Unique Contributions of Fathers to their Children’s Development

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February 20, 2019

Webinar begins at 2pm EST/1pm CST/12pm MST/11am PST
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Strategies for Involving and Engaging Fathers in Programming

March 27, 2019
2pm EDT/1pm CDT/12pm MDT/11am PDT
Origins of my Interest
Outline of Presentation

• Who are fathers?
• Our beliefs and values
• Changing expectations
• Conceptualizing father involvement
• Fathers’ contributions to their children’s development
• Communicating the importance of fathers
Who are fathers?
Who are fathers?

- Biological
- Social
- Legal
- Step-father

...in families ranging from married to cohabiting, single parent, and re-combined.
What are our beliefs & values about the role of fathers?
1. It is essential for the child's well being that fathers spend time interacting and playing with their children.

2. It is difficult for men to express tender and affectionate feelings toward babies.

Rob Palkovitz, 1984

https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/7/2667/files/2015/01/ROFQ-permissions-and-info-24v7z0x.pdf
Notions of the role of a father are diverse, and may be influenced by cultural and demographic factors.
Changing expectations
Fathers want to be more involved with their children than their fathers were with them … and they are

– not only breadwinner, also caregiver
– “co-parents”: sharing parenting responsibilities more equally with mothers

…however, fathers continue to spend significantly less time than mothers caring for children

Hofferth, Pleck, Stueve, Bianchi, & Sayer, 2002; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004
Conceptualizing father involvement
Defining father involvement

• *Positive engagement*: direct interaction with children, including caregiving and shared activities

• *Accessibility*: fathers’ availability to their children

• *Responsibility*: participation in decision-making, ensuring that children are cared for

Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987; Pleck, 2010
Building on Lamb’s model…

- Multidimensional construct, including indirect (e.g. financial providing) and direct (e.g. caregiving and play)

- *Quality* is more meaningful than *quantity* of father involvement

Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan, McBride, & Ho, 2004
Defining quality

- Sensitive
- Warm
- Close
- Friendly
- Supportive
- Intimate
- Nurturing
- Affectionate
- Encouraging
- Comforting
- Accepting

Allen & Daly, 2007
Many ways fathers are involved

- Communicating
- Teaching
- Monitoring
- Engaging in thought processes
- Providing
- Showing affection
- Protecting
- Supporting emotionally

- Running errands
- Caregiving
- Engaging in child-related maintenance
- Sharing interests
- Being available
- Planning
- Sharing activities

Palkovitz, 2002
Father involvement in comparison to mother involvement

On average, fathers tend to...

• Be involved more in play than caregiving

• Play differently
  – More physical and challenging games
  – Encourage independence and risk taking

Opening children to the outside world

According to Paquette and colleagues, fathers incite children “to explore, take chances, overcome obstacles, be braver in the presence of strangers, and stand up for themselves” (Paquette, 2012).

Benefits of father involvement
During pregnancy…

Partner support associated with positive maternal and child outcomes.

– women with supportive partners have fewer health problems in pregnancy

– the quality of mothering provided to an infant is associated with the support the mother receives from her partner

– the quality of the partner relationship predicts how both mother and father will nurture and respond to the needs of their child

ACOG, 2009; Guterman & Lee, 2005; Marsiglio, 2008
16 Things Fathers Can Do to Support Their Pregnant Partners

1. Go with your partner to her prenatal visits.

2. Watch, listen, read… about prenatal development, birthing, and becoming a parent.

3. Help plan for the baby.

4. Go to classes that will teach you and your partner about childbirth.

5. Help your partner stay healthy during pregnancy.

...
Fathers and attachment

- Paternal prenatal bonding can influence subsequent father-child relationship

- Fathers’ supportive or abusive behavior can influence maternal attachment

- Infants develop distinct bonds with their fathers by the end of their first year.

Benefits to children of positive father involvement

Positive father involvement is associated with positive social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children from infancy to adolescence.

Amato, 1994; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Parke et al., 2002; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2007; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, 2000
Benefits to children of positive father involvement

- Higher academic achievement
- Greater school readiness
- Math & verbal
Benefits to children of positive father involvement

– Greater emotional security
– Higher self-esteem
– Fewer behavioral problems
– Greater social competence
Long-lasting impacts

Positive father involvement is associated with improved outcomes into adolescence and adulthood, across multiple domains.
Intergenerational transmission of effects

Boys who experience caring relationships with their fathers during childhood are more likely to be positively involved with their own children as adults and are less likely to become violent men.

Furstenberg, 1988; Horn, 1999
The flip side

Negative aspects of fathering related to negative developmental outcomes

– Father depression related to child and adolescent internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors

– Punitive parenting related to externalizing problems in male children

Heaven, Newbury, & Mak, 2004; Kane & Garber, 2004
• Influence on the quality of the mother-child relationship

• Through the accumulation of social capital, access to privilege, income, and social networks

Lamb, 2000
Father inclusion in permanency planning and parenting training is associated with improved child outcomes.

Coakley, 2008;
Lindahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2008
Father involvement...

is also associated with benefits to men themselves:

– heightened sense of parental competence
– greater satisfaction with parenthood

Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Sagi, 1982; Snarey, 1993
Adolescent fathers and child development

• Most adolescent fathers want to be involved with their children

• Limited research shows adolescent father involvement is beneficial to child, but may depend more on quality of relationship between parents

Hollman & Alderman, 2008
Incarcerated fathers and child development

- Paternal incarceration is associated with negative effects on children’s behavioral, socio-emotional, and cognitive outcomes.
- Effects of separation due to incarceration are more pronounced than other types of separation.
- Effects of incarceration are also significant for children of non-resident fathers.
- With support, relationships can be sustained or reestablished.

Braman, 2004; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Swisher & Waller, 2008
Communicating the importance of fathers in children’s development
Beliefs that act as barriers

- Father participation is not important
- Father participation is extra / optional
- Fathers are important but not essential
- Fathers as risk factors
5 Things You Should Know About the Importance of Fathers

1. Involved dads have a direct impact on their children’s future.
2. Families are strengthened by supporting fathers.
3. Policies and programs specifically for dads are on the rise.
4. Dads find immense value from their participation in programs.
5. The evidence base on the impact of dads and the effectiveness of specialized programs is growing.

https://childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu/5-things-you-should-know-about-importance-fathers

Child & Family Research Partnership, 2017
Strategies for Involving and Engaging Fathers in Programming

March 27, 2019
1-2pm CST
Questions?
For more information…

Fatherhood Research & Practice Network
http://www.frpn.org

Father Involvement Research Alliance
http://fira.ca

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse
https://www.fatherhood.gov

National Fatherhood Initiative
www.fatherhood.org
Thank You

www.preventionboard.wi.gov

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Contact the presenter:
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Upcoming webinars

March 6, 2019:
Well-Being of Families after Experiencing Homelessness
Amanda Benton and Carli Wulff, U.S. DHHS

March 27, 2019:
Strategies for Involving and Engaging Fathers in Programming
Tova Walsh, Earnest Goggins, and Lauren Zach