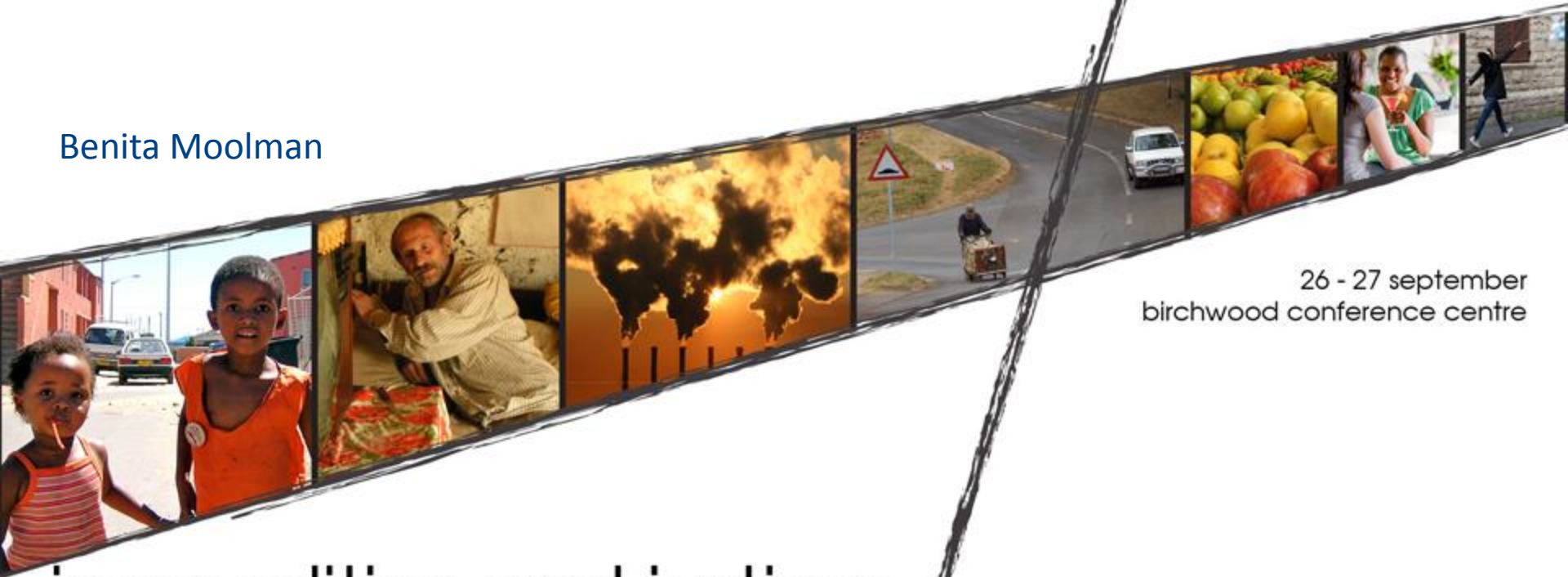


# Intra-familial sexual violence: Disentangling gendered and sexual identities in family spaces to understand the practices of sex offenders

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## inequalities and justice:

influences, effects, intersections and evidence



2013 HSRC SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CONFERENCE



# Rationale

- Stats SA report (2000)
  - 34,6% - raped by relatives or men who were intimate with victims
  - 64% of rapes occurred at home or near home
    - As opposed to 7% in open spaces/alleys
- Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) – 29% of rapes occur within the home
- Courts - reduced sentences for cases of intra-familial sexual violence where fathers, grandfathers and uncles are the sexually violent offenders (Van Der Merwe, 2005)

# Defining family

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- The idea of 'doing family' – Morgan (2001)
- Social theory – that identifies iterative practices and performances
- Similar to Butler's notion of 'identities as performances'
- If family can be done, family can be 'undone'
- Foucault – defines family as a sexualising agent, alliance, discipline and regulation

# Research Objectives

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- To investigate how gendered masculinities and femininities are expressed within the family as a private-public, intimate space
- To re-consider the family as a social space produced through multiple networks of sex, gender, intimacy, violence and power
- To assist the DSD, DCS and the DWCPD with policy and program development on masculinities, gender and sexual equality; sex offenders

# Research Questions

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1. How do sex offenders mobilise gender and sexual identities to commit acts of sexual violence?
2. How is the family space produced, negotiated and contested through relationships of intimacy and violence?
3. What are the 'spaces' of intervention to engage men and boys for transforming unequal gender and sexual relations?

