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National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)**

**DADS: The Developing a Daddy Survey
and the Collaborative Work of the DADS Working Group**

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the activities of the Developing a Daddy Survey (DADS) project, which grew out of the federal fatherhood initiative activities of the mid-1990s. The DADS project builds on existing efforts aimed at collecting data on men as they become fathers and as they go about the task of fathering their children. In this paper, we describe the background, origins and purpose of the DADS project and provide an overview of the studies included in the DADS project. While the DADS project includes six studies, the focus of this paper is on those three studies that examine the beliefs and behaviors of men who are already fathers: The Early Head Start Evaluation- Fatherhood Component (EHS), The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) and the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (Fragile Families). We describe how father involvement is measured in these studies and how the project offers new opportunities for research in fatherhood and father involvement. In addition, we provide notes to researchers interested in using the survey instruments that have been assembled by the DADS project.

Background

The DADS project developed out of the fatherhood research initiative activities of the mid-1990s. These activities sought to fill the gaps and build on existing research efforts on fatherhood by examining how fathers are conceptualized in social policies and how research and policy could jointly strengthen the role of fathers in the family (Tamis-Le Monda and Cabrera, 1999). In the mid-1990s, a number of groups and individuals, including federal statistical agencies, federal and state policy makers, practitioners and the broader family and child well-being research community came to recognize the need for more and better information about being and becoming a father. In 1994, the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics was founded to coordinate and integrate the collection and reporting of data on children and families. The Interagency Forum provided a vehicle to bring together federal officials, private funders, academics and other researchers to study fatherhood.

Later, in 1995, these agencies were asked to assume greater leadership in promoting father involvement by reviewing programs and policies in order to strengthen and highlight the importance of fathers in the lives of children, as well as to improve data collection on fathers (Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998). The agencies were asked to review their activities in light of four goals:

- Ensure, where appropriate and consistent with program objectives, that programs seek to engage and meaningfully include fathers;
- Proactively modify those programs that were designed to serve primarily mothers and children, where appropriate and consistent with program objectives, explicitly to include fathers and strengthen their involvement with their children;
- Include evidence of father involvement and participation, where appropriate, in measuring the success of programs;
- Incorporate fathers, where appropriate, in government-initiated research targeted at children and their families. This goal was taken as a further impetus to collaborate broadly to examine data, theory, measures, analyses and data collection strategies related to fathers.

The term “Fatherhood Initiative” was used to describe the series of conferences and associated activities that were coordinated under the Forum umbrella during 1996 and 1997. Here we describe the activities undertaken toward the fourth goal-addressing government-initiated research. Four major meetings were held between 1996 and 1997¹ as part of this effort. While confirming the importance of fathers to children (and of children to fathers), these conferences highlighted the major limitations of current research on fatherhood, as well as how little was known about fathers and their involvement in the lives of their children. These conferences resulted in recommendations for improving data collection on father involvement and a volume entitled *Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation and Fatherhood*, which was published in 1998 (Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998). This publication presented a detailed analysis of the state of data collection and research on male fertility, family formation, and fathering. It also offered a foundation for additional data collection and research within the public and private sectors.

The *Nurturing Fatherhood* report recommended ten targets of opportunity to improve data and research on fatherhood. These targets of opportunity were intended to fill the gaps and build on existing efforts in research work on fatherhood. These recommendations have guided the work of the Forum to date.

¹ Four workshops were held between March 1996 and March 1997 to examine more closely the role of fathers in families and how research and policy could jointly strengthen the role of the father in the family. These meetings included: (1) The Town Meeting on Fathering and Male Fertility, (March 27,1996); (2) The Conference on the Developmental, Ethnographic and Demographic Perspectives of Fatherhood, (June 11-12, 1996); (3) The Conference on Father Involvement and Methodological Workshop, (October 10-11,1996); and (4) The Conference on Fathering and Male Fertility: Improving Data and Research, (March 13-14,1997).

In April 1997, the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics was formally established by Executive Order. Using the mandate from the President and already planned conferences as building blocks for a comprehensive review, the Forum's Data Collection Committee outlined for the Forum a series of activities designed to improve the capacity of the federal statistical system to conceptualize, measure and gather information from men about their fertility and roles as fathers. The Forum concurred with the recommendations and approved all of the recommended Targets of Opportunity. The DADS project is one of these Targets of Opportunity.

The Issues

As researchers and policy makers pay more attention to the role of fathers in children's lives, calls for better and more detailed data, both at the state and national levels have been sounded. Understanding fathers' involvement with their children is essential for understanding child development and well-being. However, research on fathers in the U.S. has been hampered by limited information, and the data that are available are of unknown reliability and validity, difficult to access, fragmented and come from purposive or convenience samples (NCES, 1999). Moreover, current research is often most informative about in-home fathers and those fathers who are most in contact with their children. Multiple studies indicate that the fathers most likely to be missed in national surveys are never-married fathers, divorced fathers and minority fathers (Rendall et al., 1997; Grafinkel et al., 1997). The implications of this situation are that for some minority child populations, limited father involvement data are available. Data collection efforts are also plagued by undercounting, underreporting, rapidly changing family structures and the exclusion of institutionalized men from surveys (Cherlin and Griffith, 1998). It is evident that there is a lack of comprehensive data on father involvement, data that are critical to understanding the impact of fathers in their children's lives.

