

# Estimating Nonresident Fatherhood: Evidence from the CPS, NSFG, and SIPP

**J. Bart Stykes**

**Wendy D. Manning**

**Susan L. Brown**

*Department of Sociology and  
National Center for Family & Marriage Research*

**National Center for Family & Marriage Research**

**Working Paper Series**

**WP-12-11**

**October 2012**



This research was supported by the National Center for Family & Marriage Research, which is funded by a cooperative agreement, grant number 5 UOI AEO00001-05, between the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Bowling Green State University.

Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the author(s) and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the federal government.

RUNNING HEAD: Estimating Nonresident Fatherhood

**Estimating Nonresident Fatherhood: Evidence from the CPS, NSFG, and SIPP**

J. Bart Stykes

Wendy D. Manning

Susan L. Brown

Department of Sociology and  
National Center for Family and Marriage Research  
Bowling Green State University  
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

## Abstract

Beginning in the 1980s, researchers raised concerns that surveys underestimated nonresident fatherhood due to sampling and questionnaire effects. These concerns led federal data collection efforts to focus limited resources on obtaining reports from custodial mothers rather than nonresident fathers. Recent rounds of the Current Population Survey (CPS), Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) provide researchers a new opportunity to estimate nonresident fatherhood. The quality of recent data on nonresident fathers has not been assessed. Our goal was to provide estimates of contemporary nonresident fatherhood levels using three nationally representative datasets. Results demonstrated the NSFG produced higher estimates of nonresident fatherhood whereas the both the CPS and SIPP produced lower estimates of nonresident fatherhood. Further, the types of nonresident fathers identified in these surveys differed. We discussed sampling and questionnaire effects that might explain differences in estimates.

The growing prevalence of children residing apart from their fathers makes it essential that social scientists accurately measure nonresident fatherhood. Research has shown nonresident fathers can have positive influences on child well-being (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Carlson, 2006) and this has become an increasingly critical issue as two out of five children in the United States did not live with their biological father (Kreider & Ellis, 2011).

The quality of data collected on nonresident fathers in the 1980s and 1990s was extensively scrutinized by a number of prominent scholars who concluded that household surveys underestimated the presence of nonresident fathers (Cherlin, Griffith, & McCarthy, 1983; Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998; Seltzer & Brandeth, 1994; Sorenson, 1997). Marsiglio, Amato, Day, and Lamb's (2000) decade review of research on fatherhood in the 1990s noted that household surveys produced low estimates of nonresident fatherhood because nonresident fathers were more likely to be institutionalized and often simply were not included in household surveys. Others also suggested men were less likely to report having nonresident children than women who readily reported having a child whose father lives elsewhere (Garfinkel et al., 1998; Sorenson, 1998). Although some researchers have argued for the collection of data from both custodial mothers and nonresident fathers (Smock & Manning, 1997), many family scholars have suggested limited resources should be focused on custodial mothers' reports of child support rather than nonresident fathers' reports (Sorenson, 1998). Indeed, from 1987 through the 1990s, no survey of the entire non-institutionalized U.S. population asked questions identifying nonresident fathers (Sorenson, 1998).

However, new federal data collected at both the household and individual levels provide an opportunity to reassess the quality of data on nonresident fathers. Recent cycles of both the CPS and SIPP have re-introduced items identifying nonresident fathers at least 20 years after the

quality of these measures was first called into question for the SIPP and CPS, respectively. In addition, recent rounds of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) provided an individual-level, nationally representative survey on men that included data on fertility histories and parenting. As nonmarital childbearing (Martinez, Daniels, & Chaundra, 2012; Ventura, 2009) and family complexity (Cherlin, 2010) have become increasingly prevalent, nonresident fathers might be more willing to report the presence of nonresident children as their circumstances are now more normative and effectively less stigmatized. Given these changes in contemporary families and the availability of new data, we revisited the debate about household surveys and their ability to identify nonresident fathers.

Using data from the 2011 CPS March Supplement, the Wave 4 Poverty Topical Module from the 2008 SIPP panel, and the 2006-2010 NSFG, we compared estimates of nonresident fathers and considered the socioeconomic characteristics of nonresident fathers identified in these surveys. Our project extended prior research in two ways. First, we provided an update to Sorenson's (1997) estimates for nonresident fathers in household surveys. Second, we expanded on Sorenson's (1997) analyses by comparing estimates of nonresident fathers in both household surveys (CPS and SIPP) and an individual-based survey (the NSFG).