# Postcolonial Feminist Methodologies

- Researching violence within a postcolonial context - histories of that violence - indispensable in the South African context.
  - Mbembe , Sindiwe Magona
- Post-colonial qualitative research acknowledges that identities are produced – history, geography and politics
  - Allows for self-representation
- Race, imperialism, sexism provides a framework for understanding the multiple, lived realities of sex offenders (mainly black men) in South Africa.
- Feminist methodologies – include the researcher as present within the research – bringing in her own experiences/reflexivity

# Sampling

- 72 men in the Western Cape, Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal, were interviewed (focus groups, individual interviews).
- The men and young teenage boys (14- 70yrs).The majority of men identified as black.
- Linguistic and cultural backgrounds of isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, isiSotho, isiPedi, and one from Venda and another from Shangaan.
- Some men identified as Christian, Hindu and some Muslim.

# Data collection

- Individual interviews (unstructured)
- Focus groups (semi-structured, used images, 3 sessions)
  - Admitters - Some of the groups
  - Deniers - Some of the groups
  - Mixed - Some of the groups
- Research assistant – language/male/female



# Methodological and political reflections

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- As an African feminist researcher:
  - struggle –
    - representation and narration (and hence re/production) of this specific practice of sexuality and identity reinforces the pervasive representation of African sexuality as ‘immoral’, diseased and dangerous.
- Ambivalent about providing a ‘voice’ for the sex offender, giving ‘him’ theoretical and discursive space.

# Findings and Discussion

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- Fatherhood, Masculinity, Intimacy and Violence
- Since masculinity and fatherhood are so closely linked, it has been difficult for fathers to express emotion and intimacy while maintaining a normative masculine identity
  - Roy (2008)
    - Both the US and SA are witnessing a reshaping of men's roles, with an emphasis on how and why men are embedded in the lives of their children, partners and extended kin members

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- Uncertainty – is a space/opportunity for sex offenders to claim ignorance
  - Shift between conventional and sexualised masculinities and fathering
  - Key technique – sexual grooming
    - Sex offenders used emotional attachments (as fathering practices) such as trust, care and intimacy – to sexually groom their victims
    - Implicit Planning (seemingly unimportant decisions)
    - Usual Fatherhood responsibilities such as bathing a child, disciplining a child becomes the opportunity to groom the child

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- Dirk:
    - So I bathed Diane, I looked after her whenever I was home...so what I did I put too much attention on the small child to keep her private parts clean and I did it by hand...and there is where the sexual abuse with my own child started, so when she came to crawl by us at night or in the morning, when I was home weekends...I started touching her private parts

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- The gendered relation (grandfather) assumes meaning of care and protection and hence, the ‘impossibility of sexual violence’
  - Amos:
    - My name is Amos...I am from Boksburg. So I can say the crime of rape, I didn't do it because it was my grandchild

# The vulnerability of boys in families

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- As 'mini-men' the childhood sexualities of boys are masked by their gendered identities
- Boys vulnerability to sexual violence is invisible within family spaces
- Bodies of boys – seldom visible – except when they are perceived as the aggressor and income cases through cultural rituals such as circumcision

# Motherhood, Femininities

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## and Sexual Violence

- Violence generally and sexual violence specifically is seldom associated with women and femininities, since it is the anti-thesis of being a 'good girl' and a 'lady'
- Female sexual aggression becomes subsumed within the roles of dominant femininities such as mothers and daughters as good girls

