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RESIDENT FATHERS AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6)

Definitions and Topics

- **Resident fathers** are men who co-reside with their children.
- **Cognitive development** refers to a toddler or young child's ability to use language, learn vocabulary and use symbolic and representational thought.
- **Emotional development** refers to children's ability to be expressive, regulate their emotions, and control their behavior.
- **Externalizing behavior** problems include antisocial conduct such as fighting, non-compliance, poor performance in school, delinquent behavior, and substance use.
- **Father Cognitive Stimulation** refers to a father's role in teaching their children through outings, reading, playing, and positive feedback.
- **Father Engagement** refers to fathers' direct participation in activities with the child.
- **Father Restrictiveness/Harshness and Controlling Behaviors** refer to harsh physical behaviors, criticism, and restrictive commands.
- **Financial Support** refers to the provision of forms of formal and informal financial support for child-related resources.
- **Father Supportiveness** refers to fathers' demonstration of support and encouragement toward his child.
- **Father Warmth/Sensitivity/Closeness** refers to fathers' demonstration of warmth and affection for the child (e.g., hugging), his sensitivity to his child's needs and desires, and the degree of closeness or intimacy in the relationship between the father and his child.
- **Health/Physical Development** includes physiological well-being such as lack of serious injury/illness and appropriate physical maturation.
- **Social development** refers to the ability of children to meet the societal expectations within daily routines (i.e., independently dressing, eating, using the restroom, and communicating), maintain a spontaneous interest in learning (i.e., participating in self-initiated activities), and developing interpersonal relationships (i.e., interaction with caregivers).

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

Cognitive Development

Father Warmth/ Sensitivity/ Closeness

- Resident fathers who are more sensitive towards their one-year-old infants (as assessed by the NCATS) have children with more advanced language development at four years of age. Specifically, such children have higher scores of expressive language (ability to recall sentences in context) on the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Preschool scale.
Source: Magill-Evans, J., & Harrison, M.J. (2001). Parent-child interactions, parenting stress, and developmental outcomes at 4 years. *Children's Health Care, 30*(2), 135-150.
- Resident fathers who are sensitive and who demonstrate love and admiration for their children have children with higher mental development scores at 24 months of age (Bayley Scales of Infant Development, Second Edition Mental Development Index).
Source: Tamis-LeMonda, C.S., Shannon, J.D., Cabrera, N.J., & Lamb, M.E. (2004). Fathers and mothers at play with their 2- and 3-year-olds: Contributions to language and cognitive development. *Child Development, 75*(6), 1806-1820.
- Preschool boys whose resident fathers are nurturing have higher interpersonal and task motivation, which in turn leads to higher cognitive functioning (as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales), compared with boys whose fathers are less nurturing.
Source: Epstein, A. S., & Radin, N. (1975). Motivational components related to father behavior and cognitive functioning in preschoolers. *Child Development, 46*, 831-839.

Father Supportiveness

- Resident fathers who are highly supportive in their interactions with their 36 month old sons and daughters have children who exhibit higher cognitive scores at 36 months (as measured by the Bayley Mental Development Index, MDI), compared with children of fathers who are less supportive.
Source: Ryan, R. M., Martin, A., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2006). Is one good parent good enough? Patterns of mother and father parenting and child cognitive outcomes at 24 and 36 months. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 6*(2-3), 211-228.

