Europe PMC Funders Group
Author Manuscript
Child Educ. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2013 July 15.

Published in final edited form as:
Child Educ. 2010 ; 86(6): 360–365. doi:10.1080/00094056.2010.10523170.

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

The status of fatherhood and fathering in South Africa

Linda Richter, PhD*,
Human Sciences Research Council and the University of the Witwatersrand

Jeremiah Chikovore, PhD, and
Human Sciences Research Council

Tawanda Makusha, MA
Human Sciences Research Council

Abstract

This paper begins with estimates of fatherhood in South Africa, in the absence of formal measures of paternity. It highlights several salient features of fatherhood in the country, particularly low rates of marriages and father absence from households, and it traces their roots in colonialism and *Apartheid*, the political system in South Africa under which Black people were systematically oppressed. We point out that some forms of father absence illustrate the commitment of men to supporting their families by their willingness to seek migrant work far from their homes. Examples are given of government policies to support fathers and some of the major civil society efforts are described. The paper closes with important themes about fatherhood in work with young children.

Introduction

As in many countries, having an involved father living at home can make a big difference in the life of a young child in South Africa. For one, the household in which they grow up is likely to be better off (Desmond & Desmond, 2006; Jarret, 1994), their mother is likely to feel affirmed and assisted in her role (Richter, 2006), and their nutrition, health care and schooling is likely to be encouraged and supported (Engle, Beardshaw & Loftin, 2005). They will enjoy his protection and benefit from his position in the community (Guma & Henda, 2004). Most of all, they will have the pleasure of receiving and giving love in what is an archetypal relationship – father and child – throughout the world (Lindegger, 2006).

The majority of South Africa's children are, however, not that fortunate. South Africa has the lowest marriage rate on the continent (Richter & Panday, 2006), the second highest rate of father absence in Africa after Namibia (Posel & Devey, 2006), low rates of paternal maintenance for children (Khunou, 2006) and shockingly high rates of abuse and neglect of children by men (Richter & Dawes, 2008). Many of today's young fathers speak with sadness about the fact that they never knew their own fathers and recognize that they lack experience and guidance on father roles and responsibilities (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). In view of this, father presence and involvement in the lives of children is a critical issue for social policy and programmes. At the same time, the development of policies and programmes need the benefit of a detailed understanding of the nature and form of fatherhood in the local context, and how this has been and continues to be shaped by historical and contemporary social forces.

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

*Corresponding author: Professor Linda Richter, Child Youth Family and Social Development, Human Sciences Research Council, 750 Francois Road, Durban 4001, South Africa Ph: +27 31 242 5544 lrichter@hsrc.ac.za.

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

In this paper, we outline some of the major features of fatherhood in South Africa, trace their historical, sociocultural and economic roots, and indicate pointers for those who work with young children on how to encourage and appreciate active fathering in their work with children, parents and families, including men.

Who is a father in South Africa?

While Statistics South Africa collects regular household information through nationally representative household and labour force surveys, as well as the Census, it is difficult to establish who is, or has been, a biological father (Posel & Devey, 2006). This is partly because of the uncertainty that surrounds reported paternity – men may not know they have fathered a child or may prefer not to acknowledge paternity. Counting fathers is important, though in that it acknowledges the crucial role that men can and do play as parents (Morrell, Posel & Devey, 2003). Using the upper and lower limits of several methodologies and inferring fatherhood from information on mothers, marriage, and kin relations between household members, it is estimated that between 45-50 percent of men 15 to 54 years of age have fathered a child in South Africa (Posel & Devey, 2006). But the fact is, we simply do not which or how many men are fathers.

