

UNDERSTANDING FATHERHOOD AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: INSIGHTS FROM SURVEYS AND POPULATION COHORTS

Calls for research on men's roles in families in sub-Saharan Africa, especially as fathers, and for greater efforts to engage men in family-based interventions and policy requires detailed data on family functioning, parenting and parenthood. However, in resource poor countries within the region few family or birth cohort studies have been conducted and household and population-based studies continue to be the main sources of empirical data about families. In this brief report, we review the data on fathers and father involvement collected in South Africa (e.g., national household surveys, household panel surveys, demographic surveillance systems, birth cohort) and suggest ways to improve ongoing empirical data collection efforts.

Keywords: fathers, families, sub-Saharan Africa, measurement, study design

There have been calls for increased research on men's roles in families in sub-Saharan Africa, especially as fathers, and for greater efforts to engage men in a wide variety of family-based HIV prevention and reproductive, maternal and child health interventions and policy (Engle, 1997; Mbivzo & Bassett, 1996; Richter et al., 2009). Similar advances in scholarship, policy and intervention research related to men, par-

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ticularly fathers, in the United States and Europe were accompanied by improvements in the data available about parenting and families in large, nationally representative family surveys and birth cohorts (Batty, 2009; Cabrera et al., 2002; Eggebeen, 2002). In contrast, very few dedicated family studies have been conducted in resource poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa where household and population-based studies continue to be the main sources of empirical data about families. Even though many household surveys, household panel studies and demographic surveillance systems are conducted in the region, typically few questions are asked about parents and parenting, especially with respect to fathers and fathering.

The dearth of detailed data about family functioning in general, and men's involvement in families in particular, is of concern. At best gaps in knowledge remain unfilled. At worst, a lack of data or poor measures misrepresent fathering and father involvement, opening the way for incautious interpretations about men's absence or limited contribution to family life (O'Laughlin, 1998; Posel & Devey, 2006; Townsend, 1997).

In this brief report, we review empirical data on fathers and father involvement in South Africa collected in national household surveys, household panel surveys, demographic surveillance systems, and a birth cohort study. We consider the extent to which existing data adequately measure the identity and participation of fathers in families. We conclude with suggestions about ways to enhance the contribution of ongoing data collection efforts to promoting research and interventions related to men and families.

CONTEXT OF FATHERING IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa was chosen as a country case study within sub-Saharan Africa for several reasons. There is an established body of multi-disciplinary work on fatherhood research and policy in South Africa (Richter, 2006). Fathers have recently been a focus in high profile NGO and government programmes on HIV prevention, reproductive health and gender-based violence, for example (Brothers for Life, 2010; Sonkhe Gender Justice Network, 2010). South Africa has considerably more resources (financial, scientific, logistics) than most other sub-Saharan African countries for research and data collection. A birth cohort study, one of only two longitudinal family studies in Africa, is conducted in the Soweto area of Greater Johannesburg (Richter et al., 2004). In addition, South Africa has several national and provincial cross-sectional and panel household surveys, as well as three ongoing demographic surveillance systems.

The context for fathers and families in South Africa also illustrates many of the challenges for empirical data collection pertinent to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa; most notably measuring the involvement of non-resident and social fathers. Families in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa are characterised by very high levels of residential separation between biological fathers and their children (Jones, 1992; Jones, 1993). The widespread pattern of families "dispersing" between different households for reasons including work and schooling, was fostered by highly regulated apartheid-era systems of labour migration and *bantustan* settlements but still continues today (Murray, 1980; Sharp, 1994; Spiegel, 1987). Labour migration compounded by family dispersal and economic insecurity has also contributed to a long-term decline in marriage and increasing non-marital fertility rates (Budlender et al., 2005; Hosegood et al., 2009b; Preston-Whyte, 1978).

