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Mothers, Kin, and Father Involvement in Urban South Africa



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Running Head: Mothers, Kin and Father Involvement

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Key Words: fathers, mothers, kin, South Africa

Abstract

In this paper, we use data from the Birth to Twenty Cohort study in urban South Africa to: 1) describe two dimensions of father involvement - contact and provision of financial support; 2) estimate survival probabilities of father involvement in the early life course of children and 3) identify maternal and kin attributes that are associated with children experiencing not having father involvement. The results show that 30% of children experience not having contact with and 40% not receiving financial support from fathers by the age of 5. Children whose mothers were in union at the time of their birth face lower risks of experiencing both events than those whose mothers were not in union. The presence of non-parental adults in the household increases the risk of children experiencing both events. Maternal orphans face higher risks of experiencing both events but this effect is mediated by the involvement of kin.

It is well documented that mothers strongly affect the extent to which fathers are involved in their children's lives (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Carlson & McLanahan, 2004). Far less is known about how extended kin influence father involvement. South Africa provides an ideal context in which to examine both issues given high rates of unemployment and union instability that has constrained the ability of Black men to be involved in their children's lives (Hunter, 2006; Wilson, 2006).

These factors, combined with cultural norms that prescribe challenging marriage requirements and promote shared responsibility for child rearing among kin, has profoundly influenced the involvement of Black fathers in their children's lives (Morrell & Richter, 2006; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Existing research on the role of fathers is limited to paternal presence (Cunningham, Elo, Herbst, & Hosegood, 2010; King, Fisher, Noubary, Reece, Marais, & Lombard, 2004) and survival (Case & Ardington, 2006) but very little research has focused on father involvement over the early life course or the determinants of father involvement. In this paper, we use data from the Birth to Twenty Cohort study in the greater Johannesburg area to accomplish three objectives: 1) to describe two dimensions of father involvement - contact and provision of financial support – from birth to age 18; 2) to estimate survival probabilities of father involvement in the early life course of children and 3) to examine the extent to which maternal and family factors explain why some children face the experience of not having father involvement sooner than others.

Despite the recognition that fathers can play an important role in their children's lives, research in the South African context is still in its early stages. This contrasts with the growth in scholarship and policy development on fathers in the US and other high-income countries. The value of the current analysis is important for several reasons. One is the conceptualization of fathering which we see as multidimensional, dynamic, and dependent on child's development stage. Borne out of necessity and cultural pressures, fathering among Black men in a low-income context in South Africa is characterized by fluidity, shifting configurations of care, and adaptation over the life

course. In this sense, the South African context offers a unique opportunity to advance understanding of how marginalized men exercise agency in meeting their fathering responsibilities under condition of pervasive social inequality. Two, is the use of the Birth to Twenty dataset which allows us to use a life course perspective in studying father involvement. Three, this analysis contributes to a growing trend to move away from hegemonic models of fathering based on white, middle class (primarily US) norms and considers alternative formulations of supportive fathering in non-Western contexts (Nsamenang, 2010; Schwalb Imaizumi, & Nakazawa, 2004). Finally, the findings from this analysis will make an important contribution to the study of low-income fathers globally and to policy development aimed at strengthening the role of fathers in promoting the well-being of children growing up in disadvantaged contexts.

The challenges that Black men face in South Africa have been well documented. Whereas overall unemployment stood at 24% in 2011, the unemployment rate for Black men was at 28% (Stats SA, 2011). Labor migration, which was institutionalized under *Apartheid* and continues today, has resulted in high rates of residential separation between fathers and their children. As a consequence, households function as ‘stretched’ residential units, with family members ‘dispersed’ between different households for reasons of work, education, care, support and housing (Murray, 1980). In such a context, Black fathers, and men more generally, have lost status in the domestic sphere (Lesejane, 2006) compounded by negative portrayals of fathers as disengaged and irresponsible particularly towards their children (Morrell & Richter, 2006). This perceived “crisis in fatherhood” has resulted in scholarly interest in the role of Black fathers and has prompted intervention efforts to strengthen the involvement of fathers in their children’s lives. Despite myriad assaults on Black families brought on by *Apartheid* and post-*Apartheid* conditions, fathering has always been a crucial aspect of Black family life (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Fathers are expected to provide for their families (Moodie & Ndatshe, 1994; Silberschmidt, 1999) and the

failure to do so is a cause for shame (Wilson, 2006). They are also expected to provide moral guidance and affection to children through communication, play and role modeling (Hunter cited in Reynolds, 1984). Not having a paternal link, made evident in not carrying his surname or acquiring the father's clan name, is cause for great concern for children and youth (Ramphele, 2002; Richter, 2006) and their families (Madhavan, 2010). Others have emphasized the unique contributions of fathers to their children such as the provision of social capital, emotional support, a kin identity, and most importantly, love and care (Morrell, 2006; Nsamenang, 2000).

Montgomery, Hoosegood, Buisza, and Timaeus (2008) highlight Black men's emotional and practical support in families coping with HIV/AIDS in rural South Africa. In order to understand how fathers do or do not meet expectations amidst so many challenges, we first need to utilize an appropriate conceptual framework.

Conceptualizing Father Involvement

Father Presence

Given that most demographic data collection on parent-child relationships tends to be limited to co-residential households, the presence/absence of fathers is the most common indicator of fathers' involvement in their children's lives (Hosegood & Madhavan, 2011). Using this measure, Table 1 shows the proportions of children whose fathers are "present", "absent" and "dead" in selected countries in Africa.

Insert Table 1 here

Lower proportions of children in South Africa and Namibia have present fathers compared to children in Kenya, Mozambique and Malawi and substantially fewer than children in Nigeria where 82.6% of children have a co-resident father. According to the most General Household Survey, only 37% of preschool children in South Africa lived with their fathers (Stats SA, 2011).