Contributing biologically to the conception of a child, however, does not necessarily make a man into father. In South Africa there exists a very strong conception of a 'social father', an ascribed, as opposed to an attained, status. A saying from one local language, Sepedi, stresses that '*ngwana ga se wa shete, ke wa kgoro*', literally meaning that a sperm does not beget a child A man becomes a father, and is treated with the respect attached to the role, when he takes responsibility for his family and becomes a role model of appropriate behavior for young men (Lesejane, 2006). Acknowledged biological fatherhood, at least as a manifestation of lineage, is a very important element of identity development. Children take their clan name from their father and, in times past, children, like the famed Zulu King Shaka (1787-1828) were humiliated for being fatherless. Today, being considered fatherless generates in children a sense of loss and confusion (Ramphele, 2002). The pain for fathers can also be intense. In the novel, a Three-Letter Plague, Jonny Steinberg's protagonist, Sizwe Magadla, mourns the fact that he hasn't paid "*lobola*", bride-price, and thus the two children he has with his lover are not his own. He feels "castrated, not in the sense that he cannot father children, but in the sense that he cannot father children he can claim as his own – a man without descendents and thus without permanence." (2008, p. 250) In the same vein, Wyschograd asks "Is the loss of the father both as symbol and actuality so frequently cited in contemporary literature as symptomatic of the loss of meaning in present day life merely another episode in this history or is there something unprecedented in the present situation?" (1978, p 249).

Migrant labour and the resulting residential separation of partners, delayed marriage, and the growing delinking of child-bearing from marriage, all mean that many men today are both social and biological fathers. A man may be supporting his sister's children who live in the same household as he does because that is what is required of him as her older brother; he may also pay maintenance for a child of a former partner with whom he has regular contact, but he may not have acknowledged a child of another partner who he no longer sees. Another man may have little contact with his own children in a former household because he has moved in with a woman who has children from her previous relationship and he has become their primary source of support (Mkhize, 2004).

The multiple and shifting constellations of partnerships and parenthood in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have resulted in men and women the world over being caught between traditional and contemporary gender roles within families and in relation to children. South

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

African fathers are not very different from men elsewhere. “Among all the changes going on in the world”, says Anthony Giddens, “none are more important than those happening in our personal lives in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family. There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections with others. It is a revolution advancing unevenly in different regions and cultures, with many resistances” (2003, p. 51).

Absent fathers

Of the South African men who are estimated to be fathers, approximately 50 percent do not have daily contact with their children (Richter & Morrell, 2008). Data from national surveys across the period 1993 to 2007 (see Table 1), suggests that father absence is increasing, partly because HIV/AIDS-related mortality is increasing (Dorrington et al, 2001). In South Africa and the region, the structural separation of men from children and families is a result of a combination of colonization and urbanization which have radically transformed family arrangements and roles over the course of the last century (van Onselen, 1976).

Colonial powers in southern Africa forced people into paid work by levying taxes that required local people to earn money (Howitz, 2001). A pattern of male and, much later, female migration from rural to urban areas was established, with families separated for long periods of time (Posel, 2003). In South Africa, the *Apartheid* policy controlled the movement of people in ways that entrenched migrant labour and disrupted family life. Marriage may be delayed because of the difficulties of negotiating arrangements between families. Moreover, *lobola* (or pride price), previously payable in the form of livestock, was monetized and, more recently, commercialised. Many young men, failing to secure regular employment cannot afford to get married. Not surprisingly, therefore, marriage rates are low.

Our calculations from national data indicate that, at ages 30-34 years, only 37 percent of Black Africans are married, increasing to 51 percent between 35 and 39 years. Being able to live together as partners or to be married is primarily determined by income. For example, between the ages of 35 and 39 years, 56 percent of Black people who earn less than R2500 per month (approximately $400) are likely to be married as compared to 65 percent of those who earn R2500 or more. Similarly, men in the highest earning category are three times more likely to be living with their children, than men in the lowest income category (Desmond & Desmond, 2006). The failure and shame when men feel when they cannot support their children, many being out-of-work, may cause men to avoid being involved with their children. As Mamphele Ramphele puts it “Desertion by fathers is often prompted by their inability to bear the burden of being primary providers. The burden of failure becomes intolerable for those who lack the capacity to generate enough income as uneducated and unskilled labourers. Desertion is not always physical, it can also be emotional. Many men ‘die’ as parents and husbands by indulging in alcohol, drugs or becoming unresponsive to their families (2002, p. 158