Purpose

The DADS project is a vital research and data collection effort aimed at improving the measurement and collection of father involvement data in nationally representative surveys. The primary objective of the DADS project is to build on existing expertise and to enhance the current work of researchers involved in measuring father involvement in large national surveys. The DADS project currently coordinates data collection across six surveys that will provide previously unavailable information on many aspects of father involvement. The work of the DADS project is being facilitated

by Child Trends and supported by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). The general mission of DADS is to capitalize on existing data collection investments, share knowledge, increase comparability across surveys, and provide an integrated view of father involvement that can inform the field and serve as a guide for future projects that measure father involvement (Cabrera et al., 2000). The DADS project has had three immediate goals:

- (1) Develop constructs and measures for questionnaires being developed to measure father involvement in three national studies and hence make constructs scientifically, methodologically and theoretically as strong and as uniform as possible. The three studies are: The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, The Early Head Start Evaluation Study – Fatherhood Component (EHS) and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Birth Cohort (ECLS-B).
- (2) Develop constructs and measures for major national surveys that study men before they become fathers and make constructs scientifically, methodologically and theoretically as strong and as uniform as possible. This is being done in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 97 (NLSY97), National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) and National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health).
- (3) Assemble the survey items measuring father involvement into one document to provide state of the art measures that can be used in other surveys.²

With a little money and a lot of goodwill, an initial meeting of the DADS project was convened in the spring of 1998. In order to increase efficiency and enhance the comparability and scientific rigor of the various research efforts, researchers, data collection experts and agency officials from these national studies have continued to meet periodically, with funding from NICHD and NCES. The project represents partnerships between public and private organizations. Participants have met several times a year to discuss constructs to be included in the several studies, to consider variables that would best measure these constructs, to explore methodological issues and to provide initial feedback on the success of the strategies that are being implemented.

Collectively the six studies in DADS will improve our understanding of the dynamics of father involvement and how this involvement differentiates child development and well-being. Some of these

² This has been completed for the EHS, ECLS-B, and the Fragile Families Studies. It is envisaged that a similar compendium would be completed for the NLSY, NSFG, and the Add Health Studies.

studies will follow national samples of U.S. children and their families from birth and will permit the study of father involvement and its effect on multiple child outcomes. Whereas previous research on fathers has examined only limited aspects of children's lives, these studies will broaden the examination of father involvement to multiple domains of children's lives (NCES, 1999). These studies represent a comprehensive source of data on father involvement that can assist researchers and policy makers in understanding and forming policies on fathers. These surveys will help fill several major gaps in existing data by providing information on how fathers interact with their children, what sustains the father-child relationship and how public policies might foster responsible fathering (Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998).

The Measurement of Father Involvement in the DADS Project

The indicators of father involvement that are used in the DADS studies are organized primarily around the Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1985,1987) tripartite model and Palkovitz's (1997) extended definition of involvement. This framework includes assessments of father *responsibility*, *accessibility* and *engagement*, and is one of the most commonly used in fatherhood research. This three-part framework was designed to facilitate further analysis of father involvement and, while it has not been determined which aspect of father involvement affects particular outcomes for children, it provides a useful framework for identifying "involved fathers" (Tamis-Le Monda and Cabrera, 1999).

Engagement: A father's direct contact and shared interactions with his child in the form of caretaking, play or leisure (Tamis-Le Monda and Cabrera, 1999). Engagement represents time spent in one-on-one interaction with the child (feeding, homework, playing) and does not include time spent in proximity to the child (e.g., sitting in one room while the child plays in the next room).

Accessibility: A father's presence and/or availability to the child, irrespective of the nature or extent of interactions between father and child. Accessibility refers to parental accessibility to the child rather than direct interaction. Cooking in the kitchen while the child plays in the next room or reading the newspaper while the child does homework are examples of accessibility.

Responsibility: Responsibility refers to a father's understanding and meeting of his child's needs, including the provision of economic resources, planning and organizing (Tamis-Le Monda and Cabrera, 1999). This measure taps the extent to which the parent takes responsibility for the child's welfare and care. For example, it involves knowing just when the child needs to go to the pediatrician,

making the appointment and making sure that the child keeps this appointment. Much of the time involved in being a responsible parent is not spent on direct interaction with the child, yet this element tends to be overlooked in surveys.