If we were to only use this indicator to measure father involvement, we would conclude that the majority of fathers are disconnected from their children in South Africa. However, that would be a limited and potentially misleading conclusion because non co-residence does not necessarily mean 1) not having contact with or 2) not providing financial support for children. Indeed given the high levels of labor migration and high rates of non-cohabitation by parents, relying solely on co-residence is inappropriate for the South African context. The limitations of relying on co-residence have been demonstrated in recent work in a rural context. Townsend, Madhavan, and Garey (2006) showed that even in the youngest cohort, more than 70 percent of children in this population have social connections to their fathers if the definition of connection is extended beyond co-residence. Moreover, Madhavan, Townsend, and Garey (2008) showed that not only are non co-resident fathers able to maintain contact with their children but many also provide financial support.

Multidimensional Approach to Father Involvement

Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine's (1985) conceptualization of father involvement is one way to address the limitations of using father presence. The model has three critical dimensions: access or time spent in the presence of the child, paternal engagement or direct interaction with the child, and taking responsibility for the child's welfare or actively making sure that the child is taken care of. The model has been widely applied in studies of paternal involvement though there has been substantial variation in the ways in which the three components have been operationalized. For example, Hofferth (2003) used time diaries to develop a measure of access; responses to questions on the allocation of tasks to measure responsibility and data on frequency of actions such as hugging and disciplining to measure engagement and found that considerable race/ethnic differences exist in paternal involvement. Flouri and Buchanan (2003) used data from the National Child Development Study in the UK to construct measures of accessibility (outings with

child) and direct interaction (reading and playing) and found that involvement had positive effects on the mental health of adolescents from non-intact families.

Limited by data availability, in this analysis, we focus on two out of the three dimensions: access or time spent in presence of the child and responsibility. Access in this context includes both co-residential and non-residential contact which takes into account high levels of mobility for employment as well as frequent change in union status. Responsibility in this analysis refers to the provision of financial support which is a key determinant of a father's ability to take responsibility for his child's welfare. Whereas the provision of financial support is seen as a universal expectation of fathers (Lamb, 1997), there is variation in expectations and practice of how much and how often fathers provide (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Rangarajan & Gleeson, 1998). While our conceptualization deviates from Lamb et al.'s original model, we believe that it, nonetheless, captures the prevailing norms and expectations in Black communities in South Africa (Morrell & Richter, 2005). One limitation of the model, for the Black South African context, is its focus on biological fathering when we know that social fathers and other kin play an important role in child rearing. Therefore, we incorporate a measure of kin support in our analysis (see details in Methods section).

Determinants of Father Involvement

A number of scholars have highlighted key factors that contribute to sustained father involvement. These factors are conventionally grouped into three categories: paternal attributes, maternal attributes, and family factors. For Black fathers in South Africa, unemployment affects their ability to interact with their children in several ways. First, not being able to provide financially results in shame and depression (Case & Wilson, 2000; Thabane & Guy, 1984) and may cause fathers to disengage. Second, the lack of local employment opportunities forces fathers to leave

home to look for work (Wilson, 2006) which inhibits direct communication with their children and fundamentally disrupts the established family structure (Moodie, 1994). Third is the link between unemployment and union status. Lack of or poor employment prospects limit men's ability to pay bride price and afford a marriage and serves as disincentives for Black women to enter into and/or remain in formal unions (Hunter, 2009). Women's choice to remain unmarried or disengaged from the fathers of their children is likely to have a profound effect on fathers' ability to maintain a consistent relationship with their children (Wilson, 2006). Research on fathers' age at birth of children suggests that men who father children at a young age may be involved at the time of birth but are not emotionally or financially ready to take on the responsibilities of fathering and, therefore, are more likely to disengage than older fathers (Danziger & Radin, 1990). However, Swartz and Bhana, in their study of young fathers in Cape Town, portray at least some of their respondents as highly engaged with their children (2009).

It has been well established that mothers play an important role in mediating the relationship between fathers and their children (Allen & Hawking, 1999; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999). The extent to which mothers support or inhibit father involvement depends on, among other factors, maternal age at the birth of the child, educational attainment and survival. Young mothers may lack the skills to manage the relationship between their children and the fathers effectively. This may also hold true for those mothers who have minimal educational attainment. Mothers' influence on father involvement clearly depends on the relationship she has with the father of her children. Studies have consistently shown that a positive relationship between parents promotes father involvement (Carlson & McLanahan, 2004; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Gottman, 1998). Survival of mothers is likely to have an important effect on father involvement particularly in contexts with high HIV prevalence. While it might be expected that the death of mothers strengthens father involvement as has been found in other African settings, recent studies from

South Africa show that maternal orphans are less likely to be co-members of households with their fathers than non-orphans (Hill, Hosegood, & Newell, 2008; Hosegood, Floyd, Marston, Hill, McGrath, Isingo, Crampin, & Zaba, 2007). In this analysis, we will test whether father involvement following maternal death is mediated by kin involvement.

There is a well-established line of research in Africa that shows that the biological relationship between fathers and their children has to be situated within a larger web of relationships with kin (Lesenjane, 2006; Riesman, 1992; Townsend, 2000) and that kin play an important role in child rearing in the African context (Mkhize, 2004). Unlike Western contexts, fathers' involvement with their children often occurs in the context of extended family for both intact and dissolved unions. Maternal kin, in particular, play a critical role in both child rearing and mediating father involvement where mothers have custody of children. For example, in many Black communities in South Africa, the oldest brother of an unmarried woman with a child would have key paternal responsibilities on behalf of the mother's family and would function as a "social father" (Junod, 1962; Niehaus, 1994). This may include the provision of financial support, moral guidance and practical assistance in school and other activities. Social fathers may relate to children in lieu of or along with biological fathers. However, the influence of extended kin can sometimes be contentious. In their study of fathers in Cape Town, South Africa, Swartz and Bhana (2009) describe how extended kin both facilitate and inhibit young fathers from developing relationships with their children when they are not in a formal union with the mother of the child. US-based research that has examined this relationship quantitatively has found either no effect (Danziger & Radin 1990) or an inhibitive one (Kalil, Ziol-Guest, & Coley, 2005). In this analysis, we will ascertain the relationship between kin influence and the risk of children experiencing an episode of non-involvement with their fathers.