In African kinship, children are valued by the whole family (Engle & Breaux, 1998), and children are frequently sent to live with close relatives for varying lengths of time to get to know wider family and to consolidate ties (Anderson, 2004). In addition, *Apartheid* controls and periods of violent resistance disrupted children’s residence and schooling, forcing families to send children to urban areas to access better quality schools, or to rural schools to find stability and safe haven for their children from violent urban protests and school closures (Ntshoe, 2002). Consequently, large numbers of South African children live apart from their parents for longer or shorter periods (Maharaj, Kaufman & Richter, 1998). Based on estimates from 2002, a quarter of South African children live apart from both their

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

parents. The concepts of 'domestic fluidity' (Murray, 1981) and 'stretched' households have been used to describe this dispersion of kin as families try to balance migrant work, rural livelihoods, children's education, and responsibilities for care across extended families (van der Waal, 1996).

The question is: Does physical separation suggest that fathers are not involved with their children? Men's engagement with children may be underestimated if it is measured only in terms of current physical co-residence rather than paternal involvement over time (Townsend et al, 2005) or commitment as demonstrated by remittances paid to support a child. Townsend et al found that men's co-residence and, separately, their engagement with children, is higher in a rural area when studied in more depth, and that it changes over the course of childhood.

Delayed marriage, male migrant labour, and greater economic autonomy among women mean that many children do not live in the same home with their fathers over extended periods of time. Men describe the pain they experience when they leave home to take up work in distant places so that they can earn enough money to support their families. Marlize Rabe interviewed mine workers – most of whom live in single-sex hostels around the gold mines - some of whom only get home to their rural families once a year. All saw economic support for children as core to what it meant to be a good father, and stated that they only undertake the dangerous work underground so they can support their children. One mine worker said "Life is so unfair. I found myself bound to work for a contractor although it pays so little because I could not face my children and tell them I had no job, and that is why I could not provide them with clothing and food. It made me feel irresponsible" (2006: 262).

Helping men to become and stay engaged with their children is a priority in several government policies and programmes run by civil society organizations (CSOs).

Government policy, men and fatherhood

Especially since democratization in 1994, the South African government provides for the support of families, including fathers, in a number of ways, some of which are outlined below But many forms of support for children through fathers depend on recognition of a child by their father, which is needed for a child to be given their father's name. The child's father must register his child's birth in order for the child to receive a birth certificate; without this, a child is registered with their mother's name only (Giese & Smith, 2007). Once a father recognizes his children, the state requires that he supports them, whether or not he is married to the mother, or lives with his children.

Economic support

In South Africa, like in many other countries, tax exemptions are allowed for children, and child support is tax deductible. There is a trend, for example, in the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom – and South Africa - to expand tax credits to benefit families with children, especially working families (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2002). However, in South Africa, unemployment is high (close to 30%) and the informal economy so large, that tax benefits operate mainly for those men with better-than-average salaries, who generally live at home with their children anyway.

South Africa has an extensive social security system to protect vulnerable individuals from destitution and to support families to care for children. An old-age pension facility forms a critical source of support for poor children, and most of the money is spent food, clothing and school fees (Case et al, 2005). In addition, poor children qualify for a monthly Child Support Grant, given to the child's caregiver, including the father. Currently, 8 million

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

South African children benefit from this support. However, for a variety of reasons, including lack of knowledge and accessibility, very few fathers take up the grant, even when they are the primary caregiver of an eligible child (Case et al, 2005).

Social support

Under *Apartheid*, customary marriage was not legally recognized. This caused hardship for children who were considered illegitimate, and for wives who were not accorded the same status as in civil marriages on matters of intestate succession and maintenance (Kaganas & Murray, 1991). A maintenance order could not be made against a person who was not present. Men could thus, and did, evade maintenance orders, leaving women to support children alone (Bonthuys, 2008). The 1998 Act recognized customary marriages and, by implication, polygamy, and obliges the family head to meet the daily needs of his wife (wives) and children (Herbst & du Plessis, 2008). A Constitutional provision protecting a child's best interests now enables an order to ensure the effective enforcement of maintenance. The requirement for fathers to support children, however, exists alongside their right to see their children. As Khunou (2006) points out, custody arrangements favour mothers, and children may suffer when parents get embroiled in protracted conflict over paternal maintenance and access to his children.