By considering multiple recent surveys, we provided timely, rigorous estimates of nonresident fatherhood. Moreover, estimating nonresident fatherhood has important policy implications given the current political and economic climate. A recent issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* focused on the Great Recession and its impact on young economically disadvantaged men. Specifically, several articles in this 2011 issue addressed key policy implications that were designed to benefit the well-being of children by encouraging and facilitating nonresident father involvement (Smeeding, Garfinkel, & Mincy,

2011). Our analyses provided a first step in evaluating recent surveys and their ability to identify nonresident fathers. Further, by comparing estimates across multiple datasets, we highlighted the differences in estimates produced by various data sources. Ultimately, we found each data source provided different estimates of nonresident fatherhood.

### Background

Researchers previously raised concerns about the underreporting of nonresident fathers in household surveys (e.g., Cherlin et al., 1983; Garfinkel et al., 1998; Seltzer & Brandeth, 1994; Sorenson, 1997). Cherlin et al. (1983) demonstrated the 1980 CPS underreported nonresident fathers and urged that this limitation be acknowledged when discussing results related to nonresident fathering and child support from the CPS. Seltzer and Brandeth (1994) found similar underreports of nonresident fathers in wave one of National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). Lastly, Sorenson (1998) examined both the SIPP and NSFH and concluded these surveys underestimated nonresident fathers by 22-44%, respectively.

A number of factors might contribute to these low estimates. For instance, household surveys typically exclude non-institutionalized populations (e.g., individuals living in correction institutions, military barracks, etc.) which are predominately male. Moreover, household surveys have frequently undercounted young, disadvantaged men (Martin, 2007) suggesting they likely undercounted nonresident fathers as well (e.g. Berger & Langton, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Nelson, 2004; Rendall, Clarke, Peters, Ranjit, & Verropoulou, 1999; Pettit, 2012; Sorenson, 1997). As disadvantaged men are also underrepresented in the U.S. Census, weighting procedures failed to correct for these undercounts in surveys (see Rendall et al., 1999). In addition to systematically omitting nonresident fathers, men included in household surveys were less likely to report having children who lived elsewhere whereas women were more likely to

report having a child whose father currently lives elsewhere (Garfinkel et al., 1998; Sorenson, 1997).

In 1997, a large group of researchers, policy analysts, and public officials convened at the federally sponsored Conference on Fathering and Male Fertility to discuss methods for improving the quality of data about men and fertility. This conference was sponsored by the NICHD, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, and the NICHD Family and Child Well-being Research Network. The *Nurturing Fatherhood* (1998) report synthesized the findings and discussions of this conference. In particular, Sorenson (1998) outlined strategies for improving data quality on nonresident fathers. First, she suggested probes might be used in household surveys to identify more disadvantaged men with nonresident children (Sorenson, 1998). Martin (2007) found that probing did identify men with weak ties to households, and these men were more likely to be nonresident fathers (Berger & Langton, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Nelson, 2004; Randall et al., 1999; Petit, 2012; Sorenson, 1997). Sorenson (1998) also suggested that questionnaire design might influence estimates of nonresident fatherhood. To the best of our knowledge, no one has rigorously assessed the questionnaire effects of measures used to identify nonresident fathers. However, studies (Joyner, Peters, Hynes, Sikora, Taber, & Rendall, 2012; Lindberg, Sonenstein, Martinez, & Marcotte, 1998) have demonstrated the quality of male fertility data is influenced by questionnaire design. For instance, linking questions about fertility to previous romantic partners significantly improved the quality of male fertility data (Joyner et al., 2012; Lindberg et al., 1998). Although these studies did not specifically consider the quality of data on nonresident fathers, we suggest the quality of male fertility data is linked to estimates of nonresident fatherhood. If referencing previous romantic partners increased estimates of fatherhood, a similar strategy should also

increase estimates of nonresident fatherhood, as more men are likely to recall any children (both coresident and nonresident).