Fatherhood research benefits in several ways by using the Lamb et al. (1985,1987) model:

- (a) This model provides greater consistency and facilitates comparability in the assessment of father involvement across studies;
- (b) This model recognizes that the definition of father involvement used by independent researchers should include relative as well as absolute measures of father involvement. In other words, in addition to examining the amount of time that fathers spend interacting with their children, it is also necessary to compare the equivalent amount of time that mothers devote to children. This model helps provide a better understanding of father involvement, even if different methods are used to assess the time spent with the child, different sample sizes are used and data collected at multiple time points (Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998).
- (c) This model encourages researchers to incorporate constructs that they might otherwise have ignored. For example, they might have addressed reading to children but ignored parent involvement in health care or attendance at teacher conferences.

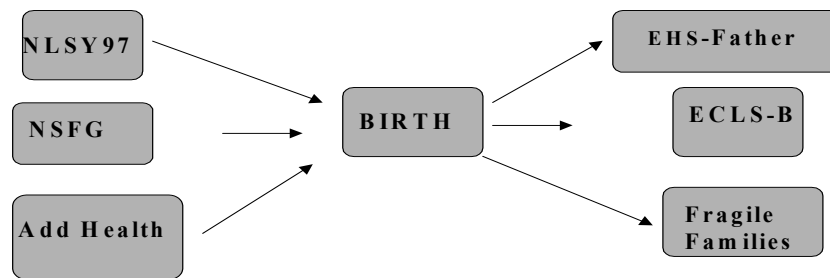
Because the DADS project consists of studies that measure father involvement in different populations, the use of the Lamb et al. (1985,1987) model provides a common framework to encourage consistency in the measurement of father involvement across studies.

Description of Studies in the DADS Project

At present, the national studies that look at father involvement can be divided into two groups— studies that examine (1) **becoming a father** and (2) **being a father**. The Early Head Start Evaluation-Fatherhood Component (EHS), Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) and Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study belong to the group of studies that examine being a father. The constructs used in these studies are provided in **Appendix 1**. The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health Study) and The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) belong to the group that investigates becoming a father. **Figure 1** shows all of the studies in the DADS project as they relate to the birth of a target child. The key features of the study designs and the fatherhood issues addressed by each of the

being a father studies are described below.

**Figure 1:
Studies Currently Included in the DADS Project**



NLSY97- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997
NSFG- National Survey of Family Growth
Add Health- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health
EHS- Early Head Start Evaluation (Fatherhood Component)
ECLS-B- The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort
Fragile Families- Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

DADS: Being a Father

The Early Head Start Evaluation (EHS)

Overview of Study Population and Research Design

The Early Head Start Evaluation (EHS) is a seven-year national study that collects information from 17 local sites on approximately 300 low-income families with children born between September 1995 and July 1998. The Early Head Start Program is a child development program consisting of comprehensive two-generation services that may begin before the child is born and focus on enhancing the child's development and supporting the family as primary educators of their children during the critical first three years of the child's life. The programs are designed to produce outcomes in four domains:

- Child development (including health, resiliency, and social, cognitive, and language development);
- Family development (including parenting and relationships with children, the home environment and family functioning, family health, parent involvement, and economic self-sufficiency);
- Staff development (including professional development and relationships with parents);
- Community development (including enhanced child care quality, community collaboration, and integration of services to support families with young children).

The study employs a randomized design with two conditions: an EHS program group and a control group, including eligible families who applied to EHS at one of the 17 research sites. The control group does not receive EHS services, but can receive any other community services. From 1996 to 2001, children were assessed and parents interviewed when children were 14-, 24- and 36- months old. Parents were also interviewed 6, 15 and 26 months after enrollment and when they exit the program. The design of the EHS includes (a) an impact evaluation, (b) policy studies, and (c) father studies.

Fatherhood Component:

The father studies of the EHS began in 1997. The EHS collects information from both biological and social fathers (non-biological men who are involved in child-rearing roles, activities, duties and responsibilities that fathers are expected to perform and fulfill) as well as mothers. Fathers were added to the study to: (a) broaden the understanding of the family context, (b) learn about the role of fathers in the lives of low-income families, (c) explore how fathers become involved in the EHS program, and (d) examine how EHS programs work to involve fathers in the programs and in the lives of their children. All the families in the Early Head Start Evaluation are low-income and qualify for welfare benefits. The fathers in the study are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, predominantly African-American, Caucasian and Latino. The focus of the father component of the EHS is on father-child interactions in the context of an early intervention program at three time points; when children are 12, 24 and 36 months old. The study collects information on how men interact with their children, how they view themselves in their fathering role and how they perceive their social and emotional investment in the lives of their children.

The fatherhood component of the EHS will fill a significant gap in knowledge by addressing the following questions:

- What the characteristics of social and biological fathers are in EHS communities;
- How father involvement affects children's developmental trajectories within a sample of low-income families; and
- How EHS programs effectively involve fathers and mothers in program activities as the primary educators of their children.