In 1996, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) demanded five days paid paternity leave and 20 days paid compassionate and family responsibility leave, noting that men have a responsibility and right to play a role in child rearing, including being supportive to their partner when a child is born. South African legislation now provides for three days paternity leave, but government recognizes the need to extend paternity leave so men can share responsibilities, and allow men more time to bond with their babies.

A National Family Policy drafted by Department of Social Development in 2006 and circulated for discussion has been criticized, amongst others, for the ways in which it deals with men and fatherhood. Hochfeld (2007) argues that the subject of fathers is not given serious attention in the draft policy beyond noting the general trend of father absence and the threat men pose for women and children as a result of violence. Notes. While it is true that alarge number of fathers are absent, tend to take little direct responsibility for domestic and childcare family chores, and are responsible for substantial violence and harm in families,their position in families is still significant. The South African policy contrasts with that in, for example, Britain, which portrays men as resources for their children (Featherstone (2003).

Civil society programmes to increase men's involvement in the lives of children

Civil society organisations in South Africa working to promote constructive male involvement and responsible fatherhood are active and increasingly successful at enlisting men and creating awareness (Peacock & Botha, 2006). Some, such as *Fathers Speak Out* and *Men as Partners*, have as their primary focus reaching men and fathers. *Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training* (ADAPT) seeks to address the role that men can and should play in bringing about a non-violent society. ADAPT also provides counseling on what men can and should be to their children (Peacock & Botha, 2006). The *Men as Partners* (MAP) network attempts to reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS by encouraging men to resist violence against women and children and to become more involved in HIV/AIDS-related prevention, care and support.

The Human Sciences Research Council launched The Fatherhood Project in 2003 aiming to influence social expectations and perceptions about men and their care for children, create a

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

sense of shared responsibility for children's development among men and women, engender broad-based and long-term commitment to men's involvement with children and to rally peer and professional support to enable men to be more involved in children's lives. It opened the project with a photographic exhibition that travelled the country, accompanied by debates and participatory events. The project has evolved into a fully fledged research programme, leading to the publication of the first book on fathers in South Africa (Richter & Morrell, 2006), with continuing studies of father's support for children and the benefits of fatherhood for men.

On the 29th of August 2009, a high-profile campaign, *Brothers For Life*, was launched jointly by, amongst others, the South African National AIDS Council, John Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa and Sonke Gender Justice. With extensive media coverage, *Brothers For Life* is the first national effort that brings together government and civil society to mobilise men across the country to speak out, take action and try to make a positive contribution towards bringing men strongly into the fight against HIV. The main messages of the campaign are expressed as follows:

> "There is a new man in South Africa. A man who takes responsibility for his actions. A man who chooses a single partner over multiple chances with HIV. A man whose self-worth is not determined by the number of women he can have. A man who makes no excuses for unprotected sex, even after drinking. A man who supports his partner and protects his children. A man who respects his woman and never lifts a hand to her. A man that knows that the choices we make today will determine whether we see tomorrow. I am that man and you are my brother".

Implications for work with children

Many young children enter out-of-home child care, preschools, and formal education from families that are dispersed or re-constituted, living with separated parents, step-parents or single parents (Richter, 2006). Messages in the media, class reading books, teacher conversations with pupils and parents' statements to children seem to echo the treasured value in South African society of both a mother and a father in a child's life. When this combines with a child's longing to know their father and to see him regularly, it reinforces pain children feel with respect to father absence, paternal disengagement or neglect.

As already observed, men may desert their ichildren out of shame for not being able to provide for them. Yet studies, including our own, show that children are less concerned about receiving status and possessions from their father than they are about being the recipient of his attention and affection (Richter & Smith, 2006). Children also appreciate the role unemployment played in their fathers' inability to provide for their families, and even empathized with their fathers. These messages are important for men to hear, especially for the many men who are not able to provide materially for their children as a result of unemployment or disability.