Paternity and fathering are important aspects of men's identity in South Africa (Hunter, 2006; Hunter, 2008; Mkhize, 2006; Morrell, 2006). While young children born to unmarried parents will often live with their mothers, most children will be acknowledged by their father and paternal kin (Preston-Whyte, 1974, 1993; Russell, 2003). While studies in rural areas of South Africa have reported that less than half all children are co-resident with their biological fathers at birth (Hosegood et al., 2009a), it is very common for children to be considered part of maternal and paternal households and move between them (Madhavan et al., 2008). Social fatherhood is also widely practiced and important for men and families in South Africa (Mkhize, 2004). Many men are involved in fathering of step-children non-biological children. Social fatherhood in South Africa is very common whether formally through fostering or adoption or more typically informally. Many factors contribute to the extent of involvement by men in the raising non-biological children including cultural practices that emphasise collective responsibility of the extended family in child-rearing, high levels of long-term migration, relationship dissolution and re-partnering, and the high level of rate of paternal orphaning due to the severe HIV epidemic and other causes of premature male mortality (Hosegood et al., 2009b; Hunter, 2006; Jones, 1992; Mkhize, 2006).

Detailed observations of different dimensions of men's involvement in families in South Africa, particularly in relation to children, are scarce (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Co-residence has been shown to have only limited utility as an indicator of father involvement in South Africa given the context of labour migration, household fluidity and non-marital childbearing (Brookes et al., 2004; Moultrie & Timæus, 2001). The involvement of fathers in financial and material provision is undoubtedly central and a dimension about which most is known (Hunter, 2006; Madhavan & Townsend, 2007; Madhavan et al., 2008; Wilson, 2006). Qualitative studies reporting men's own accounts of their involvement report father involvement in a wide range of traditional and non-traditional roles including intimate physical care, education, play, emotional engagement, organisation, and monitoring (Montgomery et al., 2006; Ramphela, 1993; Swartz & Bhana, 2009).

EMPIRICAL DATA ON FATHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA: AVAILABILITY AND CONSTRAINTS

In this section, we describe data on fathers, fatherhood and fathering collected in South African household surveys, demographic surveillance systems and birth cohort. We relate these data to issues in conceptualising, measuring and collecting data about men and families. Table 1 summarises data about fathers collected in two national cross-sectional household surveys (South African DHS, 2003 and General Household Survey (GHS), 2006); a national household panel survey (National Income and Dynamics Survey (NIDS), 2008/9); two provincial household panel surveys (KwaZulu Income Dynamics Study (KIDS), 1993-2004 and Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS), 2002-2006); a birth cohort study (Birth to Twenty (BT20) study, 1990-ongoing); and two demographic surveillance systems (Africa Centre Demographic Information System (ACDIS), 2000-ongoing and Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System (AHDSS), 1992-ongoing). While varying in terms of their design, purpose and study populations, with the exception of the birth cohort study, the primary sampling and enumeration unit used

Table 1
Data Collected about Fathers in Selected South African National Household Surveys, Birth Cohort Studies, Household Panel Surveys and Demographic Surveillance Systems¹

Name	Birth to Twenty
Year	1992-ongoing
Design	Birth cohort of 3273 children born in the metropolitan area of Johannesburg-Soweto in 1990.
Data collected about fathers	<i>Child all ages:</i> Identity of father-figure whether father-figure is a resident or non-resident household member <i>Children aged 18 years:</i> Identity of biological father, survival status of biological father, financial support by biological father and amount of support, contact with biological father, co-residence with biological father, biological father responsibilities with regards to child rearing. <i>Children aged 15 years:</i> Feelings towards being a father <i>Paternity:</i> Information about childbearing is collected prospectively. Individuals in the birth cohort who become young biological fathers are eligible for recruitment into a separate study of young fathers. http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Health/Research/BirthTo20/
Further info	
Name	South Africa Demographic and Health Survey²
Year	1998
Design	Nationally representative household survey of 12,000 women between the ages of 15 and 49 years.
Data collected about fathers	The survey administers three questionnaires: a Household Questionnaire, a Woman's Questionnaire and an Adult Health Questionnaire. Households surveyed include at least one eligible woman aged 15-49 years. Only resident household members and visitors on night prior to survey are recorded. In every second household, all men and women aged 15 and above were selected to receive an Adult Health Questionnaire. <i>Child 15 years and younger:</i> Survival status of biological father, identity of biological father where father is a household member.
Further info	<i>Identified resident fathers:</i> Demographic information collected during the DHS household members questionnaire. A sub-sample of identified fathers will be among the men selected for to participate in an adult health interview. http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pub_details.cfm?ID=360
Name	General Household Survey (GHS)³
Year	2002-2007
Design	Annual national household survey conducted by Statistics South Africa. The 2002 GHS included 26,287 households in which