The EHS consists of four strands of father studies.

(a) *Interviews with fathers of children ages 24 and 36 months:* This study collects information on fathers in 14 sites. The data collected through questionnaires administered to 1,000 fathers drawn from 12 of the 17 sites will allow researchers to explore issues relating to fathers and their involvement

in their children's lives and in early childhood intervention programs. This study also collects information on father-toddler interactions in seven sites using videotaping techniques similar to those used to assess mother-toddler interactions for children the same age (Cabrera et al., 1999).

(b) *Study of Mothers and Fathers of Newborns*. This study follows 200 fathers and mothers of newborns. Both parents are interviewed when children are 1-, 3-, 6-, 14-, 24- and 36- months old.

(c) *Local Research Study*. This is a series of special studies focused on fatherhood issues. It entails interviews with fathers and the videotaping of father-child interactions at follow-up periods during the national study data collection process (Cabrera et al., 1999). The data collection procedures used in the Early Head Start Evaluation consist of both quantitative and qualitative questionnaires, as well as videotaped father-child interactions.

(d) *The Practitioners Study*. This study assesses how father-child relationships are influenced by EHS Programs. This study uses a combination of survey and qualitative methods to assess father involvement in program activities. Specific practitioner study components were started in 1997 and include focus groups with fathers, mothers and Early Head Start staff members, in-depth studies of father involvement, a survey of father involvement at 17 research sites and qualitative questions about support needs as part of interviews with fathers.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)

Overview of Study Population and Research Design:

This study follows a nationally representative sample of approximately 16,000 children born in 2001 from 9 months of age through first grade. The study assesses children's development in multiple domains that are critical for later school readiness and academic achievement. A major goal of this study is to understand children's development before they enter school and the factors that influence their physical, emotional, cognitive and language development. The study also examines children's transitions to non-parental care, early education programs, kindergarten and first grade. The ECLS-B is designed to examine how transitions affect child development. These include the transition from home to a group-based early childhood program, from pre-school to regular school, and from kindergarten to first grade. The ECLS-B will provide the range and breadth of data needed to describe more fully children's health, early learning, development and educational experiences (NCES, 1999). The study will specifically provide information on children's growth and development, transitions to out-of-home

programs and school, and school readiness. The findings from the study will broaden our understanding of how these factors affect different groups of families and children, as distinguished by their family structure, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language and minority status (NCES, 1999).

The study examines children's school readiness and preparation for school by exploring the role that parents and families play in preparing children for formal schooling. It also entails an examination of how the education system responds to the diverse backgrounds and experiences that children bring with them as they enter school for the first time (NCES, 1999). Over time, it will provide information on the relationship between children's early care and education experiences and their growth in key developmental domains.

The sample consists of children from a variety of racial and ethnic groups and includes an over-sample of low birth weight children. Twins are also over-sampled. Children are followed longitudinally through the end of first grade. The study is comprised of at least seven waves of data collection occurring from birth through the child's entry into first grade. The first stage of data collection begins when the baby is nine months of age to allow researchers to collect information on prenatal care and the health care of the mother and child. Data are also collected at 18 months, 30 months and 48 months of age (NCES, 1999). The ECLS-B uses a variety of sources for data collection. Information is collected from children's birth certificates and interviews are conducted with children's parents and guardians, care providers, preschool teachers, school administrators and resident fathers.

Fatherhood Component:

Fathers in the ECLS-B will be asked about the roles they play in the lives of their children. The father questionnaire captures information on children's well-being and activities in which the fathers participate with their children. Self-administered questionnaires are collected from resident father when the study child is 9, 18, 30, 48 months of age, and at the beginning of kindergarten and first grade. Non-resident fathers are included in the father sample only after receiving permission from the mother, and are asked to complete a non-resident father questionnaire. Only biological fathers who have had contact with the study child or mother within 3 months of the parent interview are included in the non-resident father sample.

Fathers are asked to provide information about themselves as caregivers. Specifically, the ECLS-B father component will provide information on:

- Demographic, education and employment information about fathers living with sampled children.

- Father's perception of their parental role identification (e.g., specific duties versus “co-parents”), their perception of their financial situation, their involvement and expectations with regard to their children, their families of origin (what kind of fathers they had), and their relationships with their wives/partners.
- Aspects of father-child and father-mother interactions that affect young children’s development over time. This information on fathers is crucial because studies of school-age children and youth have shown that father absence is adversely associated with school performance and that resident and non-resident fathers can have positive effects on school-performances, independent of mothers. Further, this information will permit an understanding of how and when father involvement influences the cognitive ability of young children (Mellgren and Taylor, 1998).