Data and Methods

Data Description: Birth to Twenty (Bt20) is one of the longest running birth cohort studies in Africa situated in the greater Johannesburg-Soweto municipality in South Africa (Sabet, Richter, Ramchandani, Stein, Quigley, & Norris, 2009; Yach, Cameron, Padayachee, Wagstaff, Richter, & Fonn, 1991). The majority of families live in socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances. Bt20 was initiated as an observational, systematic study of human development, health and well-being - from birth extended through to young adulthood. Data collection has covered a broad range of topics including anthropometric measures, nutrition, family composition, socioeconomic circumstances, childcare, parenting, cognitive development, and social experiences at home, school, and in the community. Prospective data collection began in the antenatal period and continued with approximately 21 follow up visits until age 20. Children born between April and June 1990 and resident for at least 6 months in the Soweto-Johannesburg municipality were enrolled into the study (n=3273). The cohort includes Black, White, Indian and Colored children but we limit this analysis to only the Black children (n=2568) who comprise the largest proportion of the cohort. Even though data have been collected through age 20, this analysis uses age 18 as the end point. Table 2 provides selected descriptive characteristics of the cohort at the start of the study.

Insert Table 2 here

A little more than a third of the cohort is comprised of first births and the mean age of mothers at birth of the index child is 25. More than a third of all mothers were married or living together with their partners. The majority of mothers have had at least some secondary school education. We find a similar distribution for fathers on educational attainment though there is a sizeable missing proportion. The household wealth index is computed as quintile rankings based on home ownership, access to regular electricity and ownership of car, TV, fridge and phone. It ranges from 1 (very poor) to 5 (wealthy) and shows highest proportions in the 2nd and 3rd quintile. Finally, we

find that the majority of households are classified as extended family structure though there is, a sizeable number of records with missing data.

Data on Fathers: Data available in Bto20 on father involvement have been collected in two ways. Prospective data collected as part of household rosters to determine father co-residence, and provision of financial support by fathers for most years of data collection. Contact with child (when fathers are not co-resident) was only included for some of the years which means that we may be underestimating father contact for years in which fathers do not appear on the roster and no additional data on contact is available. To address this issue and to fill in other missing prospective data on fathers, a retrospective questionnaire specifically focusing on father involvement over the child's life course was administered at year 18. The questionnaires included detailed information on fathers' co-residence with the child, extent of contact if not co-resident, provision of financial support, and other forms of interaction with the child for every year from birth until age 18. To both maximize our sample size and improve the validity of our measures, we use the retrospective data to supplement the prospective data but always privilege the prospective when it is available. There are two drawbacks that need to be acknowledged. One, most of the data on fathers comes from mothers or other caregivers. Research from the US context has highlighted the potential biases in mothers' reports which consistently show underreporting of father involvement (Coley & Morris, 2002). It is difficult to establish the extent of such bias in the Bt20 data but comparison of mothers' reports of father contact over the life course and fathers' reports of their own involvement suggest potential underreporting. Two, the use of retrospective data introduces problems associated with memory recall the farther back in time that data are sought. However, when we compared retrospective reports of father presence in the 0-2 year period with prospective data for the same time period, we found that 85% of reports matched.

Analytical Sample: Attrition over the course of the BT20 study has been about 30%, mostly occurring during infancy and early childhood when women moved back to their rural homes after giving birth (Norris, Richter & Fleetwood, 2007). A small number of children were lost to follow-up as a result of death. There have been very few withdrawals from the study. After removing non-Black children, the sample is 1942 girls and boys followed up from birth to age 18, out of which, 1563 were administered the retrospective questionnaire. A further 7 were removed because of insufficient data bringing the final analytical sample size to 1557.

Analysis: We include two indicators of father involvement: contact with child and provision of financial support, both treated as dichotomous (1/0) variables. A father is counted as being in contact if he is 1) co-resident with the child (based on household rosters) or 2) in contact with the child but not co-resident. The latter response is based on responses to a question that asks “How often does the Bt20 child have contact with his / her biological father?” Provision of financial support is assessed by the question, “In the past year, who was mainly responsible for the material support of the child.” Each dimension is measured at every year from birth to age 18. However, for the descriptive analysis, we will present each dimension of father involvement by developmental stage. We aggregate years into four key developmental stages: 0-2 (infancy); 3-5 (pre-school), 6-11 (primary school), and 12-18 (early to late adolescence). These age groupings are consistent with key markers of stages of child development (Maccoby, 1998).

To examine survival probabilities of father involvement, we use Kaplan-Meier estimation techniques to determine the probability of children experiencing the event which is defined as “not being co-resident with father”; “not having contact with fathers” and “not having financial support from fathers.” We include children whose fathers were not co-resident, in contact or providing support at birth and set the time of these events at time 0. An observation is censored if event does not occur by the age of 18 when the observation period ends or when the father dies before

the event occurs. Although we recognise that the events of interest could recur, in these analyses we consider only the first observed event.