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Data collected about fathers	only individuals who were resident at least four nights a week were included. <i>All individuals: Survival status of father (biological or social not specified), identity of father where father is a resident co-member of household.</i>
Further info	<i>Identified resident fathers:</i> Demographic and socio-economic information collected on individuals in the GHS. http://www.statssa.gov.za/additional_services/quest_archive_social.asp
Name	Africa Centre Demographic Information System (ACDIS)
Year	2000-ongoing
Design	Demographic surveillance system of approximately 11,000 households resident in an area of northern KwaZulu-Natal province. Longitudinal bi-annual follow-up of approximately 89,000 resident and non-resident household members. Routine data collection focuses on demographic and health information. Special surveys are conducted periodically including socio-economic, HIV and sexual behaviour surveys.
Data collected about fathers	<i>Individuals of all ages:</i> Survival status of biological fathers, identity of biological father where father is a resident or non-resident member of household <i>For children 18 years and younger:</i> Person with primary responsibility for school fees (option to report father) Person responsibility for day-to-day care (option to report father)
Further info	<i>Identified co-member fathers:</i> Longitudinal demographic and socio-economic information collected by ACDIS. A sub-sample of fathers 15 years and older will have been interviewed once or more in special HIV and sexual behaviour surveys. In the 2003/4 sexual behaviour survey information about paternity (number of children ever born) was asked of men 15-54 years. http://www.africacentre.ac.za/
Name	Agincourt DSS (AHDSS)
Year	1992-ongoing
Design	Demographic surveillance system of approximately 82,000 members of households in the Agincourt sub-district of the Bush-buckridge district of Mpumalanga province. Longitudinal annual follow-up of households with routine demographic and health data collection. Special data collection modules are included in the annual survey including modules on adult health, child grants, and fathering.
Data collected about fathers	<i>Individuals all ages:</i> Identity of biological father where father is resident or non-resident member of household and is the head of the household. <i>For children aged 0-17 years:</i> In the annual census conducted in 2007 and 2008, information was collected about fathers includ-

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Further info	<p>ing whether the father is biological or social, the survival status of fathers, current and previous locations of father, contact with father in past 30 days, father support for school fees in past 30 days, existence of legal order mandating father to pay child support.</p> <p><i>Identified co-member fathers:</i> Collected routinely.</p> <p>http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Health/PublicHealth/Agincourt/</p>
Name	KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (KIDS)
Year	1993, 1998 and 2004
Design	Household panel survey of households in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Fieldwork has been conducted in 1993, 1998 and 2004, with respondents interviewed in 865 households in most recent wave. The focus of study is to measure trends in poverty and changes in the socio-economic condition of households. Resident and non-resident household members are recorded in KIDS.
Data collected about fathers	<p><i>All household members:</i> Identity of father where father is a household member. Survival status of father.</p> <p><i>Resident child under 21 years:</i> Responsibility for day-to-day care (option to report father).</p> <p><i>All residents:</i> Would their father would assist if household experienced financial trouble, fathers' employment and education status, financial and material contributions of household by amount and type (option to report information about fathers within or outside the household that contribute to any member of the household). Questions about contributions by fathers do not specify whether the term 'father' applies only to biological fathers or includes adopted, foster and step-fathers.</p> <p>http://sds.ukzn.ac.za/default.php?11,0,0,0,0</p>
Further info	
Name	Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS)
Year	2002, 2003, 2005, 2006
Design	Panel study of youths and young adults in metropolitan Cape Town. In 2002, the first wave conducted individual and household interviews with 4,800 young people aged 14-22 years. Subsequent waves have continued to follow the youth sample, as well as conducting interviews with their parents and older adults within their households. CAPS collects a wide range of information including schooling, employment, health and family dynamics.
Data collected about fathers	<p><i>All household members:</i> Identity of biological / step-father / adoptive/foster father where father is co-resident household member, survival status of biological father. This information is updated at re-interviews of the household.</p> <p><i>All household members aged 14 years and older:</i> Number of biological children alive and living elsewhere</p> <p><i>Youth sample only:</i> Information is updated at each interview about the presence of biological and social fathers within the household. If biological or social fathers previously identified are no longer co-members, information is collected about the reasons for</p>