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Overview of Study Population and Research Design:

This study, which began in 1996, is a major research initiative of the Center for Research on Child Wellbeing at Princeton University and the Social Indicators Survey Center at Columbia University. The study is designed to provide information about unmarried parents and their children. It examines issues of non-marital childbearing, welfare reform and the role of fathers. It provides information on the characteristics and capabilities of new unwed fathers, on the relationship between unwed mothers and fathers, on the factors that push unwed parents together or apart and on how public policies affect parents’ behaviors and living arrangements. The study specifically examines the consequences of new welfare regulations for parents, children and society. Data are collected on a sample of married couples. The field work for this study began in 1998.

Data are collected across 20 cities in the United States with populations of more than 200,000. The data are representative of non-marital births in each city, and the full sample will be representative of all non-marital births in large cities in the U.S with a population of 200,000 or more. The total sample size will be 4,800 families, which includes 3,675 unmarried couples and 1,125 married couples. Interviews are scheduled when children are 12, 30 and 48 months old. New mothers are interviewed in the hospital within 48 hours of their child’s birth and fathers are interviewed as soon as possible after the birth.

Fatherhood Component:

The content of the questionnaires in the Fragile Families study covers issues such as prenatal care, mother-father relationships, expectations about fathers' rights and responsibilities, attitudes toward marriage, parents' health, social support and extended kin, knowledge about community resources, education, employment and income. The follow-up interviews examine issues such as experiences with local welfare and child support agencies, domestic violence, parental conflict and access to and use of health care and child care services (Fragile Families, 2000).

This study will provide previously unavailable information on issues such as:

- The conditions and capabilities of new unwed fathers—how many have steady employment and how many fathers and mothers want the father to be involved in child-rearing;
- The quality of relationships among unwed fathers, how many expect to enter into marriage and the levels of conflict and domestic violence in these relationships;
- The factors at work in the relationships of unwed fathers and how policies affect living arrangements; and
- The consequences of welfare reform, child support enforcement and paternity establishment on fathers and their children, and the role of health care and child care policies in different socio-economic environments.

DADS: Becoming a Father

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)

This survey provides information on childbearing, contraception and related aspects of maternal and child health. The NSFG is the principal national source of data on trends and group differences in contraceptive use and effectiveness, use of family planning services, the "wantedness" of births, sexual activity of teenagers and other factors related to the U.S. birth rate. The data are based on personal in-home interviews with a probability sample of women 15-44 years of age. In Cycles 1 and 2 (1973 and 1976) the survey was limited to women who had ever been married or had their own children living with them. In Cycles 3, 4 and 5 (1982, 1988 and 1995), all women 15-44 years of age were sampled. A follow-up telephone interview was conducted in 1990 with the 1988 respondents. Approximately 7,000 men ages 15-49 were interviewed in Cycle 6, which was fielded in October 2001. The National Survey of Adolescent Males (NSAM) has been incorporated into the NSFG and the next round will be fielded in 2002.

Fatherhood Component:

The fatherhood component of the NSFG will increase our understanding of fertility and family formation by interviewing men directly. This study will identify trends and differences in how men become fathers and what they do as fathers. The study will obtain information about men periodically on (a) their sexual activity, contraceptive use, the pregnancies to which they contribute, and the outcomes of these pregnancies; (b) their perceptions of their own and their partners' views of the intendedness of these pregnancies and births and their views of fatherhood and marriage; and (c) what they do as fathers (Mellgren and Taylor, 1998).

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)

This study began in 1995 as a nationally representative study of the health-related behavior of more than 90,000 adolescents in grades 7 through 12. The study provides a comprehensive view of the health and health related behaviors of adolescents, as well as their antecedents and outcomes - personal, interpersonal, familial and environmental. The study uses a longitudinal, multi-level design with independent measurement at the individual, family, peer group, school and community levels. The basic sample was drawn from a stratified probability sample of 80 high schools and associated feeder schools (middle or junior high schools) nationwide. Information on peer networks, non-sensitive health behaviors and school climate was collected in the schools from all students attending grades 7-12. Subsequent interviews were conducted in individuals' homes with a sub sample of more than 20,000 adolescents drawn from the school rosters and at least one of their parents. School policies and characteristics were reported by school administrators in a short questionnaire. Community and neighborhood characteristics were measured using independent sources of existing data. The third wave of interviews with adolescents will be fielded in Spring 2001.