The following messages, which also emerged in *The Fatherhood Project*, seem crucial:

- Every child has or had a father somewhere, even if they don't live with or see him very often. Moreover, many men including relatives, step-fathers, or foster-fathers, among other others, play the role of father.
- Children need and want the care of men in their lives. They value the idea of a father or a father-figure. Being usually taught to respect men, children want to spend time with, learn from, and be guided by them. Children also have great fun with men through adventurous and boisterous play and being involved in men's work.

- If men can't live with their children, they can still keep in contact with their children. Children appreciate hearing from their fathers and knowing that their fathers care about them.
- If men can't support their children or provide materially for their children's needs, they can still give them love, affection and support.
- Men need to be kind to their children and not hurt them. Men are so much bigger and stronger than children. Their strength should be used to protect children from harm everywhere: in the neighbourhood, at school, on public transport systems, and in the home.
- Young fathers benefit from staying in contact with their children. Young men who are involved with their children make more effort to protect themselves from harm and to be economically active as a result of knowing that the child they love depends on them.

References

Anderson K. Relatedness and investment in children in South Africa. Human Nature. 2005; 16:1–31.

Beardshaw, T. Taking forward work with men in families. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 306-316.

Bonthuys E. Realizing South African children's basic socio-economic claims against parents and the state: What courts can achieve. International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family. 2008; 22:333–355.

Caribbean Child Development Centre, S. o. C. S.. Men and their families: Discussion guide for use by groups in church, school, community and other settings. University of the West Indies; Kingston, Jamaica: 1994.

Case A, Hosegood V, Lund F. The reach and impact of Child Support Grants: Evidence from KwaZulu-Natal. Development Southern Africa. 2005; 22:467–482.

Chikovore J, Nyström L, Lindmark G, Ahlberg B. Denial and violence: Paradoxes in male perspectives to premarital sex and pregnancy in rural Zimbabwe. African Sociological Review. 2003; 7:53–72.

COSATU. Focus on the employment standards Bill: Defend Worker Rights!. COSATU; 1996.

Department of Social Development. National Family Policy (June), final draft. Department of Social Development; Pretoria: 2006.

Desmond, C.; Desmond, C. HIV/AIDS and the crisis of care for children. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 226-236.

Dorrington, R.; Bourne, D.; Bradshaw, D.; Laubscher, R.; Timaeus, L. The impact of HIV/AIDS on adult mortality in South Africa. Medical Research Council; Cape Town: 2001.

Engle P. The role of men in families: Achieving gender equity and supporting children. Gender and Development. 1997; 5:31–40. [PubMed: 12292613]

Engle, P.; Beardshaw, T.; Loftin, C. The child's right to shared parenting. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 293-305.

Engle, P.; Breaux, C. Father involvement with children: Perspectives from developing countries. Society for Research in Child Development, University of Michigan; MI: 1998. Social Policy Report Volume XII (1)

Featherstone B. Taking Fathers Seriously. British Journal of Social Work. 2003; 33:239–254.

Giddens, A. Runaway world: How globalization is reshaping our lives. Profile Books; London: 2003.

Giese, S.; Smith, L. Rapid appraisal of Home Affairs policy and practice affecting children in South Africa. Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security; Cape Town: 2007.

Guma, M.; Henda, N. The socio-cultural context of child abuse. A betrayal of trust. In: Richter, L.; Dawes, A.; Higson-Smith, C., editors. Sexual abuse of young children in southern Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2004.

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts
Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Herbst M, du Plessis W. Customary Law v Common Law Marriages: A Hybrid Approach in South Africa. Electronic Journal of Comparative Law. 2008; 12:121–128.

Hochfeld T. Missed opportunities: Conservative discourses in the draft National Family Policy of South Africa. International Social Work. 2007; 50:79–91.

Horwitz, S. Migrancy and HIV/AIDS-A historical perspective. Paper read at the AIDS in context International Conference at Witwatersrand University; South Africa. 2001.

HSRC. Leave benefits: Human resources policies and procedures. HSRC Press; Pretoria: 2008.

Jarrett R. Living poor: Family life among single-parent, African-American women. Social Problems. 1994; 41:30–49.

Kaganas F, Murray C. Law and women's rights in South Africa: An overview. ACTA JURIDICA. 1991:1–38.