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<p>departure and their current employment status. Similarly information about the arrival of a youth's father in household is recorded. Person who helps young person with homework (option to record father), person with primary responsibility for school fees (option to record father).</p>	<p><i>Fathers of youth sample:</i> In wave 3, a sub-sample of parents (fathers or mothers) of youth sample were asked to participate in an interview. Data was collected about their quality of life, attitudes to education, their expectations about the index adolescents future education, employment and marriage, the quality of the parent and index youth relationship, important influences in their own life, and HIV/AIDS. In addition to questions about the index youth (17-25 years), parents were asked about whether they had children 7-16 years and if so, questions were asked about one child in this age group. http://www.caps.uct.ac.za/index.html</p>
<p>Further info</p>	<p>National Income Dynamics Survey (NIDS) ⁴ 2008</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>NIDS is a national household panel survey. The first wave was conducted in 2008 with interviews with respondents in 7,300 households. Resident and non-resident household members are recorded. Data collection will occur every two years. A primary focus of NIDS is household income and expenditure and includes information about intra- and inter-household transfers including those by non-resident fathers.</p>
<p>Year</p>	<p><i>Individuals all ages:</i> Identity of biological father where father is a resident or non-resident household member, survival status of biological father, if father is dead - year of death.</p>
<p>Design</p>	<p><i>Children 15 years and younger:</i> Contact with biological father, whether financial support given by biological father, status of relationship between child's biological parents. Person with primary responsibility for child (option to report father), other people involved in care of the child (option to report father). The NIDS questionnaire specifically notes that for the previous two items the term 'father' would be valid for biological, adoptive, foster or stepfathers.</p>
<p>Data collected about fathers</p>	<p>Adult household members: Amount and type of financial contributions made for a child within or outside the household. http://www.nids.uct.ac.za/home/</p>
<p>Further info</p>	<p><i>General notes:</i> In longitudinal studies the data collected about fathers may differ from wave to wave and we note this where possible. We have not included information that is collected using questions phrased in relation to 'parents' more generally, for example in the case of a question 'Who chose the school you are currently attending?' where the option is 'My parents' without distinction between mother or father.</p>

In some surveys, the questionnaires, published papers or available supporting documents do not describe the way in which the term "father" was explained by the fieldworker to the respondent. We note this in the table whilst recognising that those involved in administering the questionnaire may have used a specific definition in training and fieldwork.

¹ A third DSS, the Dikgale DSS is conducted by the University of the North in the Northern Province. We have not included a review the Dikgale

Table 1, notes continued from page 263

DSS given the strong focus on nutritional research in published studies that use data collected in the Dikgale DSS. Furthermore, given the highly selected households and children enrolled we also do not include studies based on surveys or cohorts that were established with a very specific research focus, for example, the Transitions to Adulthood in the Context of HIV/AIDS or the KwaZulu-Natal Longitudinal Study of Orphan Welfare.