Fatherhood Component:

The Add Health survey will provide information on male adolescents and their family contexts. It will provide information on their peer groups, social networks and friendship network ties. It will provide multiple measures of patterns of association with the school community, the density of centralization of the social network, and the degree to which these patterns are fractured on lines of race, gender or behaviors. It will also provide information on dyadic relationships from adolescent respondents on best friends, romantic partners, sexual partners, the process of pair formation and

dissolution, relationship event sequencing and relationship symmetry. It will also provide information on the schools, neighborhoods and communities of male adolescents (Bearman, Jones and Udry,1997)

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997(NLSY97)

The NLSY consists of a nationally representative sample of approximately 8,700 youths who were 12 to 16 years old as of December 31, 1996. It was designed to document the transition from school to work and the transition to adulthood. This survey collects information about youths' labor market behavior and educational experiences over time. Subject areas in the youth questionnaire include youths' relationships with parents, contact with absent parents, marital and fertility histories, dating, sexual activity, onset of puberty, training, participation in government assistance programs, educational and occupational expectations, time-use, criminal behavior, and alcohol and drug use. Round 4 of this survey was fielded in 2000 and 2001. In Round 5 of this survey, parenting items for both male and female resident and non-resident parents of sampled youth are included. The fatherhood component of this study will include items on shared activities, responsibility and accessibility. Field work for Round 5 began in Fall 2001.

Fatherhood Component:

The fatherhood component of the NLSY97 provides a unique opportunity to examine how male sexual behavior, fertility, cohabitation, marriage and fatherhood affect the education, training, employment and income of young men and women and vice-versa. Longitudinal data obtained directly from young men will provide descriptive information on male behavior. Moreover, these data will support studies of how fertility, family formation and fatherhood affect labor force success and how labor force activities affect families and children. This survey is one of the most important for providing information on the impact of fathering and family formation on the lives of young men because it interviews young men directly and asks questions about their fertility and fathering behaviors rather than gathering data from a secondary source (Mellgren and Taylor, 1998).

DADS: Its unique strengths and how it offers new possibilities for fatherhood research

While the DADS studies consist of six surveys, the three studies that constitute the "being a father" group collect data on different populations of men and each has a different substantive focus. At the same time, each of these studies complements the other. Each of the three "being a father"

studies provides a different perspective on father involvement which contributes to our larger understanding of men's involvement in families. These studies allow for comparable and complementary analyses of father involvement and at the same time facilitate substantive subgroup analyses of residential, non-residential and social fathers. These studies are being conducted at a time of major changes in the role of fathers in families and provide critical data and information on the evolving role of fathers. These DADS studies will fill significant gaps in our understanding of how fathers' relationships affect and are affected by non-marital childbearing, welfare reform, children's developmental trajectories and family development. These are issues that are just beginning to be understood by researchers.

Conducting comparable and complementary analyses of father involvement

The DADS "being a father" studies allow for the examination of a vast array of issues and research questions pertaining to father involvement at multiple time points. One of the many strengths of the being a father studies is that they use the same constructs to measure father involvement, and collect data at varied time points, yet focus on different populations of men. This design allows users of the data to compare the results across varied samples and populations.

Because the data from some of the studies are derived from nationally representative samples, they can support both descriptive and multivariate analyses of father involvement. The large sample sizes and population subgroups facilitate subgroup analyses. Some of the studies also have longitudinal designs which can provide greater insight into causal ordering and underlying processes than would repeated cross-sectional studies (Cherlin and Griffith, 1998). This data will make it possible to conduct growth curve and other analyses of change over time. In addition, information on father involvement has been collected from multiple sources and across multiple domains of child well-being, which facilitates analyses on multiple child outcomes across a wide range of fathers. The studies in the "being a father" group therefore have unique strengths that offer new possibilities for fatherhood research in the realm of descriptive studies, multivariate analyses, longitudinal analyses and growth curve analyses.

Many of the samples in the "being a father" studies allow for descriptive analyses on fathers and father involvement. Possible descriptive analyses include profiles of married, cohabiting, unmarried, divorced and single fathers. Descriptive analyses of these fathers could be done according

to their demographic characteristics (racial, ethnic, social and economic backgrounds), their relationships with their partners and their levels of paternal involvement with their children. In the Early Head Start Evaluation (EHS), and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) for example, descriptions are of fathers of children—the kinds of fathering that children receive. The focus of these two studies is on children. The data also permit analyses of unmarried fathers and how they differ from married fathers, analyses of teen compared with older fathers, analyses of low-income fathers vs. more affluent fathers, biological fathers vs. social fathers (grandfathers and uncles), stepfathers vs. biological fathers, resident vs. non-resident fathers and how these groups differ from each other in their levels of paternal involvement.

The “being a father” surveys allow for multivariate analyses examining the effects of father involvement on child outcomes net of mother involvement, and background differences, such as age, race and marital status. Possible analyses include whether greater father involvement is associated with more positive child outcomes; the effects of paternal involvement on children’s cognitive, and socioemotional, and behavioral development; and whether one aspect of father involvement is more beneficial to children than others (e.g., is *engagement* more important for children than *accessibility* or *responsibility*?).