To examine correlates of father involvement, we use a Cox proportional hazards (PH) model to determine the influence of selected mother and kin characteristics on the risk of children experiencing not being in contact with their fathers and not receiving financial support from fathers. Each child's exposure time is divided into child-years starting at birth and consisting of one-year intervals. The dependent variable is the time to event which is defined in two ways: 1) first experience of not having contact; and 2) first experience of not receiving financial support. The co-variables of interest include 1) maternal characteristics and 3) kin involvement measures. The maternal characteristics include mother's age at birth of child, mother's education at time of birth, mother's union status at time of birth and survival. Maternal union status at time of birth is a dichotomous variable (1 – not in union/not married; 0 – in union/married). Two hundred and twenty eight (228) children became maternal orphans before the age of 18. Kin involvement is measured by 1) number of co-resident non-parental adults and 2) whether the main breadwinner is someone other than a parent. Control variables include child characteristics, namely, sex of child (M/F) and birth order (1-4); paternal attributes, including father's age at birth of child (3 groups; 14-20, 21-30 and 31-55), father's educational level at time of birth, and social class at time of birth (6 rank ordered categories with 0 being unemployed to 6 referring to professional employment), and household wealth at time of birth measured by quintile ranking of asset score (1-5). All co-variables are measured at time of child's birth (time constant) except maternal survival, number of co-resident non-parental adults and access to non-parental breadwinner which are treated as time varying and are measured at the beginning of each period. To test whether the effect of maternal death depends on kin involvement, an interaction term is included.

PH models are widely used because they do not require the specification of the distribution of the baseline hazard. Another advantage of Cox models is the ability to handle missing values.

However, the model is based on the assumption that the hazard ratio is independent of time. In other words, the effect of a covariate remains constant over time. In order to verify this assumption, we included interaction variables with time in the model and found no significant effects thereby confirming that the PH assumptions hold.

Survival bias: In our quest for maximizing sample size by integrating retrospective data with the prospective data, the analytic sample is comprised of only those children who “survived” in the study until year 18. It is possible that those children who were lost to follow up might have had weaker links to their fathers which would, in turn, contribute to an overestimation of father involvement in our analysis. We examined this issue by comparing the means of duration of father contact for children who dropped out and those who did not by age of attrition. With the exception of two attrition periods: 6 months – 2 years and 12-13, none of the differences are significant suggesting that our estimates of father contact in this analysis are not seriously affected by survivor bias.

Findings

Table 3 shows the proportion of children in selected contact and support receipt types across developmental stages. Children whose fathers died at some point in the period are treated as a separate category and not included in the denominators of the other proportions.

Insert Table 3 here

Sixteen percent of children are co-resident with their fathers throughout the entire early infancy period of 0-2 but this figure decreases to 10% in the 3-5 but then increases again in the last two age periods. The figures for full non-resident contact are much higher with about 26% in early

infancy rising to 30% in the 3-5 age group and falling again to a low of approximately 13% in the oldest age group. When we examine partial contact with fathers, we find nearly 50% of children aged 0-2 falling in this category followed by a drop-off to approximately 31% in the last development stage. Conversely, the proportions who have no contact with their fathers gradually increases from around 6% in infancy to 22% in the oldest age group. The proportion of children who receive financial support from their fathers throughout the period decreases from a high of 69% at ages 0-2 to below 40% at the oldest age group. However, the proportions who receive no support during the period is similar across age groups though much higher overall than those who have no contact. In examining the extent of overlap between having contact and receiving financial support (results not shown), it appears that where there is financial support, there is contact but the converse is not necessarily true. We now turn to survival probabilities to gain a better understanding of the timing of non-involvement of fathers in children's lives.

Survival Probabilities

Figure 1 shows survival probabilities for co-residence with father. The event is defined as the first time a child does not co-reside with his/her father.

Insert Figure 1

Most children begin life co-residing with their fathers. About 78% start out in this situation and survivorship declines drastically to less than 40% by age 5 and holds steady at that level until age 18. However, non co-residence does not mean non-contact which is reflected in Figure 2 which incorporates non-residential contact into the event variable. .

Insert Figure 2

Ninety percent of children start out life having contact which tells us that half of the children who were not co-residing with their fathers at birth were, nonetheless, in contact with him. The proportion of children who “survive” without experiencing a “non-contact” event drops to about 55% by age 5. By age 18, only 40% of children have remained in contact with their fathers without disruption. The last curve shows survival probabilities for the receipt of financial support from fathers.

Insert Figure 3

Eighty percent of children start out life receiving financial support from their fathers. The percentage of children who receive support without a disruption drops to 55% by age 5 with a further gradual decline to 45% by age 18.

Correlates of Father Involvement

Tables 4 and 5 shows results from three Cox models predicting the hazards of children first experiencing non-contact (4) and non-provision of financial support (5). We use the less restrictive definition of contact which includes both co-residential and non-residential contact. Model 1 includes only control variables of child, paternal characteristics and household wealth. Model 2 adds maternal attributes and model 3 includes kin involvement and interaction effects of maternal survival and presence of kin.

Insert Table 5 here

Gender of child has no effect in any of the models. Higher birth order, on the other hand, decreases the risk of experiencing a non-contact event in Model 1 but the effect disappears in the subsequent models. None of the paternal characteristics or household wealth has any effect on the risk of experiencing a non-contact event in any of the models. Maternal attributes, as seen in

Models 2 and 3, appears to have strong significant effects. Having an older mother at the time of birth marginally reduces the risk of the event. The most notable effects are for union status and maternal survival. The risk of experiencing an episode of non-contact with fathers for children whose mothers were in a formal union at the time of birth experience is about 50% less than children whose mothers were not in a union. However, children whose mothers die face nearly 3 times the risk of experiencing the event as children whose mothers are alive. Both measures of kin involvement increase the risk of children experiencing non-contact with fathers and the effect is particularly pronounced for the presence of a non parental breadwinner. The effect of the interaction term suggests that the effect of maternal death on father involvement is dependent on the number of non-parental adults in the household. The greater this number, the lower the risk of experiencing the non-contact event for maternal orphans. The inclusion of this interaction term, however, makes the independent effect of maternal death much stronger as would be expected. We now turn to results for experiencing a first “non-provision” of financial support.