### Current Investigation

By comparing estimates of nonresident fathers in three nationally representative surveys of the non-institutionalized U.S. population, we made at least three contributions to the field. First, we assessed the role of sampling by comparing two household surveys (CPS and SIPP) and an individual-based survey (NSFG). In doing so, we expanded Sorenson's (1997) prior work, which relied on two household surveys (the NSFH and SIPP) and could not address differences in a household-based versus an individual-based sampling design. We expected individual-based sampling designs to produce higher estimates of nonresident fatherhood as men having weaker ties to households were less likely to be omitted from an individual-based survey, and self-reports (obtained in an individual-based survey) were more accurate than indirect reports (obtained in a household survey). Second, comparisons of the surveys provided an opportunity to assess questionnaire strategies. In the method section, we discuss both the context of questions in the surveys and the questionnaire strategies used to identify nonresident fathers in these surveys. Ultimately, we anticipated that a more complex questionnaire strategy using multiple questions to ask men about the residency status of each child ever fathered (used by the NSFG) produced higher estimates than the single-question strategy (used by the CPS and SIPP). Third, we provided a descriptive profile of nonresident fathers using each of these nationally representative surveys. We expected the prevalence and types of nonresident fathers identified in each survey might differ somewhat due to differences in sampling design and questionnaire strategies.

### Method

This section presents detailed descriptions of the sampling and questionnaire strategies used by the CPS, SIPP, and NSFG, emphasizing variation across these surveys and the possible effects such variation might have on estimates of nonresident fatherhood. Our analyses proceeded in two steps. First, we addressed the prevalence of nonresident fatherhood by reporting the proportions of men (and fathers/fathers with minor children) who were nonresident fathers. Considering the proportion of fathers who had nonresident children might seem more intuitive. However, we caution these estimates would present additional biases as fathers were identified differently across surveys (Joyner et al., 2012). Second, we explored the types of nonresident fathers who were identified by reporting the distributions of socioeconomic characteristics of nonresident fathers identified in each survey.

#### *Surveys and Samples*

Table 1 presents the years of the survey rounds along with the time frame of reference for questions used to identify nonresident fathers. Although prior CPS cycles (such as the 2008-2010) provided more comparable estimates in terms of survey timing, earlier cycles did not include questions allowing us to identify nonresident fathers. Ultimately, our three data sources covered roughly comparable time periods with differences across surveys never exceeding four years. Therefore, any substantial differences in estimates of nonresident fathers resulted from survey and questionnaire design rather than changes in prevalence of nonresident fatherhood over time.

[Table 1 about here]

Next, we ensured the samples were as comparable as possible. The CPS and SIPP both interviewed respondents who are 15 and older. In contrast, the NSFG sample was limited to

individuals aged 15-44. Therefore, we limited the CPS and SIPP samples to men aged 15-44, so all three samples comprised identical age ranges.

*Sampling Design: Direct versus Proxy Reporting*

The most relevant difference in these datasets is the sampling unit. The CPS and SIPP are household surveys that collect information at the household level. In the CPS, respondents were ‘knowledgeable’ household heads (aged 15 or older) who provided information for all individuals currently living in the household. If the household head had a nonresident child, then this nonresident father was identified through direct reporting. However, if the household head reported that someone else living in the household had a nonresident child, then the nonresident father was identified through proxy reporting. In addition, a household survey, the SIPP relied on a slightly different sampling strategy. In collecting data for the SIPP, survey administrators attempted to interview each individual currently living in the household (15 or older). If a household member could not be interviewed directly, then a ‘knowledgeable’ household member (similar to the CPS household head) served as a proxy respondent. Again, nonresident fathers who reported on their own nonresident children were identified directly whereas nonresident fathers identified by a proxy respondent were identified indirectly. Ultimately, the SIPP’s sampling strategy should identify more nonresident fathers directly than the CPS. In contrast to a household sampling design, the NSFG sampled individuals. Respondents in the NSFG were men aged 15-44 who provided information on their own behaviors and attitudes. In effect, all nonresident fathers identified in the NSFG were identified directly.

We expected the individual-based sampling strategy to produce higher estimates of nonresident fatherhood for two reasons. First, respondents were more knowledgeable about their own fertility histories and the living arrangements of their children, providing more accurate

information. A household head (proxy respondent) having close ties to the “other” household member (such as a parent or spouse/partner) might have been cognizant of his nonresident child(ren). However, household heads (proxy respondents) with weaker ties (such as a roommate or boarder) might have not been aware of a man’s nonresident children. Second, Martin (2007) demonstrated that disadvantaged men were often overlooked in household surveys. Sorenson (1997) also suggested that household surveys (specifically, the 1987-88 NSFH and 1990 SIPP panel) underestimated nonresident fathers by omitting the most disadvantaged men from their sampling frames.