In addition, the DADS studies allow for the longitudinal analysis of father involvement and its effects on developmental changes in children. Because information is collected at various time points in many studies, it is possible to track changes in father involvement over time, with dependent variables being measures of father involvement. The data also facilitate the examination of growth curves in cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes for some studies such as the ECLS-B. Possible issues that may be addressed through longitudinal analyses include: Does the type, timing and consistency of father involvement over time have an effect on child outcomes? At what point in a child’s development does father involvement matter the most? Is father involvement more important to child development in the first year of life or in the later years of life? Is consistent father involvement associated with growth in cognitive and positive socioemotional and behavioral outcomes over time? Does paternal involvement differentiate children with improving outcomes from those with stable or deteriorating outcomes? Do fathers differ from mothers in the timing of their involvement in children’s lives? How does this change as children grow up and as fathers move through various life cycle stages?

The studies in the “being a father” project will help to fill many gaps in existing data on father

involvement. The longitudinal design of many of these studies also will enable researchers to study multiple developmental outcomes as they are related to father involvement, growth and change over time.

Analyses of resident, non-resident and social fathers

One area of concern in research on father involvement is that of assessing the involvement of different types of fathers in the lives of children. The “being a father” studies facilitate analyses of the role of resident, non-resident and social fathers in the lives of children. Father involvement is to a large extent affected by living arrangements; therefore resident fathers, non-resident fathers and social fathers tend to have different types of interaction with their children. While it is recognized that it is probably inadequate to ask the same questions of mothers and fathers in studies of parenting, it is also recognized that analyses of different groups of fathers is needed to tap into different populations of fathers.

Resident fathers, non-resident fathers and social fathers differ in their levels of involvement with children, and analyses of these differences are critical to improving our understanding of father involvement among each of these groups of fathers. Seltzer and Brandreth (1995) report that when parents live together, mothers have some power to direct men’s interactions with their children. Women, however, have greater control over father-child interaction when fathers and children live apart. Mothers tend to control the schedules of younger children and construct the guidelines within which these children may spend time with their non-resident fathers. However, non-resident fathers may actually have autonomy when they are with their children in the absence of a female moderator and gain considerable experience in child-rearing when they do not have a new partner or wife. Current research is limited in its ability to understand how separate living arrangements affect father involvement and men’s interaction with children, especially when some non-resident fathers are disengaged from child-rearing.

Even less is known about children’s interaction and involvement with social fathers. Social fathers are defined as men who demonstrate parental characteristics who are involved in fathering and the child-rearing roles, activities, duties and responsibilities that fathers are expected to perform and

fulfill that make them a father figure to the child. In many cases these men hold expectations and obligations that society prescribes for fathers, such as being biologically related to the child (grandfather, uncle), associated through marital ties (e.g., stepfathers) or socially related to the mother (cohabiting partner). Prior research also shows that in surveys the question of who the father is has a different meaning for different respondents (Cabrera et al., 1999).

To improve the quality of data collected for this diverse group of fathers, some of the DADS studies have adopted more targeted approaches to data collection. Some DADS studies such as the EHS, use small intensive observational studies that involve direct observation with different groups of fathers. This method has the advantage of providing insights into father-child interactions that can be further tested in larger surveys with close-ended questions (Cherlin and Griffith, 1998). In some studies, such as Fragile Families, births at hospitals have been sampled and parents have been interviewed soon after the birth of a child so that the complications involved in keeping track and identifying fathers is minimized. The varied data collection methods used in many of the studies will provide information that will allow researchers to conduct subgroup analyses of resident, non-resident and social fathers.

Current Activities of the DADS Working Group

The current activities of the DADS group continue to be informed by a number of collaborative working meetings held quarterly and coordinated by Child Trends. While data collection for many of these studies is still ongoing, in 2001, the group:

- Disseminated the fatherhood measures used in the EHS, ECLS-B, and Fragile Families Studies to members of the wider research community who requested this information. There are two separate binders for questions about infants and questions about toddlers. These binders were disseminated with the cost of duplication being shared by participating agencies
- Updated the DADS binders which are a set of notebooks that contain the fatherhood measures from the "being a father" studies.
- Participated and produced a report on the methodological issues associated with measuring father involvement in large-scale surveys.
- Developed an agenda for psychometric analysis.

Next Steps

The future activities of the DADS group are geared toward psychometric analyses, data dissemination and substantive research. The group will target future efforts at:

- The participation of DADS principal investigators and researchers in national meetings to further discuss data collection on fathers in national and local surveys.
- Adding the **becoming a father** measures from the NLSY97, Add Health, and NSFG to the DADS binders.
- Preparation of a DADS refereed journal article.
- Preparation of a DADS collaborative paper on the joint findings across studies for an agreed set of themes.
- Psychometric analysis. The data for most of the fatherhood components of the DADS studies will become available for public use in 2002 or 2003. It is envisioned that some psychometric analyses will be conducted to determine the validity and reliability of measures in the DADS project. The DADS studies will also be assessed for data quality. In cases where variables have little variation, are highly skewed and there are many missing cases, the measures may not be considered for analysis. The estimates will also be benchmarked, using estimates from other national studies so as to establish a fair level of confidence in the usefulness of measures in the studies. Descriptive analyses will also be conducted. Reports based on descriptive results will also be submitted for publication and presented at annual professional meetings and multivariate and longitudinal analyses of many issues. However, what and when such analyses will be completed remains to be determined.