²The second South African Demographic and Health Survey was conducted in 2003. This survey included an interview with men in which questions about their paternity histories were asked. However, because the 2003 survey data has not been available we have not included the survey in our summary table.

³Two other repeated national surveys have been conducted by Statistics South Africa: the annual October Household Surveys (OHS) (1993-1999) and the biannual Labour Force Surveys (LFS) (2000-ongoing). The Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD) was another national household survey conducted by SALDRU in 1993. The information available on fathers and the approach to defining households are generally similar in all these surveys to that collected in the General Household Survey i.e. the biological father is identified if a member of the household and some limited information was collected about financial contributions of fathers to the household. A difference between the PSLSD and the OHS, LFS and GHS is the inclusion of resident and non-resident household members. We have included only the GHS in the table as being broadly representative of these types of national household surveys.

⁴Another panel study (PSLSD) conducted in 1993 is not included in the table.

in the other surveys and surveillance systems is that of a household. All these data sources collect some information about each member of a household and his or her relationship to one or more members of the household.

Counting Fathers

In 2006, Posel and Devey concluded that: “*There are currently no data available in South Africa with which we can count and describe all men who are fathers, or identify changes over time.*” This remains the situation as no paternity histories are available from the South African household surveys and studies. Instead information about fathers is collected indirectly in relation to children in the household. The most widely available indicator about biological fathers is his survival status, and his identity in situations where father and child belong to the same household.

Information about paternal survival status and child-father dyads typically refers to biological fathers. Some questionnaires or training guides do not make this explicit but reports of social fathers cannot be distinguished from biological fathers. Information about social fathers is inconsistently collected in the data sources reviewed. Any detailed data on social fathering is collected from the perspective of children within the household. The Birth to Twenty cohort study has collected information about men described as “father figures.” In CAPS, foster-, adopted- or step-fathers are recorded when the social father is co-resident with the child. In other surveys, this information may be imputed for some children indirectly from data collected on intra-household relationships, for example, where the relationship between each member and the head of household is recorded. However, this information cannot be consistently used to identify

father-child pairs in cases where the child's father is not the head of household. None of data sources reviewed ask all men whether they were social fathers to children in or outside the household.

Measures of Father Involvement

Very little information about the involvement of fathers with children is collected in South African household surveys. We examine the available data with reference to Lamb et al.'s (1985) well-known model that groups dimensions of father involvement into accessibility, engagement and responsibility (Lamb et al., 1985). Descriptions of father involvement in South African surveys are primarily based on a child's access to his biological father; with access narrowly defined as whether the father is alive, and if so, whether he is co-resident. Given the severity of the HIV epidemic in South Africa, there is considerable interest in understanding the impact of parental deaths on children's health and wellbeing. In 2005, 12 percent of children under 18 years in the ACDIS population were paternal orphans and 2 percent were double orphans (Hill et al., 2008). The survival status of biological fathers is asked in all South African cross-sectional surveys, and updated in some of the sources of longitudinal data.

Measuring the accessibility of fathers to their children is complicated in South Africa by high levels of circular labour migration (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2010). Many households, especially in rural areas, include members who whilst living somewhere else, are nonetheless still considered to be part of the household (Russell, 2003). Fathers of young children will often be non-resident members because they have migrated for work or to look for work. Qualitative research in rural South Africa has shown that non-resident fathers belonging to the same household as their child are more available and engaged than non-resident fathers who are not members of the same household (Madhavan et al., 2008). Whilst all data sources examined collect information about whether fathers are resident or not, the definitions of households vary which influences social representations of fathers and children. Where a co-residential concept of household is used, non-resident fathers will be excluded even when considered by respondents to be members of the household (e.g., DHS). In contrast, if household eligibility is defined by membership rather than co-residency, non-resident fathers can be recorded if reported by the household respondents (e.g., ACDIS and Agincourt DSS). Collecting data about the characteristics and involvement of fathers identified on a survey household roster is considerably more straightforward than for fathers whose are not explicitly identified. For fathers on the roster, questions can be formulated for his specific circumstances and any data collected about him in different modules or rounds of data collection will also be available. Some South African surveys and cohort studies have sought to collect information about basic socio-economic characteristics about all biological fathers of children in the household. For example, the 1998 South African DHS asked about the education and employment status of fathers for all children.