### *Questionnaire Design*

These surveys used unique questions to identify nonresident fathers, which might influence estimates. The CPS and SIPP had a similar method for identifying nonresident fathers. Both surveys focused on sources of income and expenditures within and across households as well as labor force participation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). To assess economic support provided to nonresident children, these surveys first identified nonresident fathers. In contrast, the NSFG was concerned with producing reliable estimates of family life by exploring factors including but not limited to fertility histories and parenting (CDC/National Center for Health Statistics, 2012). In other words, the CPS and SIPP identified nonresident fathers to collect information on child support whereas the NSFG identified nonresident fathers to provide accurate information about men’s fertility histories.

The 2011 March Supplement of the CPS asked household heads, “Does anyone in this household have any children who lived elsewhere with their other parent or guardian at any time during 2010?” The SIPP’s question was quite similar, but it also provided an age restriction on nonresident children. The Poverty Topical Module (Wave 4) of the 2008 SIPP panel asked

respondents, “Do you (Does \_\_\_\_\_) have any children under 21 who lived elsewhere with their other parent or guardian at any time during the past four months?” We coded respondents who were male, 15-44, and reported “yes” to these questions into a dummy variable, *nonresident father* (1). Other respondents who were male, 15-44, and reported “no” to these questions were coded as not being nonresident fathers (0). Minimal differences existed between the questions included in the CPS and SIPP. However, the SIPP placed more stringent restrictions (both in terms of child’s age and the time reference) on identifying nonresident fathers. Therefore, based on the question design, we expected the CPS to produce slightly higher estimates of nonresident fathers than the SIPP.

The NSFG used a more elaborate method to identify nonresident fathers by placing questions in the context of previous sexual partners. First, the NSFG asked men, “Have you and [woman’s name] ever had a child together?” This question was asked for each woman with whom the respondent reported having sexual relations. Next, the NSFG asked, “Where does [child’s name] usually live now?” Again, this question was asked for each child the respondent had ever fathered. Based on these questions, the NSFG provided a recoded variable that counted the number of nonresident children aged 18 or younger that each respondent reported having fathered. Since we were concerned with identifying nonresident fathers, we recoded the NSFG variable into a dummy variable that distinguished nonresident fathers (1) from other men aged 15-44 (0).

The context of questions within the surveys had implications for identifying nonresident fathers, too. For instance, both the CPS and SIPP included questions about nonresident children following a series of questions about expenses. In contrast, the NSFG included questions about child(ren)’s residence following questions about previous partners. We expected the CPS and

SIPP systematically underestimated the most disadvantaged nonresident fathers, by asking about child(ren)'s residence after household expenditures. It was reasonable to expect those fathers who did not or could not pay child support were less likely to report having children.

### *Analyses*

Our primary analyses were designed to identify the proportion of men who were nonresident fathers. In addition to estimating instances of nonresident fatherhood, we ran two other types of analyses. The first considered different subpopulations in computing the proportion of nonresident fathers. By changing denominators, we also presented the *proportion of fathers* (men who had ever fathered a child) with a nonresident child as well as *the proportion of fathers with minor children* (men with at least one child under 18) having a nonresident child. In addition to examining estimates of nonresident fathers, we documented the socioeconomic composition of nonresident fathers identified in each survey by examining the distributions of nonresident fathers across race/ethnicity and educational attainment in each of the three surveys. *Race/ethnicity* was coded as four mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories: White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and other (including multi-racial). *Educational attainment* was coded into four mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories: less than high school, high school graduate, some college, and a Bachelor's degree or higher.

### Results

Table 2 presents the proportions of nonresident fathers identified in each dataset for three subpopulations: men aged 15-44, fathers aged 15-44, and fathers aged 15-44 with minor children. The NSFG produced considerably higher estimates of nonresident fathers than either the CPS or SIPP. According to the NSFG, 12.0% of all men aged 15-44 had at least one

nonresident child. Meanwhile, the CPS and SIPP indicated that 4.1% and 6.3%, respectively, of men aged 15-44 had a nonresident child.

Estimates concerning the proportion of fathers who were nonresident demonstrated similar patterns. The NSFG yielded the highest estimates with 26.8% of fathers (aged 15-44) with minor children report having had at least one nonresident child under 18. Meanwhile, the comparable estimate for the SIPP suggested that 8.2% of fathers with minor children had at least one nonresident child. The CPS identified fathers differently. However, we indirectly identified fathers in the CPS and found that 12.2% of fathers (15-44) had at least one nonresident child under age 18. Results consistently demonstrated the NSFG produced notably higher estimates of nonresident fathers compared with the CPS and SIPP. Additionally, it was noteworthy that the CPS and SIPP yielded comparable estimates of nonresident fathers among all men. Additional analyses (not shown) demonstrated that 58% and 61% of nonresident fathers identified in the CPS and SIPP, respectively, were identified directly.