Insert Table 6 here

Similar effects are apparent for child attributes, household wealth and mother’s union status at birth as were found for father contact. We find a marginal effect of father’s educational level at the time of child’s birth which disappears in Model 3 when we control for kin involvement. In terms of maternal attributes, children with mothers who were older at the time of birth have a 4% reduction in risk of experiencing the event. The effect of a maternal death is even greater for experiencing the risk of non- provision of financial support than for non- contact. Children who lose a mother face nearly three times the risk of experiencing an episode of non-support from fathers as children who have surviving mothers in Model 2. The inclusion of measures of kin involvement and an interaction term for maternal death with kin involvement in Model 3 produces similar results as for risk of non-contact. The presence of a non-parental breadwinner increases

the risk of children experiencing an episode of non-support from fathers. The effect of the interaction term has similar effects to those seen for non-contact. The larger the number of non-parental adults in the household, the lower the risk of experiencing a period of non-support for maternal orphans. Again, we find that the inclusion of the interaction term makes the independent effect of maternal death much stronger.

Discussion

In this analysis, we set out to understand the ways in which fathers are involved with their children over the early life course of childhood and the extent to which maternal factors and kin presence and support influence their involvement in an urban context in South Africa. Several key findings merit some consideration. First, the majority of children in this cohort have at least some contact with their fathers and enjoy some financial support from their fathers fairly consistently throughout childhood though there is variation across ages. In particular, the increase in proportions of children co-residing with fathers in early adolescence might be a reflection of children moving in with their fathers following remarriage of their mothers. That lower proportions of children receive consistent financial support compared to having contact reflects the challenges brought on by high unemployment that makes it difficult for men to provide for their children. The variation by age may also be capturing fathers' difficulties in meeting age specific needs of children. It may be easier to pay for early childcare needs (diapers, food) than for school related expenses later on in life.

Second, we find that nearly 60% of children experience not co-residing with their fathers, 30% not having contact with non-resident fathers and 40% not receiving support from their fathers in the first 5 years of life. This is similar to findings in the US literature that has documented the waning of father involvement in early childhood (Furstenburg & Harris 1993; Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon,

& Russell, 1998). This is likely a result of instability in the relationship between parents accompanied by changes in partnering by both mothers and fathers. Moreover, fathers may have to manage competing demands that emerge from subsequent childbearing with new partners who are able to make more demands on the man than older partners. Finally, fathers may sense greater social approbation when they do not contact or provide for the mothers of their very young children, an internalised or externalised attitude that might not be as strong for fathers of older children.

Third, we find that maternal attributes are far more important than paternal attributes in influencing father involvement. Children whose mothers were older and in a formal union at the time of birth face lower risks of experiencing either event. Given that 25% of the mothers in our sample were less than 21 at the time of birth, older women in our sample have most likely had a previous birth and therefore more experienced in managing relationships. Older women are likely to be more resourceful in keeping men both in contact with their children and providing support which may be accompanied by greater commitment to the union itself. Even though our measure captures maternal union status, it is quite likely that most of these unions are with the fathers of their children. Fathers who are committed to the mothers of their children when children are born are less likely to break their involvement even in the first 5 years when the relationship is tested and/or eventually dissolves. Finally, we find that children whose mothers die face substantially higher risks of losing both contact with and support from their fathers.

Perhaps the most interesting findings relate to the role of extended kin in children's lives. Our findings suggest that the presence of non-parental adults in the child's household increases the risk of children not having contact with their fathers. If the child has access to a non-parental breadwinner, he/she faces substantially elevated risk of experiencing both non-contact with and non-support from fathers. It is possible that having access to kin who provide financial support

may be a disincentive for fathers to provide financial support to their children. While it is difficult to tell whether fathers are getting “pushed out” by kin influence or whether fathers “disengage,” it is evident that the role of kin is critical in understanding father involvement. The importance of kin involvement is also made evident when we include the interaction effects of maternal death and kin involvement. We find that maternal orphans who live in households with a large number of kin face lower risks of experiencing both an episode of non-contact with and non-support from fathers than orphans who live with fewer number of kin. These findings underscore the complex interaction of parents and extended families in children’s lives in a setting marked by high unemployment, high union instability and some of the world’s highest HIV prevalence rates. On one hand, we have a troubling finding that children who lose a mother might also lose contact with the surviving father, a point that has been noted in other work (Hosegood , Floyd, Marston, Hill, McGrath, Isingo, Crampin, & Zaba, 2007). However, this effect is dependent on the number of co-resident kin. Again, we cannot tell whether kin actively keep fathers involved with their children who have lost their mothers or whether fathers are more motivated to be engaged in the presence of kin. Nor do our data allow us to determine whether kin are maternal or paternal or the interaction with maternal union status at the time of death. This is important because children of intact unions are more likely to be living with paternal kin which would, in turn, influence the extent of paternal involvement. Moreover, other work from rural South Africa shows that the presence of elderly women in the household lowers the odds of mobility for maternal orphans (Madhavan, Schatz, Clark & Collinson, 2012). More work, particularly qualitative, is needed to fully understand these processes.

In interpreting these results, it is important to recognize other limitations of the analysis. First, we limited this analysis to the first event. There is compelling reason to view experience of “no father contact” or “no support provision” as a recurring event. Our initial analysis suggests that 24% of

children experienced “no father contact” and 32% experienced “no provision of support” as temporary events. In a context in which union dynamics are volatile and where the connection to the labor market is tenuous at best for Black men, it would be expected that fathers exit and re-enter children’s lives. Therefore, future analysis should examine involvement trajectories which would reveal the waxing and waning of father involvement. Moreover, recent work suggests that time span of examining father involvement should be expanded to include the prenatal period (Shannon, Natasha, Tamis-LeMonda, & Lamb, in press). Second, is the measurement of co-variates, many of which we have constrained to be time constant in this analysis. While conditions at the time of birth may have a unique effect on the timing of events later on in life, it is important to account for the time varying nature of these co-variates, in particular, marital status of parents.

