

Identifying **SELECTED** **GAPS** in South African family research: A focus on **YOUNG FATHERS**

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Overview

1. The issues and the gaps
2. Current Policy Framework
3. White Paper on Families, 2012
4. South African Social Attitudes Survey
5. The *Teenage Tata* study
6. Recommendations



Contribute

Interests-of-child

Families-under-siege

Obstacles

Contact



Barriers

Fathering-important

Care
Rights

Responsibilities

Young-fathers

Current policy framework

1. The “**best interests’ of the child**”
(Children’s Act 2005 and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989)
2. Holistic definition of legal parenthood status – rights and responsibilities – **care, contact, contribute (CCC)**
3. Fathers’ responsibility – contribute; no **right** to care and contact
4. Legal paternity – must ‘**have attempted’ CCC**



White Paper on Families

1. Stable and supportive families important
2. Human rights and family diversity recognised
3. Promote, preserve and strengthen families as goal
4. Strategic and coordinated responses required
5. Involve communities, private sector and civil society
6. Offer training and education
7. Lurking notion of 'moral degeneration'



On fathers...

“While poverty, high rates of unemployment, and **financial constraints** may contribute to large numbers of fathers failing to take responsibility for their children this trend is a cause for concern given the significant **body of evidence** showing the positive effect of the presence and active **involvement of a father in a child’s life chances; academic performance; and social, emotional and cognitive functioning** (Engle et al, 2006; Richter, 2006; Kang & Weber, 2009).”

South African Social Attitudes Survey Sections 2012

- Section 1: Family and Changing Gender Roles
- Section 2: Perceptions of Poverty and Inequality
- Section 3: Dignity, Poverty and Social Grants
- Section 4: Necessities for Children
- Section 5: Family Cohesion
- Section 6: Community Perceptions/Involvement
- Section 7: Views of Marriage and Relationships
- Section 8: Views on Children and Parenting
- Section 9: Respondent Relationship with Partner

SASAS Survey



1. Foci include poverty, grants, child rearing, corporal punishment, IPV
2. Attitudes to marriage (but not remarriage) and types of families
3. **Gendered roles played in homes or families**
4. Expectations of governmental involvement/support
5. **Should government provide education for families?**
6. Fathers...

About now some questions about fathers in general today.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

[*Showcard 1*]

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(Do not know)
183. Most fathers want to have a loving relationship with their children.	1	2	3	4	5	8
184. It is a crisis that many fathers in South Africa do not live with their children.	1	2	3	4	5	8
185. Men perform best as fathers if they are married to the mothers of their children.	1	2	3	4	5	8
186. Fathers should have less responsibility for child rearing (than mothers).	1	2	3	4	5	8
187. You get a lot of respect for being a father.	1	2	3	4	5	8
188. A father will feel inadequate if he cannot provide for his family.	1	2	3	4	5	8
189. The government should do more to help and support fathers.	1	2	3	4	5	8



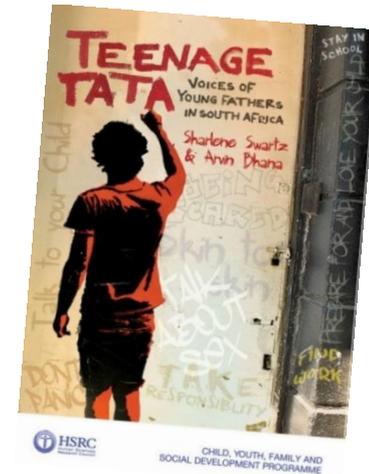
of
families
in South
Africa

**COMING
SOON**

But what of young fathers...?