We conducted supplemental analyses that examined the proportion of custodial mothers in the NSFG. Results demonstrated that 19.1% of women aged 15-44 (compared to 12.0% of men aged 15-44) reported having at least one child with a resident father. There are no widely accepted estimates of nonresident fatherhood in the U.S. Therefore, we cannot make definitive statements regarding the quality of identifying nonresident fathers across these datasets. However, given previous research showing nonresident fathers were underreported (Cherlin et al., 1983; Seltzer & Brandnerth, 1994; Sorenson 1997) and the individual-based sampling design of the NSFG; we believe the estimates of nonresident fathers derived from the NSFG were more accurate.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 presents the distributions of race/ethnicity and educational attainment for the entire sample of men aged 15-44 in each of the three surveys. The patterns suggested these data were comparable in terms of race/ethnicity and education. There was little variation in the racial and ethnic composition of the three samples, although the NSFG included a slightly higher proportion of “Other” (including multi-racial) men (about 9.1% versus 7.4% in the other two surveys). The SIPP sample reported slightly higher educational attainment than either the CPS or the NSFG, and the NSFG sample reported lower educational attainment overall. For example, 22.8% of men in the SIPP had a college degree versus 22% in the CPS and 20.5% in the NSFG. These small differences might reflect attrition as the SIPP incorporated a longitudinal design. Ultimately, these patterns demonstrated the three surveys were comparable in terms of men’s racial/ethnic and education distributions.

[Table 3 about here]

Table 4 reveals considerable variation in the distributions of race and ethnicity and educational attainment for nonresident fathers across the three surveys. Consistent with our expectations, nonresident fathers identified in the CPS and SIPP were more advantaged, on average, compared with nonresident fathers identified in the NSFG. For instance, the majority of nonresident fathers in the CPS and SIPP (58.4% and 57.5%, respectively) were White compared with just 40.7% of nonresident fathers in the NSFG. Although the NSFG yielded higher proportions across all minority groups, this difference was most pronounced for Hispanics. According to the NSFG, 28.9% of nonresident fathers were Hispanic, whereas the CPS and SIPP indicated that 17.4% and 19.0% of nonresident fathers were Hispanic, respectively.

[Table 4 about here]

The distribution of educational attainment among nonresident fathers followed similar patterns (Table 4). One in seven (15%) nonresident fathers in the CPS and SIPP reported less than a high school degree. In contrast, over one-third (37.2%) of nonresident fathers in the NSFG reported less than a high school degree. The educational distribution of nonresident fathers in the CPS and SIPP exhibited a U-shaped pattern that was consistent with their estimates of educational attainment for the full sample of men (see Table 3). However, the distribution of nonresident fathers in the NSFG revealed a strong, negative education gradient with higher proportions of nonresident fathers who reported lower levels of education.

### Discussion

Monitoring change in the numbers and composition of nonresident fathers is important for policies targeted at the well-being of children and parents. Newly released data provide researchers an opportunity to incorporate the nonresident father's perspective on complex family dynamics such as child support and multiple partner fertility. However, to date, no one has examined the quality of these recent data on nonresident fathers. Given concerns about the quality of data collected on nonresident fathers in the 1980s and 1990s, this oversight merits attention.

Our study yielded two key conclusions. First, the CPS and SIPP produced comparably modest estimates of nonresident fathers whereas the NSFG produced considerably higher estimates. Second, we found variation in the types of nonresident fathers identified in household-based versus individual-based surveys. Prior research noted the demographic characteristics of nonresident fathers in two household surveys, the NSFH and SIPP, were remarkably similar (Sorenson, 1998). However, we documented substantial variation in the distributions of race/ethnicity and educational attainment for nonresident fathers identified in

household versus individual-based surveys. In general, larger shares of nonresident fathers in the NSFG belonged to a minority racial/ethnic group and reported lower educational attainment than nonresident fathers identified in the CPS and SIPP.