Notes for Users of the DADS Binders

The DADS Binders

The DADS binders are a set of notebooks that contain selected fatherhood measures from the EHS (1, 3, 6, 14, 24 and 36 month), ECLS-B (9 and 18 month) and Fragile Families Studies (birth, and 12 month) that have been assembled into three-ring binders. The binders are available upon request to interested researchers. They represent a comprehensive collection of measures designed to assess father involvement as children and fathers change over time. The questionnaires have been organized

into one document and are arranged by constructs. **Appendix 1 provides details of the constructs and measures used in the surveys.**

How the DADS binders can benefit researchers

Researchers, government officials, policy makers and community leaders from private and non-profit organizations are often faced with inadequate data on fathers and they may wish to collect data to fill this need. By using the DADS binders as an information source in questionnaire design, users can derive information on constructs used to measure the different components of father involvement.

The DADS binders might be considered a “one-stop shop” for information on constructs of father involvement derived from national surveys. These binders allow the user to quickly access information in a more detailed form on constructs of father involvement. The user can easily select a domain of interest and obtain information on constructs/items that may be used to measure a particular dimension of father involvement. The grids that summarize the constructs and items also allow the user to identify which national surveys have used these items to measure specific domains of father involvement.

Contents of the DADS binders

The following is a list of the major dimensions of father involvement contained in the binders:

- (1) Sociodemographics
- (2) Family background
- (3) Accessibility**
- (4) Engagement**
- (5) Responsibility**
- (6) Fertility and Marital/Partner History
- (7) Health, Mental Health, Stressful Life Events
- (8) Father-Mother Relationships
- (9) Relationship with Family Members
- (10) Knowledge and Attitudes About Fatherhood
- (11) Marriage and Gender Role Perceptions
- (12) Social Support Network

(13) Neighborhood and Environment

(14) Child-related Services and Government Programs

How researchers can obtain information on a specific dimension of father involvement

Each binder includes a grid, which summarizes the domains of father involvement and constructs/items included for each domain. The domains of father involvement are in the left column of the grid with the items and constructs listed below each domain. The rows that correspond to each item/construct indicate the national study in which the construct has been used. The three-ring binders are organized according to these domains of father involvement. Users should refer to the section relating to their domain of interest. The actual wording of the questions that were used in national surveys is provided.

Obtaining further information on the full survey instruments used in the DADS studies

The survey instruments for each study are also available to researchers who would like to examine the full content of each study. Additional information on studies as well as requests for questionnaires can be made at the following web site addresses:

- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) website, <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls> ;
- Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study website, <http://crcw.princeton.edu>. Copies of the questionnaires can be obtained from Pam Shebel at: pshebel@princeton.edu;
- Early Head Start website, <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com> ;
- National Survey of Family Growth – The questionnaires for this study are still in the developmental stages and certain details have not been finalized. The 2001 questionnaires will be made available after they are finalized.
- The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997- website, <http://www.stats.bls.gov/nlsy97.htm>;
- Add Health website, <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/whois.html>.

Data Availability

NCES will release data from the ECLS-B for the first time in fall 2003. The first release will

include the 9-month (1) parent interview data, (2) child assessment data and (3) father questionnaire data. NCES will release data on subsequent waves approximately one year after data collection ends (NCES, 1999). The EHS Newborn study public use data set will be released in Fall of 2002. The 14- month, 24- month and 36-month data will be released in Fall of 2002. The baseline data from the Fragile Families study will be released in Spring 2002. The 12 -month and 30-month Fragile Families survey data will be released in the Fall of 2002 and Spring of 2003. Researchers will generally release reports based on the data as well as the data file itself.

Conclusion

The DADS project is one of a number of new path breaking research activities in the field of child and family well-being research and represents an important step towards the introduction of father involvement constructs into nationally representative surveys. The DADS project (specifically the "being a father" studies) has the potential to advance our understanding of how to measure what fathers do with their children, how they are involved and the aspects of father involvement that are linked to child outcomes. These rich data that come from three large-scale surveys will collectively be able to provide a more complete picture of the type, frequency and nature of father involvement in the United States. The project is building new data collection efforts about father involvement based on the best available methodological expertise, both that which is published and that which is currently evolving among researchers working in the field.

To date, the DADS group has coordinated studies that measure the process of being a dad and linked them to studies that look at the process of becoming a dad. These measures have been compiled into two binders, one containing measures appropriate for infants and one containing measures that are appropriate for toddlers. It is envisioned that these studies will change the course of fatherhood research by improving our current knowledge base and facilitating new methodological and substantive analyses on father involvement that will inform the next generation of research.

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