Beyond survival and co-residence, information about other dimensions of father involvement are limited and inconsistently collected. Where father engagement and responsibility is investigated, most surveys focus on the topic of financial contributions towards children's food, clothing, school fees and school uniforms. In some surveys, questions are asked directly about financial contributions made by the father (biologi-

cal or social) for each of his children within the household or to children outside the household (e.g., NIDS). However, it is more typical that questions about engagement and responsibility in relation to aspects of children's lives (schooling, meals, intimate personal care, health care) ask only about the person who makes the "largest" contribution or is the "primary" person responsible. Therefore, unless the child's father holds these roles, no information is collected about his involvement. Social and cultural gender norms in South African communities can strongly influence the reporting of father involvement (Montgomery et al., 2006; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). In ACDIS for example, a question is asked about care: "*Who is the main person responsible for NAME's day-to-day care?*" It would be unusual for families to report the child's father as having primary responsibility for caregiving if a child's mother or another woman was present in the household, particularly with respect to young children. Other than a few one-off data collection exercises (e.g., the Birth to Twenty parental questionnaire administered at 18 years), detailed information about the types and amount of specific activities and roles played by fathers have not been collected.

Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Data About Fathers

Whilst most nationally representative household surveys in South Africa have been cross-sectional, South Africa has several sources of longitudinal data including household panels and demographic surveillance systems. There are particular disadvantages to using cross-sectional survey data to explore father involvement in South Africa. A static profile of household composition and functioning cannot capture changes in men's involvement with respect to different children and families. Longitudinal data on fathers, if appropriately measured, can reveal much more about the very dynamic social and residential arrangements of men and families. Age can influence the circumstances under which men become fathers and the way in which they are involved in fathering. Marriage, partnering, childbearing, employment, and migration patterns vary by age but there may also be changes in men's values and attitudes with age and experience. Given low rates of marriage and late age at marriage most young fathers will not be married to or be members of the same household as the mothers of their children (Hosegood et al., 2009a). Circumstances in which older men become fathers or are involved in fathering may be quite different to those of younger men. For example, older men may already have established their own independent households. With high levels of union instability, many men will father children with more than one woman with whom the level and quality of contact and communication may differ and change over time influencing their involvement. Furthermore, changing father roles may also reflect social and cultural norms about appropriate involvement depending on the age and sex of each child. Longitudinal data are required to answer questions about the long-term effects of fathers and fathering for children, other family members, and indeed men themselves.

However, the existing approaches used to collect longitudinal data about fathers in the ongoing studies reviewed present challenges for studying men and families. The most important limitation is that little or no prospective data is collected about fathers who are not household members. Changes in these men's social and economic circumstances may be potentially important influences on family involvement, for example, loss of

employment, remarriage, becoming a father again. However, such information is not currently collected for fathers who are not part of the index household. The exception is questions asked directly about the survival status of fathers of all children in the household (e.g., in ACDIS) (Hosegood et al., 2007). A absence of prospective information about fathers is also an when men cease to be part of the household, for example, upon divorce or out-migration.

Choice of Respondents

For reasons of logistics and cost, household surveys and demographic surveillance systems primarily rely on key household informants to answer routine questions. A knowledgeable adult member of the household is typically selected to answer questions about household composition, basic characteristics of each member, and events such as deaths or migrations. The consequence is that most data about men collected in these surveys are proxy reports rather than reports by men themselves. In the majority of cases, key household respondents are women.

The extent to which proxy informants can provide reliable and valid data on men's paternity and fathering will depend on several aspects including: their knowledge, the type of information that is collected, sensitivity of the questions, social desirability, and, the quality of their relationship.