Consistent with our expectations, direct reports from individual men (as opposed to the householder) produced higher population estimates of nonresident fathers. Recall that all of the nonresident fathers identified in the NSFG were identified directly. In contrast, just over half (58% and 61%) of nonresident fathers identified in the CPS and SIPP (respectively) were identified directly. Further, the similarity of estimates based on the CPS and SIPP were considered additional evidence supporting the importance of both survey and questionnaire design. Both household surveys (the CPS and SIPP) used similar questions to identify nonresident fathers. Although the SIPP attempted to interview all household members directly, this strategy did not work as well in targeting nonresident fathers. By introducing this additional step, the SIPP only identified an additional 3% of nonresident fathers directly compared to the CPS, which suggests nonresident fathers remain an elusive survey population (see Martin, 2007; Sorenson, 1997).

In addition to survey design, results provided evidence supporting our expectations regarding the importance of questionnaire strategy. The NSFG arguably produced higher estimates because it used a detailed series of questions to identify men with nonresident children. Further, we expected the context of questions in the survey introduced biases as well. The CPS and SIPP both included the question used to identify nonresident children directly following questions concerning annual expenses. This approach may have systematically discouraged nonresident fathers who did not (or could not) provide economic support to their children to report having them. Results indicated that special attention should be paid to the questions used

in identifying nonresident fathers because estimates of nonresident fathers varied substantially across surveys. Further, the types of nonresident fathers identified by different surveys were distinctive.

The CPS, SIPP, and NSFG all underestimated nonresident fatherhood by excluding institutionalized men. Several longitudinal surveys (such as the NLSY79, NLSY97, and Fragile Families) continued to interview respondents after they enter institutions. However, we are unaware of a recent nationally representative, cross-sectional survey allowing researchers to present estimates of nonresident fathers for the entire U.S. population. This is problematic as multiple scholars have demonstrated specific subgroups of men (who are also more likely to be nonresident fathers) more often experience incarceration (Pettit & Western, 2004; Wildeman, 2009).

Correctly identifying nonresident fathers is a critical task for research on father involvement, child support, and child well-being as families become increasingly complex. For instance, research on complex ties across households draws attention to multiple partner fertility, which has been measured using a variety of methods and data sources. Scholars have relied solely on men's fertility histories (e.g. Guzzo & Furstenberg, 2007; Manlove, Logan, Ikramullah, & Holcombe, 2008), used reports of fertility histories with data from both men and women (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Harknekt & Knab, 2007; Sinkewicz & Garfinkel, 2009; Turney & Carlson, 2011), and merged administrative data on men and women (Meyer, Cancian & Cook, 2005) to identify fathers having children with multiple women. If the quality of data on fathers varies across datasets with some data sources identifying the most disadvantaged nonresident fathers better than others, then our estimates of other complex family behaviors, such as multiple partner fertility, and the implications of these behaviors, are affected as well. As contemporary

families have become increasingly complex (Cherlin, 2010), family scholars must develop valid survey instruments that can produce accurate estimates reflecting diversity in family dynamics. Moreover, recent scholarship has discussed policy reforms and programs geared toward facilitating more involvement from young disadvantaged fathers (Cancian, Meyer, & Han, 2011; Heinrich & Holzer, 2011; Mincy, Klimpin, & Schmidt, 2011; Smeeding et al., 2011). Unfortunately, researchers cannot gauge policy use or evaluate the success of policy reforms so long as the population of interest is systematically undercounted in data. Attention to differences in sampling and questionnaire strategies are important factors in producing accurate estimates of nonresident fatherhood. We urge family scholars and policy makers to consider these implications when interpreting results about nonresident fathers using these survey data.

## REFERENCES

1. (1998). Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation, and Fatherhood, Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
2. Amato, P. R., & Gilbreth, J. G. (1999). Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 557-573.
3. Berger, L. M., & Langton, C. E. (2011). Young Disadvantaged Men as Fathers. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 635, 56-75.
4. Carlson, M. (2006). Family Structure, Father Involvement, and Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 137-154.
5. Carlson, M., & Furstenberg, F. (2006). The Prevalence and Correlates of Multiple Partner Fertility among Urban U.S. Parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 718-732.
6. Cancian, M., Meyer, D. R., & Han, E. (2011). Child Support: Responsible Fatherhood and the Quid Pro Quo. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 635, 140-162.
7. CDC/National Center for Health Statistics. National Survey of Family Growth webpage (updated June 2012). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg.htm>.
8. Cherlin, A. (2010). *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today*. New York: Vintage Books.
9. Cherlin, A., Griffith, J., & McCarthy, J. (1983). A Note on Maritally-Disrupted Men's Reports of Child Support in the June 1980 Current Population Survey. *Demography*, 20, 385-389.

