

Fathering across households

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ABSTRACT:

The complexity of men's paternity can be seen in the intersection of several different statistics. For example, roughly a quarter of all fathers of minor children do not live with at least some of those children, probably in part because 14.6 percent of fathers have children with more than one woman. However, even in the absence of multiple partner fertility, few men have sole custody following a divorce. These data suggest that, for many men, fathering extends beyond a single home, and may include a diversity of parenting arrangements and situations. In this paper, I use a large, nationally representative dataset with extensive measures of household and familial complexity to examine men's fathering of minor children, particularly in the context of non-nuclear families.

FATHERING ACROSS HOUSEHOLDS

PROPOSAL:

Interest in men's roles as fathers has increased as the literature has increasingly demonstrated the importance of fathers for children's well-being, as well as the ways in which fathering affects men's lives (see, for example, [Scott et. al., 2016](#)). However, the literature also demonstrates the ways in which men's fathering may occur in different ways and over different domains than women's mothering.

The complexity of men's paternity can be seen in the intersection of several different statistics. For example, roughly a quarter of all fathers of minor children do not live with at least some of those children ([Monte, 2017a](#)). This is due to a variety of factors, such as the fact that 14.6 percent of fathers have children with more than one woman ([Monte, 2017b](#)). However, even in the absence of multiple partner fertility, only 17.5 percent of custodial parents are fathers ([Grall, 2016](#)), and recent research showed that only 3.7 percent of minor children live with their father without a mother or stepmother present, while 23.6 percent of children live with their mother without a father or stepfather ([Kreider & Ellis, 2011](#)). These data suggest that, for many men, fathering extends beyond a single home, and may include a diversity of parenting arrangements and situations.

In this paper, I make use of a large, nationally representative dataset with extensive measures of household and familial complexity to examine men's fathering of minor children, particularly in the context of non-nuclear families. Using data from the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), I will seek to answer a variety of questions about men's fathering, including:

1. Who are the men who do and do not live with minor children, and how are they different from each other?
2. How often do fathers see their minor children with whom they do not live?
 - a. Does this vary by the age of the child?
 - b. Does it vary by whether the father has children with more than one woman?

3. How does interaction with the children with whom a father lives vary by the relationship between fathers and children?

The SIPP is a nationally representative survey of the civilian non-institutionalized population. The 2014 panel was first administered in the first half of 2014, and collected longitudinal data reflecting men's lives and households across calendar year 2013. Although the SIPP has been administered by the US Census Bureau since 1985, the re-engineered 2014 SIPP includes some unique data. It is the first Census Bureau survey to collect a complete fertility history for both women and men, as well as information on shared and non-shared childbearing and multiple partner fertility (meaning having biological children with more than one person). In addition, it collects detailed relationship information for all household members. In the context of additional measures of child well-being and child support, these data can be used to shed new light on the questions of men's fatherhood and fathering.

In this paper, I look to describe and contextualize the ways in which men are fathers in complex families. Using the 2014 SIPP data, I will first describe the men who do and do not live with children under 18 – both their own biological and adopted children, as well as stepchildren, grandchildren, and nieces and/or nephews. Then I will look at men's involvement with their own minor children with whom they do not live, as well as non-custodial fathers' payment of child support. I will additionally exploit the longitudinal nature of the dataset to profile men with intermittent custody of minor children, looking at men whose children live with them for part, but not all, of the year. I will also look at men's fathering behaviors (including such things as outings and dinners together) depending on the children with whom they live, particularly at the differences between simple, nuclear families, blended families, and stepfather families. In addition, I will examine the personal and family characteristics of men who have custody of children, discussing their demographics, living arrangements, and marital histories, as well as overall fertility.

The SIPP data also allow for some examination of men's involvement from the perspective of mothers and children. I will use these data to examine both child support receipt from, and father involvement of non-surveyed men whose children live with only their mother. I will use these data both to inform a profile of fathering, but also as a comparison for men's reports of their own financial support of children.

This paper will inform the literature about the ways fathering occurs in complex families and across households. It will offer insight into the populations affected, and the internal reliability of reports of father involvement. Using SIPP data about shared and non-shared fertility and the myriad types of father/child relationships, the diversity of fathering experiences will be described in an effort to better understand the nuance and depth of fathering and fatherhood for a representative sample of men in the United States.