1. Studies have concentrated on **absent** fathers (2/3rds) and young women
2. **Negative** outcomes for young men (poverty, unemployment, low education, poor health, dependence)
3. Frequent **moral panics** of refused paternity
4. Young fathers have **poor life outcomes**, and are less likely to be involved in children's lives
5. **We don't know how many men become fathers before they turn 18 or 21**

The *Teenage Tata* study



1. Funded by Save the Children Sweden
2. Voice-centred, young father's perspective
3. 27 young men from townships and informal settlements in Durban and Cape Town ('black' and 'Coloured')
4. Living in poverty, below R600 per month
5. Became fathers between 14 -20/17-23
6. 54 individual interviews – 2 with each; 24 social network interviews
7. Workshop to engage and debrief

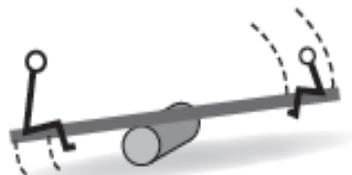


Hindering factors

- Responsibility equated with money.
- Money dominant over emotional engagement.
- Rejection by mother of child's family.
- High unemployment rates.
- Multiple concurrent partnerships.
- Ignorance about basic biology and contraception.
- Foreshortened view of the future.
- Parents hijacking young father's responsibility.
- Geographical separation between father and child.
- The failure of services and sex education.



Young fathers' well-being



and participation in parenting

Enabling features

- A strong sense of responsibility.
- Emotional engagement with children.
- The motivating power of young fathers' absent fathers.
- Ability to articulate the qualities and practices of good fathers.
- The strong roles of young fathers' mothers in their lives.
- The effects of being welcomed by mother of child's family.
- The desire for sex education and mentoring by peers and family.
- Clear aspirations for future involvement with their child.
- A clear recognition of the help they need.
- HIV testing and post-birth contraceptive use.

Teenage Tata study findings

1. Focus on impact of resource constraints
2. Young fathers want an active role – to be good fathers
3. For two reasons – both presence of own father and his absence
4. Have high levels of emotional engagement: shame, fear, excitement and pride; eager to talk
5. They face conceptual, financial, cultural and relational barriers
6. They need support services and access
7. Window of opportunity– changed behaviour

Barriers to young fathering

- 1. Conceptual:** Wide appreciation of fathering practices; stuck on money as ultimate measure
- 2. Financial:** Access denied! Choice between continuing school or getting a job.
- 3. Cultural:** Family makes decisions. Damage payments. Responsibility hijacked.
- 4. Relational barriers:** Commonly rejected by mother of child's family as "not good enough".



Wide understandings of fatherhood

- Being a “hero”
- Playing with your child
- Being involved in daily activities
- Talking to your child
- Living with and caring for your child
- Providing financially

Stuck on money as ultimate measure

“He’s there to help the child... when his child is feeling sad or something. He must talk with him if he wants advice. ... put[ting] her on the right – shows her the right path and that’s a good father. ..I don’t feel like a real father because I’m not working. I’m not supporting and that. A father’s job is to be there and support his family and I’m not doing that and that’s what makes me feel a bit down... ” (Ibrahiem, Bontehewel, age 18/20)

The role of culture

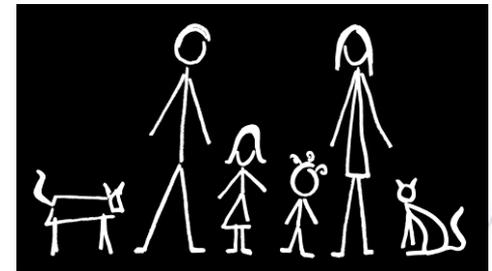
Mother of Child's Uncle: The culture has helped you in a way that you did not have to work on your own. It forced your family to help you with the problem. *And the culture stopped you to be a good father when you were not allowed to come to the family alone, whereas your child is there... The culture can be one of the causes of losing the contact because if you are a young father sometimes you have no say.* So there is someone to decide for you.

The effect of exclusion

Close friend: You did not have to go through the whole process because you are still young. .. it was going to affect your studies. *And I think it stopped you from being a good father by not allowing you to go and see the child from the family of the child's mother. Now it seems like you do not care about him when he is here.*

Recommendations for young fathers

1. Assist young fathers to **claim rights** – scaffolded over time
2. **Broader understanding** of social fatherhood – **CONTACT CARE CONTRIBUTE**
3. **Relationship education** for the whole family
4. Encourage **active involvement**
5. Provide **financial ‘opportunities’**
6. **School crèches???**



“Involve me in the
child’s life **from day
one**... discuss it with
me, **give me advice**”
(Lonwabo, Langa, age
18/24).