10. Garfinkel, I., McLanahan, S., & Hanson, T. (1998). A Patchwork Portrait of Nonresident Fathers. In I. Garfinkel, S. McLanahan, D. Meyer, & J. Seltzer (Eds.), *Fathers Under Fire: The Revolution in Child Support Enforcement* (pp. 31-60). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
11. Grall, T. S. (2011). Custodial Mothers and Their Child Support: 2009. *Current Population Report*, 60-240. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.
12. Guzzo, K., & Furstenberg, F. (2007). Multipartnered Fertility among American Men. *Demography*, 44, 583-601.
13. Harknett, K., & Knab, J. (2007). More Kin, Less Support: Multipartnered Fertility and Perceived Support among Mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, 237-253.
14. Heinrich, C. J., & Holzer, H. J. (2011). Improving Education and Employment for Disadvantaged Young Men: Proven and Promising Strategies. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 635, 163-191.
15. Joyner, K., Peters, E., Hynes, K., Sikora, A., Tabor, J. R., & Rendall, M. (2012). The Quality of Male Fertility Data in Major U.S. Surveys. *Demography*, 49, 101-124.
16. Kennedy, S., & Bumpass, L. (2008). Cohabitation and Children's Living Arrangements: New Estimates from the United States. *Demographic Research*, 19, 1663-1692.
17. Kreider, R., & Ellis, R. (2011). Living Arrangements of Children: 2009. *Current Population Reports*, 70-126. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.
18. Manlove, J., Logan, C., Ikramullah, E., & Holcombe, E. (2008). Factors Associated with Multiple-Partner Fertility among Fathers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70, 536-548.

19. Manning, W. D., Smock, P. J., & Majumdar, D. (2004). The Relative Stability of Cohabiting and Marital Unions for Children. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 23, 135-159.
20. Marsiglio, W., Amato, P., Day, R., & Lamb, M. (2000). Scholarship on Fatherhood in the 1990s and Beyond. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 1173-1191.
21. Martin, E. (2007). Strength of Attachment: Survey Coverage of People with Tenuous Ties to Residences. *Demography*, 44, 427-440.
22. Martinez, G., Daniels, K., & Chandra, A. (2012). Fertility of Men and Women Aged 15-44 Years in the United States: National Survey of Family Growth 2006-2010. *National Health Statistics Report*, 51, 1-29.
23. Meyer, D. R., Cancian, M., & Cook, S. T. (2005). Multiple-Partner Fertility: Incidence and Implications for Child Support Policy. *The Social Science Review*, 79, 577-601.
24. Mincy, R. B., Klempin, S., & Schmidt, H. (2011). Income Support Policies for Low-Income Men and Noncustodial Fathers: Tax and Transfer Programs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 635, 240-261.
25. Nelson, T. (2004). Low-income Fathers. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 427-451.
26. Pettit, B. (2012). *Invisible Men: Mass Incarceration and the Myth of Black Progress*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
27. Pettit, B., & Western, B. (2004). Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration. *American Sociological Review*, 62, 151-169.
28. Raley, R. K. (2001). Increasing Fertility in Cohabiting Unions: Evidence for the Second Demographic Transition Theory in the United States? *Demography*, 38, 59-66.

29. Rendall, M., Clarke, L., Peters, E., Ranjit, N., & Verropoulou, G. (1999). Incomplete Reporting of Men's Fertility in the United States and Britain: A Research Note. *Demography*, *36*, 135-144.
30. Seltzer, J., & Brandreth, Y. (1994). What Fathers Say about Involvement with Children after Separation. *Journal of Family Issues*, *15*, 49-77.
31. Sinkewicz, M., & Garfinkel, I. (2009). Unwed Father's Ability to Pay Child Support: New Estimates Accounting for Multiple-Partner Fertility. *Demography*, *46*, 247-263.
32. Smeeding, T. M., Garfinkel, I., & Mincy, R. B. (2011). Young Disadvantaged Men: Fathers, Families, Poverty, and Policy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, *635*, 6-21.
33. Smock, P. J., & Manning, W. D. (1997). Nonresident Fathers' Characteristics and Child Support. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *59*, 798-808.
34. Sorenson, E. (1997). A National Profile of Nonresident Fathers and Their Ability to Pay Child Support. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *59*, 785-797.
35. Sorenson, E. (1998). Nonresident Fathers: What We Know and What's Left to Learn? In *NURTURING FATHERHOOD: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation, and Fatherhood*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1-9. Washington, D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
36. Teachman, J. (1990). Socioeconomic Resources of Parents and Award of Child Support in the United States: Some Exploratory Models. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *52*, 689-699.