Studies examining the reliability data reported by proxy household respondents, in particular, mothers in providing data on fathers suggest that proxy respondents are generally good informants for social and demographic characteristics they are less reliable for health and well-being, and poor judges of emotional states and perceptions (Nelson et al., 1994).

With respect to the types of questions currently asked about fathers in household surveys, those related to financial contributions and care responsibility may be at particularly vulnerable to misreporting by proxy respondents. Information about non-resident fathers, particularly fathers who are not members of the households, may not be known by the respondent or interpreted in a particular light. For example, aspects of men's involvement in families may be under-reported where household respondents perceive that a man has behaved irresponsibly towards or abandoned his family (Montgomery et al., 2006). Some surveys and longitudinal studies reviewed conduct interviews specifically with men; however, data collection is focused on the topic of sexual and reproductive health (DHS and DSS) or employment (GHS). Such Interviews are therefore, missed opportunities for collecting data about paternity and fathering directly from men.

Improving Data Collection in South African Household Studies

Despite the conceptual and methodological shortcomings of household-based survey and study design, they will nonetheless continue to be the most common source of empirical data on fathers in South Africa and in the rest of the sub-Saharan Africa. A need for research and policy addressing how best to promote and support positive involvement of men in families justifies efforts to improve the collection of relevant, detailed, and valid data in large, cross-sectional and longitudinal household surveys in Africa

(Desmond & Hosegood, 2011). South Africa is well placed with its multiple, well-resourced repeated surveys and longitudinal studies to develop approaches and instruments that can be adapted for other African settings. While some of these may be particularly dominant features of South African communities, in particular the very large proportion of biological fathers who live apart from their children; these issues are by no means unique. Much can also be learned from efforts to learn more about fathers in other countries, for example, the Fatherhood Research Initiative in the United States (Cabrera et al., 2002). Similarly different approaches to validating and collecting data about and from parents in longitudinal family studies can be explored for their applicability in household-based studies (Tomkins, 2009). In addition, the extensive research exploring how best to measure father involvement provides us with a picture of the diverse circumstances in which men become fathers and the variety of forms men's involvement in families can take.

We suggest that the main priorities are a) to use innovative approaches to collecting data about fathers who are not part of the index household, and b) to identify socially and culturally relevant measures of men's involvement in families; not only the role of biological fathers but all men contributing to child and family health and well-being. In Table 2, we present a list of indicators and measures that could potentially be included in ongoing household surveys or studies in South Africa. The table indicates whether indicators would be collected for all men or with respect to an index child; topics related to biological and social fathers. The suggestions are necessarily generic as their inclusion would require a process of refinement, piloting and validation in a specific study population and research design context. Social fathering for example, unlike biological fathering requires definitions and constructs that are developed and tested locally (Townsend, 2002). We include a suggestion that data could be collected not only about fathers within but also outside the household. As the type of information about fathering becomes more detailed interviews with men are needed. Several ongoing surveys and studies already conduct interviews with men. Furthermore, alternatives to face-to-face interviews successfully in other studies might be usefully explored, for example, telephone interviews (Kirsch, 2002). In a household survey or cohort where a father-child relationship has been openly reported by the household respondents and no paternity tests are used, questions about fathering may not reduce men's willingness to participate in interviews. If information is collected from multiple respondents for example, reports of father-child contact from household respondent and fathers, attention will be needed to examine respondent bias and data validation.