Future research should also examine the role of mothers in mediating father involvement using other measures. For example, maternal gatekeeping, through which mothers monitor the time that fathers spend with their children, and the quality of that interaction can be examined further by including more nuanced indicators of maternal contact, and the amount of support that mothers provide. Finally, it would be very valuable to incorporate markers of child’s development stage other than age.

Taken together, the analysis presented in this paper and the proposed future research will greatly advance our understanding of how Black men in South Africa manage the myriad challenges of fatherhood amidst substantial uncertainty. Moreover, our analysis underscores the importance of developing context relevant policies, which, in the case of South Africa, should incorporate the role of extended kin in supporting fathers’ efforts to be involved in their children’s lives.

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Table 1. Father's residential status for children (0-14) in selected countries in Africa

	South. Africa	Namibia	Zimbabwe	Kenya	Mozambique	Malawi	Nigeria
Present	41.5	33.8	54.1	64.1	67.6	63.2	82.6
Absent	51.1	57.6	34.5	28.4	24.7	28.5	13.4
Dead	8.4	8.6	11.4	7.5	7.7	8.3	4

Source: Posel and Devey (2006)

Table 2. Selected characteristics of black children in Bto20 cohort at birth

Sex of Child		Paternal Education	
Male	49%	No Schooling	1.1%
Female	51%	Some primary	2.5%
Parity		Completed primary	4.2%
1	36%	Some secondary	21.2%
2	30%	Completed matric	26.1%
3	18%	Post-School	10.7%
4+	16%	Missing	34.2%
Maternal Age (mean)	25	Household Wealth Index	
Mother's Marital Status		1	19.6%
Married	28.9%	2	16.4%
Living Together	7.2%	3	28.9%
Divorced/widowed	.9%	4	16.1%
Single	62.3%	5	7.8%
		Missing	11.2%
Maternal Education		Household Structure	
No Schooling	1.8%	Nuclear Family	21.9%
Some primary	7.3%	Extended Family	53.9%
Completed primary	7.3%	Missing	24.1%
Some secondary	39.5%		
Completed matric	28.9%		
Post-School	7.1%		
Missing	8.1%		
N	2568	N	2568

Table 3: Proportion of children in selected contact and support receipt types across developmental stages *

	0-2	3-5	6-11	12-18
<i>Contact with Father</i>				
Co-resident with father throughout period	15.8% (245)	10.3% (157)	11.6% (171)	14.5% (223)
In contact with father throughout period (non-resident)	26.5% (409)	30.4% (464)	22.6% (333)	13.0% (201)
In contact with father partially throughout period (both co-resident and non-resident)	49.8% (770)	38.9% (593)	36.4% (561)	30.7% (473)
No contact with father in period	5.6% (87)	16.5% (252)	20.9% (322)	21.9% (338)
<i>Financial Support Provision</i>				
Receive financial support from father throughout period	69.3%(1038)	53.8% (817)	48.8% (753)	38.4% (594)
Receive financial support from father partially throughout period	3.7% (55)	18.9% (287)	21.8% (336)	18.2% (281)
Receive no financial support from father in period	24.7% (370)	23.4% (355)	19.6% (302)	21.4% (330)
Dead fathers **	2.3% (35)	3.9% (60)	9.8% (153)	21.6% (337)
Total	1557	1557	1557	1557

