Fathers and Fathering in Contemporary Contexts: Future Directions

Ryan D. King
University at Albany, SUNY
Three Types of Issues

1. Imagination
   – Are there new questions we might ask?

2. Information
   – Do we have the data we need... or want?

3. Execution
   – Are we able to identify effects and mechanisms?
Imagination
(What might we further investigate?)

• Institutional effects
  1. Incarceration and the criminal justice system
     • Why are some able to reintegrate better than others?
     • What about fathers’ responses to maternal incarceration?
  2. Military deployment
     • What are the key barriers to successful reentry? Dispositional? Wartime experiences? Social setting to which they return?
  3. Economy
     • ‘Fathers of the Great Recession’
Data Issues

1. Social fathers and multi-partner fertility – Quantitative versus qualitative data and findings
   – One paints a more positive picture than the other
   – Reconcile what on the surface appears to be differences (multi-method approach?)

2. Who are we missing from household surveys? And does it matter?
   – 20-40% of black men in their prime childbearing years of 20-40 are not included in major household surveys (Nelson, ARS, 2004, p.429)
   – Can we at least assign a direction to the bias?

3. Inadequate data on incarceration
   – Jail vs. prison; Duration; Time since release
   – Possible solution: Follow those released for a period of time
Execution
(Identifying mechanisms)

1. Compare exposure to very different types of institutions
   - Does the type of institution matter?
   - E.g., Military deployment vs. incarceration – different institutions, similar effects on children