Theoretical and Methodological Implications Beyond South Africa

The picture of South African fatherhood that comes to the fore is one of large numbers of children whose biological fathers are not co-resident and the commonplace situation of men taking on father roles and responsibilities for non-biological children, typically without formal legal recognition or rights. Questions may therefore be asked about whether the case of South Africa needs to be understood as exceptional, particularly given some of the legacies of the unique policies and practices linked to Apartheid. Moreover, it might be assumed that collecting data on fathers and fatherhood

Table 2

Measures of Father Involvement for Improved Data Collection in Household Surveys Related to a) Fathering and Fatherhood for Men in Study Households, and b) Father Identity and Involvement for Index Children in Study Households

A) QUESTIONS ASKED OF ALL MEN WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

Paternity history

History of adoptive, foster, step-father relationships with children

B) QUESTIONS ASKED OF ALL BIOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FATHERS¹

Identification of biological or social children within the household

Characteristics of biological or social children outside the household

Relationship history with child's biological mother and/or primary caregiver

Measures of accessibility

e.g., Frequency of contact with the child

Measures of engagement

e.g., Shared activities (meals together, visiting relatives together)

Measures of responsibility

e.g., Role in decision-making (health care, schooling); financial support

C) QUESTIONS ASKED ABOUT AN INDEX CHILD

Identity of biological or social father within the household²

Survival status of biological and social fathers (date of death, cause of death)

Characteristics of fathers outside the household (age, marital status, education, employment, health, place of residence)³

Father relationship history with child's biological mother and/or primary caregiver

Measures of accessibility

e.g., Frequency of contact with the father

Measures of engagement

e.g., Shared activities (meals together, visiting relatives together)

Measures of responsibility

e.g., Fathers' role in decision-making (health care, schooling); financial support

¹ Given the current approaches used in household surveys, this would be asked only of fathers who are members of the index household. However, as we discuss in the paper, information about fathers outside the household is also important.

² South African surveys differ in the inclusion of resident and non-resident household members. In sources such as ACDIS, members of the household include resident and non-resident men. Thus, providing that a non-resident father is a member of the same household as the child, information recorded about his characteristics will be available.

³ Similar data do not need to be collected for fathers who are members of the household and linked to the child unless not collected as part of the main survey or study.

is considerably more difficult in South Africa than elsewhere and would require specifically tailored study designs. In reality, however, the forms and patterns of fatherhood and father involvement are similar in their diversity of types to those identified in work in Western countries, for example the main permutations of fatherhood described by Marsiglio and colleagues (2000). An exception would be that of polygamous marriage arrangements although these constitute a small and declining proportion of marriages in South Africa. For South African as for international scholars, the need to represent and understand the involvement of non-resident and social fathers is increasingly an important shared issue; one that poses methodological challenges for measurement, conceptualisation, design and analysis across different settings. It is also important to note that as elsewhere, a considerable amount of fathering in South Africa occurs in co-residential two parent families. There is value in comparing empirical findings and theoretical frameworks between different cultural contexts as exemplified in work by Townsend exploring men and families in rural Botswana and suburban U.S.; Roy's comparison of African-American and South African Black fathers using life course theories; and Madhavan and Roy's analysis of how kin support fathering in low income Black communities in the US and South Africa (Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Roy, 2008; Townsend, 2002). While cultural differences are important we need to recognize the similarities that exist across contexts, including marginalization from the labor market and racism. With social inequality increasingly becoming a defining characteristic of so many countries, Black men in South Africa are not unique in facing challenges to positive involvement in families as fathers.

One distinctive feature of fatherhood studies in South Africa and even more so in the region are the limited resources for data collection which influences the types of study designs with which we work. Without support for the kind of detailed, longitudinal data on fathers and family processes available in the U.S. and Europe, we are substantially constrained in our ability to identify the determinants of father involvement and outcomes for children and other family members. When relying on data available from household surveys that have been primarily collected for other purposes, researchers must critically review the data from these sources whilst, as this article demonstrates, identifying ways that these surveys can improve the definitions and data on fathers and families.

In conclusion, the dearth of the data about fathers in South Africa has resulted in a gap in knowledge about the role of fathers at best and a misrepresentation of what they do (or do not do) at worst. Throughout the region, household surveys can be enhanced to improve the data collected about the involvement and impact of fathers, mothers and other people on child and family health and well-being.

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