these sorts of notions of difference, and have highlighted the common patterns by which colonised countries and colonised peoples were regarded as 'feminine' and 'childlike' in opposition to colonisers who were set up as masculine and adult (Markowitz, 2001; Moane, 1999; Sinha, 1997). Take into account the idea that '[t]he more pronounced degree of differentiation between white men and women is offered as one factor separating whites from other races and signaling their superiority' (Ferber, 1999; p. 77), and it becomes clearer that western discourses around manhood have been inextricably tied to those of race as well as gender, and that what makes a man is both his whiteness as well as the ways in which he is distanced from women and children.

Given this, it could well be argued that portraying black men inside the home surrounded by children and wives inadvertently played *into* the apartheid project of racist unmanning. Representing black males as men through the proximity of children, wives and other family members, was a discourse typical of African rather than western societies. In the minds of white audiences and the apartheid regime, far from demonstrating successful manhood, the proximity of children and women actually helped feminise black men. With this in mind, *Drum*'s shift towards displaying males as men through the proximity specifically of other men can be understood as a process by which black writers elected to adopt and adapt from the overarching hegemonic framework in ways that reclaimed agency. Rather than a simple evolutionary process in which black writers slowly learned the 'proper' discourse, writing fatherhood out of manhood can thus be understood as an implicit challenge to the apartheid project of racist unmanning.

Conclusion

In the early editions of *Drum* magazine, black males were represented as men in both articles and advertisements through the foregrounding of their relationships with children generally and sons in particular. But by the beginning of the 1960s, images of children were confined to the flanks of women presented as home-bound mothers, women portrayed as married to breadwinning men whose significant others were increasingly presented as other non-kin men such as employers and colleagues. Changes in advertisements can be attributed to changes in the advertising industry which encouraged the production of images of black families in ways that resembled the structures and relationships typical of middle-class white families. Changes in the articles that appeared in *Drum*, on the other hand, have more complex causes. In the early *Drum*, images of black men with children owed a great deal to understandings of what it meant to be a man that emerged out of African rather than western traditions. That these images changed could be read as the simple consequence of black writers' increasing familiarity with and uncritical emulation of the western discourses that established children as women's business. Alternatively, given the context of white supremacist and colonial discourses that endeavoured to establish adult black males as effeminate/boys, the shift towards creating distance between black fathers and their children can be read as the product of agency, representing an implicit challenge to the racist construction of a subordinate black masculinity. With this in mind, changes in *Drum*'s later representations of men can be read as a declaration that – *just* like white men – black males were indeed men and not boys.

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