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- Dirk: my stepsister started, her part was she used to bring me to bed at night then I had to play with her and she used to put me on top of her...and at that stage I was too small...so she used my hand to satisfy her...I remember I told my mom and an argument broke out



# Co-Offending

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- Female sex offenders are likely to co-offend with a male sex offender
  - abusive relationship
- Dirk
  - But also what happened...my wife was very...I think my wife....I never talked to her...maybe something went wrong in her own life...because she started telling Diane to undress in front of me...while she was playing music and showing her private parts to me...it was more of a kind of entertainment for me
- Interviewer: So she undressed herself and Diane
- Dirk: No...only Diane.....I really don't know what went wrong

# conclusions

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- Power operates through family practices and associated roles of masculinities and femininities
- Authority inherent in heteronormative roles
  - husband, father, grandfather, as well as mother, sister sanctioned power to violate the bodies of girl and boy children
- Women and men mobilise particular identities for particular interests within specific times/places

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- Sexual role of the family is seldom spoken about – ambiguous and uncertain terrain for adults and parents within families
  - Re-envision the management and governance of families – around notions of shared power
  - Detaching power from conventional gender and sexual identities is critical to ending and preventing intra-familial sexual violence
  - Rethink (and end)- Campaigns on Real Men don't rape – doesn't serve a purpose but reinforces and reinscribe the idea that 'perfect' men exist – often excuses 'family' men who rape

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- Family creates a necessary environment of intimacy and privacy that is translated as an opportunity and protection for sexual violations
  - The home and the family are places where gender in/equalities are learnt and practiced --potential to be places of resistance, agency and change.

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- **SHE TOOK THE POT OF VASELINE AND THREW IT AT ME:  
WHEN FATHER'S RAPE**

# Diary Reflections

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- **22 December 2009**
- These Incest stories are the hardest to listen to!!...why... I am thinking..is it because it is such an onslaught on my own perception of family...what does it mean to be family, related by blood or not even blood, but related none-the less...but when someone holds the title of father..and mother..these words in the incest stories..are empty..hollow with no meaning..what the daughters had to go through..listening to the fathers, their rapists ...describe over and over again..this Sexual Relationship they call it..an infatuation, loving their daughters as sexual and romantic partners as matured equal individuals

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- what the fuck..rationalising their actions through the language of love and relationships....and as an interviewer I listened attentively..no hint of anger..i surely did not feel angry listening to them....but now...I need to read more about the Mormon religion and more examples of where this relationship between fathers and daughters are acceptable and normalised.....do I really want to..what am I sacrificing in my own worldview when I do this...is it a sacrifice or just a suspension of my own worldview..maybe I should read the MacKensie Phillips story....she had a consensual relationship with her father..that in her own words..(apparently she retracted her understanding of the consensual relationship) but it is hectic to listen to..i had to prepare or warn my advisor...I sent her my first incest transcription..to read it in parts...it is just so graphic and the role of mothers...I wonder what is the purpose to bring that in

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- is it about showing women's collusion or is it about 'telling the truth' or is it about showing how they kept it a secret...or how they managed to have both women...mother and daughter...is it just that sense of entitlement..i think it is more than that..it is more than just because they can..they can..but they have to put other things in place to continue..like William's talk about the fear..if it was only entitlement..then why is there a need to secure the secrecy through fear....it is not just about entitlement..there is something more.....I am yawning..i am just tired after these interviews..the incest cases particularly so...

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# Diary Reflections

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- 11 May 2010
- And as I write my dissertation, chapter two which is about incest or intrafamilial rape, since incest does not really (or legally really) describe the coercion and force of the rape within the family. And I am struggling with naming this chapter....to show within the title the violence within the relation of father and daughter..i am not going to make a distinction between step or biological..i don't see the relevance of this mute point....but in the naming how do I show her (or womens agency) and not just represent her and them as victims..cos that is what he does..he was all powerful..yet they constantly negotiated their own safety as daughter and mother, at times more successful than other times...yet it was their unity that ultimately stopped this man!!!