Kamerman S, Gatenio S. Tax day: how do America's child benefits compare? The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies. 2002 (Issue Brief 4).

Khunou, G. Fathers don't stand a chance: Experience of custody, access and maintenance. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 265-276.

Lesejane, D. Fatherhood from an African cultural perspective. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 173-182.

Lindegger, G. The father in the mind. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 121-131.

Mkhize N. Who is a father? ChildrenFIRST. 2004; 56:3–8.

Morrell R, Posel D, Devey R. Counting fathers in South Africa: Issues of definition, methodology and policy. Social Dynamics. 2003; 29:73–94.

Murray, C. Families divided: The impact of migrant labor in Lesotho. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge: 1981.

Ntshoe I. The impact of political violence on Education in South Africa: Past, present and future. Current Issues in Comparative Education. 2002; 2:62–69.

PAWUSA. Public negotiations. PAWUSA; 2009.

Peacock, D.; Botha, M. The new gender platforms and fatherhood. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 281-292.

Posel, D. Have migration patterns in post-Apartheid South Africa changed?. Paper prepared for Conference on African migration in comparative perspectives; Johannesburg, South Africa. 2003.

Posel, D.; Devey, R. The demographics of fatherhood in South Africa: An analysis of survey data, 1993-2002. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 38-52.

Rabe, M. Being a father in a man's world: The experience of goldmine workers. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 250-264.

Ramphele, M. Steering by the stars: Being young in South Africa. Tafelberg Publishers; Cape Town: 2002.

Richter, L. The Importance of fathering for children. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 53-69.

Richter, L.; Morrell, R. Introduction. In: Richter, L.; Morrell, R., editors. Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. p. 1-12.

Richter, L.; Smith, W. Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2006. Children's views of fathers; p. 155-172.

Richter L, Panday S. Youth conceptions of the transition to adulthood in South Africa: Barriers and opportunities. Sexuality in Africa. 2006; 3:1–4.

Richter L, Dawes A. Child abuse in South Africa: Rights and wrongs. Child Abuse Review. 2008; 17:79–93.

Richter, L.; Morrell, R. Fathering: The role of men in raising children in Africa-Holding up the other half of the sky. In: Garcia, M.; Pence, A.; Evans, J., editors. Africa's future, Africa's challenge:

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts
Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Early childhood care and development in sub-Saharan Africa. World Bank; Washington: 2008. p. 151-166.

Silberschmidt, M. Male disempowerment and male sexuality: Rethinking men and masculinities in rural and urban East Africa. In: Ouzgane, L.; Morrell, R., editors. African masculinities. Palgrave MacMillan; New York: 2005. p. 189-204.

Steinberg, J. Three-letter plague. Jonathan Ball; 2008.

Swartz, S.; Bhana, A. Teenage tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa. HSRC Press; Cape Town: 2009.

The South African Presidency. Calls for an extension of men's three-day paternity leave to a couple of weeks paid leave. 2009.

Townsend, N.; Madhavan, S.; Garey, A. Father presence in Rural South Africa: Incorporating social connection and life course experience. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association; Philadelphia. 2005.

van der Waal C. Rural children and residential instability in the Northern Province of South Africa. Social Dynamics. 1996; 22:31–54.

Van Onselen, C. Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia 1910-1933. Pluto Press; London: 1976.

Wyschogrod E. Sons without fathers: A study in identity and culture. Journal of American Academy of Psychoanalysis. 1978; 6:249–262.

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Europe PMC Funders Author Manuscripts

Table 1

Fathers deceased or absent, 1993-2007 (Statistics South Africa)

Children 15 years and younger	1993 Project for Statistics on Living Standards & Development	1996 October Household Survey	1992 October Household Survey	2002 General Household Survey	2007 Community Survey
Whose fathers are deceased	7.5%	9.2%	9.5%	11.5%	14.1%
Whose fathers are alive but absent from the household	36%	41.6%	-	45.8%	-
Total father absence	43.5%	51%	-	57%	-

Data not available on fathers alive but absent for the years 1992 and 2007 because the question was not asked in the survey.