

Remembering “Nurturing Fatherhood”

Jeff Evans

Antecedents of the Report

- Policy Questions: Do we understand the behavior of marginalized young men? Do we listen to estranged fathers?
- Research Questions: Are fathers lying in research studies or are researchers misled by proxy responses or inadequate sampling? Do we have adequate constructs to measure father involvement?
- Al Gore's Fatherhood Initiative – Fatherhood involvement is inherently good.

Public/Private Co-operation

- Private Foundations, led by Ford and Ann E. Casey, focus on fatherhood
- NICHD forms the Family and Child Well-being Research Network and supports Michael Lamb's work in the NICHD Intramural Program
- The Interagency Forum for Child and Family Statistics adopts fatherhood as a project

Fatherhood Activity Accelerates

Town Meeting on data needs for policy was sponsored by the Forum and two Conferences were sponsored by the National Institutes for Health and the NICHD Family and Child Well-Being Research Network. One of the conferences focused on qualitative and clinical research and how it could be integrated with data from large scale surveys. The second conference invited scholars from several disciplines to present empirical work, primarily from large scale studies.

The Conference on Fathering and Male Fertility

The findings and recommendations presented at at the March 13 and 14 , 1997 conference were the cumulative efforts of more than a hundred researchers, policy analysts, and public officials who, over the course of year, thought deeply and creatively about how to improve the information available to society on fathers

The Nurturing Fatherhood Report

- The recommendations of the conference were conveyed to the Forum
- The Forum accepted the recommendations in October 1997 and listed 10 targets of opportunity
- The Forum served a monitoring role for implementing the recommendations

Target of Opportunity One: State of Data Collection and Research on Fathering

- **Publish a report on the state of data collection and research on male fertility, family formation, and fathering**
- ACCOMPLISHED by publication of the Nurturing Fatherhood report

Target of Opportunity Two: Indicators of Male Fertility and Fatherhood

- **Publish a Report on Fatherhood Indicators. This report would include indicators on male fertility, family formation, and fathering.**
- **Accomplished – Child Trends published such a report**

Target of Opportunity Three:

Collection of Data on Male Fertility

- **Use the National Survey of Family Growth to increase our understanding of fertility and family formation by interviewing men directly**
- **ACCOMPLISHED**

Target of Opportunity Four: Better Measurement of Father Absence and Presence

- Lamb-Pleck framework
- Fragile Families, ECLS-B, Early HeadStart Evaluation and others

Target of Opportunity Five: Understanding the Role of Father Involvement in Child Development and School Readiness

- **Use the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Birth Cohort Study (ECLS-B) to expand our understanding of fathers' relationship to child development and school readiness by including a module on the involvement of both resident and nonresident fathers.**
- **Accomplished**

Target of Opportunity Six: The Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood: Understanding the Relationship of Sexual Activity, Fertility, Marriage, and Parenthood to Educational Attainment and Labor Force Participation.

- **Use the new National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY-97) to increase our understanding of how sexual activity, fertility, marriage, and parenthood (including child support and child care responsibilities) affect educational attainment and labor force participation for men**
- **Accomplished**

Target of Opportunity Seven: Developing a Better Understanding of the Meaning of Father Involvement

- **Use the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project as a laboratory for conducting basic theoretical research on the meaning and nature of fathering for low-income men and their children**
- **Accomplished - The Ford Foundation funded such a project at one site**

Target of Opportunity Eight: Finding the Missing Men

- The Life Situations pilot
- The Fragile Families Survey
- 3 Cities Study
- ECLS-B

Target of Opportunity Nine: Finding the Missing Men: Special Populations

- Military
- Prisons
- Seam with non-institutionalized data still exists

Target of Opportunity Ten: Expanding Data Collection Sources

- **Explore the possibility of using state administrative data to augment national survey data about fathers - failed**
- **NICHD Fielded the Fragile Families Survey and other university driven studies**

Aftermath of “Nurturing Fatherhood”

- The Hammer Award
- A large body of fatherhood research
- Research and Policy visibility for the topic