37. Turney, K., & Carlson, M. (2011). Multipartnered Fertility and Depression among Fragile Families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 73, 570-587.
38. U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey webpage (updated June 2012). Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/cps/>.
39. U.S. Census Bureau. Survey of Income and Program Participation webpage (updated May 2006). Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/sipp/intro.html>.
40. Ventura, S. J. (2009). Nonmarital Childbearing. NCHS data brief, No. 18. Hyattsville, MD.
41. Wildeman, C. (2009). Parental Imprisonment, the Prison Boom, and the Concentration of Childhood Disadvantage. *Demography*, 46, 265-280.

Table 1. Time Comparisons for the Most Recent Cycles of the CPS, SIPP, and NSFG

	CPS	SIPP	NSFG
Period of Data Collection	March 2011	August-October 2009	June 2006-June 2010
Questions Frame of Reference	"In 2010"	"In the last 4 months"	Currently
Time Difference across Surveys (in years)			
NSFG	0-4	0-3	--
SIPP	1	--	0-3
CPS	--	1	0-4

**Table 2. Instances of Nonresident Fatherhood: the Proportion of Nonresident Fathers in the CPS, SIPP, and NSFG**

	2011 CPS			2008 SIPP			2006-2010 NSFG		
	<i>Direct and Proxy Reports</i>			<i>Direct and Proxy Reports</i>			<i>Direct Reports</i>		
	Nonresident Fathers	Population at risk	Percent	Nonresident Fathers	Population at risk	Percent	Nonresident Fathers	Population at risk	Percent
Men	1,612	40,519	4.1	1,067	17,086	6.3	1,324	10,403	12.0
Fathers with minor children	1,612	23,633	8.2	NA	NA	NA	1,324	3,928	26.8
Fathers	NA	NA	NA	1,067	9,274	12.2	1,324	3,969	26.8

*Notes:* For comparative purposes, all samples are limited to men aged 15-44. This table presents unweighted frequencies and weighted percents. Population at risk refers to the population that comprises the denominator.

Source. 2011 Current Population Survey ASEC Supplement; 2008 SIPP Wave IV Poverty Module, 2006-2010 NSFG Male Data File.

Table 3. Racial/Ethnic and Education Distribution of Male Population aged 15-44

	2011 CPS		2008 SIPP		2006-2010 NSFG	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>						
White	24,160	60.2	47,993	61.2	5,275	60.0
Black	4,212	12.1	9,695	12.6	1,752	11.8
Hispanic	8,440	20	12,329	18.5	2,409	19.0
Other	3,707	7.37	6,652	7.46	967	9.10
<i>Educational Attainment</i>						
Less than High School	10,475	23.3	16,916	20.3	3,434	28.9
High School/GED	10,888	27.6	17,813	24.1	2,562	24.1
Some College	10,379	26.9	24,931	32.6	2,544	26.3
At least a Bachelor's	8,777	22.0	17,009	22.8	1,863	20.5
N	40,519		76,669		10,403	

*Notes:* For comparative purposes, the samples are limited to men aged 15-44. This table presents raw frequencies and weighted percents.

Source. 2011 Current Population Survey ASEC Supplement; 2008 SIPP Wave IV Poverty Module, 2006-2010 NSFG Male Data File.

Table 4. Racial/Ethnic and Education Comparisons among Nonresident Fathers (15-44)

	2011 CPS		2008 SIPP		2006-2010 NSFG	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>						
White	920	58.4	670	57.5	426	40.7
Black	264	19.4	176	17.3	404	23.3
Hispanic	321	17.4	149	19.0	397	28.9
Other	107	4.60	72	6.12	97	7.02
<i>Educational Attainment</i>						
Less than High School	250	15.3	168	15.3	492	37.2
High School/GED	622	38.4	379	34.9	449	31.9
Some College	497	30.8	388	36.9	296	24.6
At least a Bachelor's	243	15.0	132	12.7	87	6.16
N	1,612		1,067		1,324	

*Notes:* For comparative purposes, samples are limited to men aged 15-44. This table also presents raw frequencies and weighted percents

Source. 2011 Current Population Survey ASEC Supplement; 2008 SIPP Wave IV Poverty Module, 2006-2010 NSFG Male Data File.