Note: Dead fathers removed from denominator of all percentages

*Percentage missing ranges from 0 to 4% across years

**Cumulative percentages

Figure 1. First experience of not co-residing with fathers

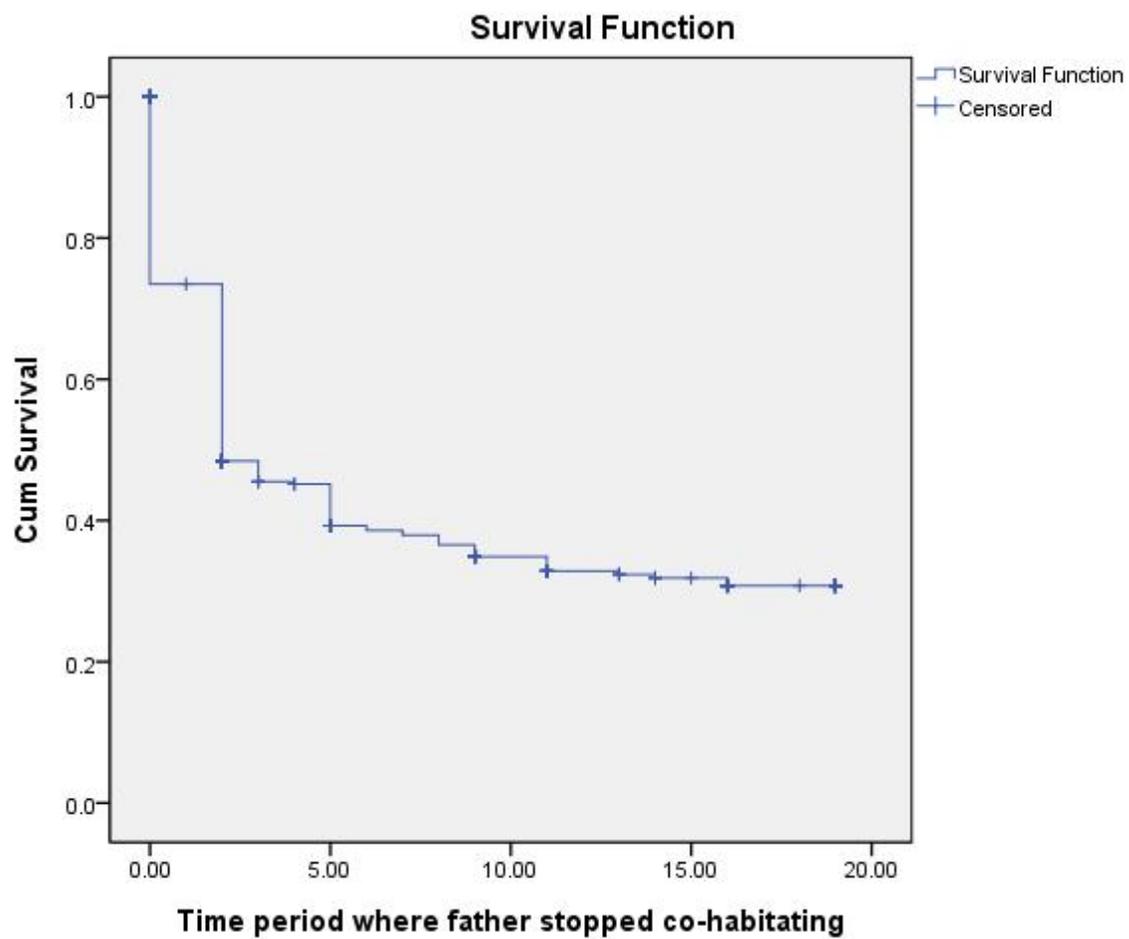


Figure 2: First experience of no contact with fathers

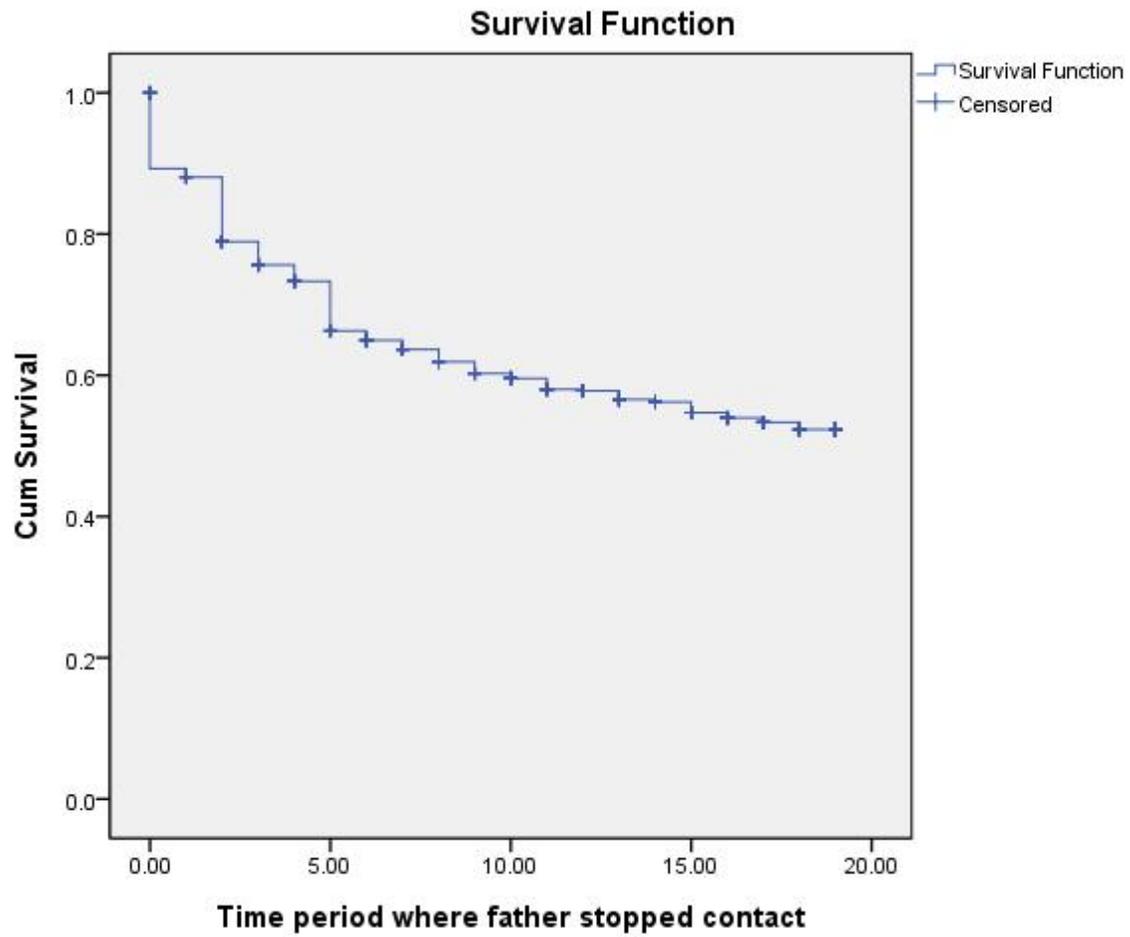


Figure 3. First experience of not receiving financial support from fathers

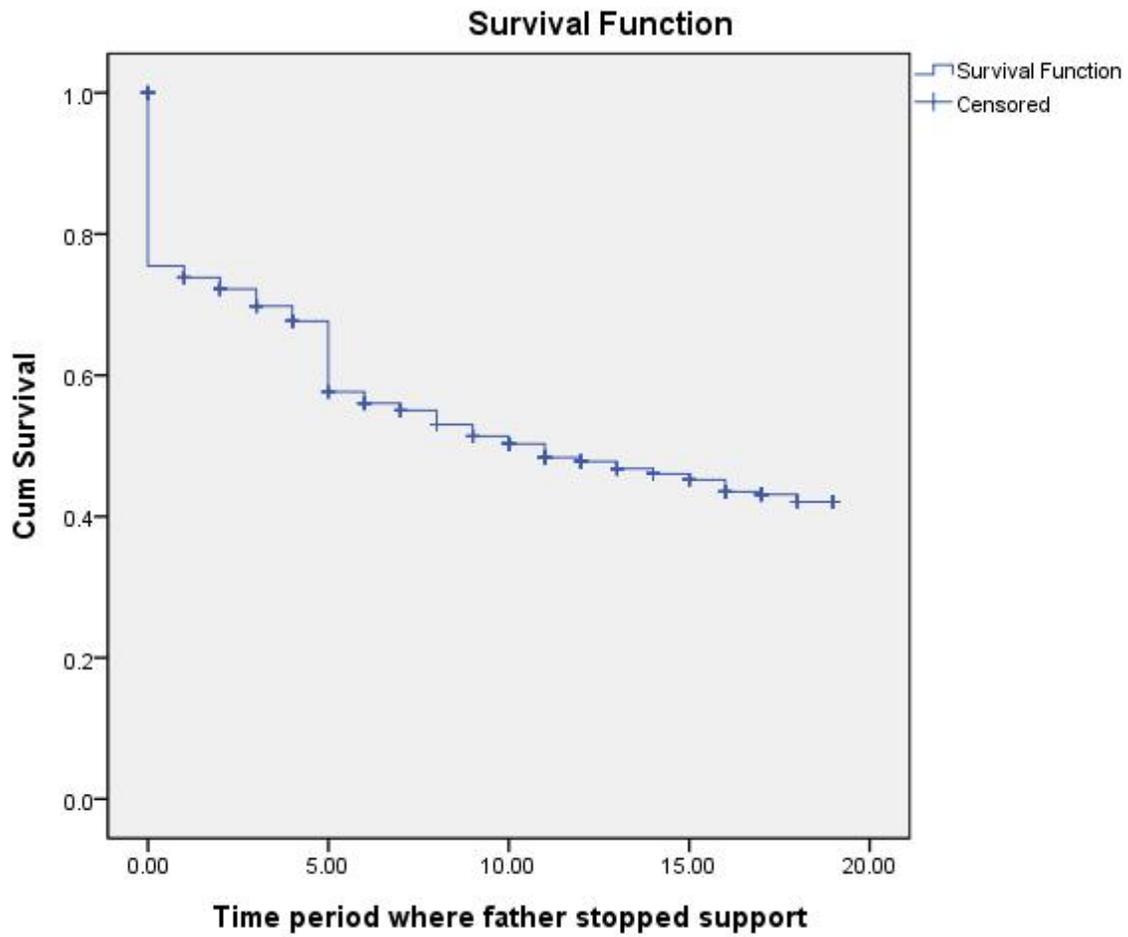


Table 4: Risk of children experiencing a first “non-contact” event by age 18

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
Child Characteristics			
Sex of child (ref: female)	1.001 (.007)	1.023 (.077)	1.028 (.077)
Birth order of child	.834*** (.046)	.996 (.058)	1.012 (.058)
Paternal Characteristics			
Age at birth of child	.994 (.007)	1.008 (.008)	1.009 (.008)
Educational level at birth of child	.974 (.050)	.980 (.052)	1.004 (.052)
Occupational status at birth of child	.953 (.034)	1.020 (.036)	1.050 (.036)
Household Wealth Index (Quintiles 1-5)	1.023 (.033)	1.048 (.034)	1.021 (.034)
Maternal Characteristics			
Age at birth of child	xxxxxxx	.977* (.012)	.988 (.012)
Educational level at birth of child	xxxxxxx	.960 (.046)	.980 (.046)
Marital status at birth of child (ref: not in union)	xxxxxxx	.445*** (.108)	.505***(.110)
Maternal death	xxxxxxx	2.91***(.274)	6.84***(.424)
Kin Involvement			
Number of non-parental adults in household	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	1.039*(.016)
Presence of non-parental breadwinner	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	1.957***(.088)
Maternal Death x Number of non-parental adults in household	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	.594**(.173)
Log Likelihood	9391.462	9268.949	9190.262
N	1395	1395	1395

*** significant at the .001 level; **significant at the .01 level; *significant at the .05 level

Table 5: Risk of children experiencing a first “non-receipt of financial support” event by age 18

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
Child Characteristics			
Sex of child (ref: female)	1.083 (.072)	1.094 (.072)	1.095 (.072)
Birth order of child	.872***(.042)	1.044(.054)	1.061(.054)
Paternal Characteristics			
Age at birth of child	.990 (.007)	1.008 (.007)	1.008 (.008)
Educational level at birth of child	.904* (.034)	.904*(.048)	.918 (.048)
Occupational status at birth of child	.982 (.031)	1.048(.033)	1.070*(.033)
Household Wealth Index (Quintiles 1-5)	1.038 (.031)	1.052 (.032)	1.029 (.032)
Maternal Characteristics			
Age at birth of child	xxxxxxx	.964***(.011)	.972**(.001)
Educational level at birth of child	xxxxxxx	.982 (.053)	1.000 (.044)
Marital status at birth of child (ref: not in union)	xxxxxxx	.587***(.096)	.644***(.099)
Maternal death	xxxxxxx	4.778***(.254)	7.000***(.396)
Kin Involvement			
Number of non-parental adults in household	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	1.012(.016)
Presence of non-parental breadwinner	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	1.788***(.084)
Maternal Death x Number of non-parental adults in household	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	.732***(.154)
Log Likelihood	10828.051	10718.561	10664.734
N	1395	1395	1395

*** significant at the .001 level; **significant at the .01 level; *significant at the .05 level