Father Engagement

- Resident fathers who participated in an intervention program that increased their involvement with their preschoolers (e.g., direct caregiving activities, reading to child, taking child on outings, playing with child, attending school events) had children who exhibited higher math skills (measured by Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement-Revised) and fewer behavioral problems (as measured by the Social Skills Rating System, SSRS), compared with fathers who did not participate in the intervention program.
Source: Fagan, J., & Iglesias, A. (1999). Father involvement program effects on fathers, father figures, and their head start children: A quasi-experimental study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 14*(2), 243-269.
- Preschool children whose resident fathers demonstrate competent communication skills when interacting with them develop better communication skills themselves, which are in turn associated with better social competence (e.g., fewer behavior problems) in preschool children (as measured by the Social Skills Rating System, SSRS).
Source: Fagan, J., & Iglesias, A. (2000). The relationship between fathers' and children's communication skills and children's behavior problems: A study of Head Start children. *Early Education & Development, 11*(3), 307-320.
- Fathers' behaviors during interactions affect their four-year-old daughters' task and interpersonal motivation, with more positive father behaviors (e.g., asking about and meeting child's needs, asking child questions, praising child, correcting child's errors, listening to child, exhibiting appropriate control, etc.) associated with higher levels of child motivation.
Source: Epstein, A. S., & Radin, N. (1975). Motivational components related to father behavior and cognitive functioning in preschoolers. *Child Development, 46*, 831-839.

Father Restrictiveness/ Harshness and Controlling behaviors

- Preschool boys from low SES families whose resident fathers are restrictive exhibit lower interpersonal and task motivation, which in turn leads to poorer cognitive functioning (as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales), compared with boys whose fathers are less restrictive.

Source: Epstein, A. S., & Radin, N. (1975). Motivational components related to father behavior and cognitive functioning in preschoolers. *Child Development*, 46, 831-839.

Social/Emotional Development

Father Cognitive Stimulation

- African American resident fathers who are more involved in home-based educational activities have pre-school aged children with higher levels of emotion regulation (measured by the Emotion Regulation Checklist, ERC).

Source: Downer, J. T., & Mendez, J. L. (2005). African American father involvement and preschool children's school readiness. *Early Education & Development*, 16(3), 317-340.

Father Supportiveness

- Six-year-old children who report high levels of resident father supportiveness (measured by the Inventory of Supportive Figures) have a stronger sense of social competence (assessed by the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance by Young Children) and fewer depressive symptoms (measured by the Preschool Symptoms Self Report, PRESS), compared with children who perceive their fathers to be less supportive.

Source: Dubowitz, H., Black, M. M., Cox, C. E., Kerr, M. A., Litrownik, A. J., Radhakrishna, A., English, D. J., Schneider, M. W., & Runyan, D. K. (2001). Father involvement and children's functioning at age 6 Years: A multisite study. *Child Maltreatment*, 6(4), 300-309.

Father Engagement

- Kindergarten and first grade children with highly engaged resident fathers (including general involvement, child care responsibilities, socialization responsibilities, influence in child rearing decisions, and availability, as measured by the Paternal Involvement and Child Care Index, PICCI) report higher feelings of paternal acceptance (measured by the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance, PCSA), compared with children with less involved fathers.

Source: Culp, R. E., Schadle, S., Robinson, L., & Culp, A. M. (2000). Relationships among paternal involvement and young children's perceived self-competence and behavioral problems. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 9(1), 27-38.

- African American resident fathers of preschool children who report being more involved in child care activities have children who are rated highly by teachers in the area of emotion regulation (measured by the Emotion Regulation Checklist, ERC).

Source: Downer, J. T., & Mendez, J. L. (2005). African American father involvement and preschool children's school readiness. *Early Education & Development*, 16(3), 317-340.

- Puerto Rican American resident fathers who are more responsive and consistent in their parenting (as assessed by the Parenting Dimensions Inventory, PDI) have preschool children with higher levels of social competence (as measured by the Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Version, SSRS). Unexpectedly, a higher level of father involvement in caregiving activities is associated with lower social competence among preschoolers with African American or Puerto Rican fathers.

Source: Fagan, J. (2000). African American and Puerto Rican American parenting styles, paternal involvement, and Head Start children's social competence. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 46(4), 592-612.

- Preschool children whose resident fathers demonstrate competent communication skills when interacting with them develop better communication skills themselves, which are in turn associated with better social competence (e.g., fewer behavior problems) in preschool children (as measured by the Social Skills Rating System, SSRS).

Source: Fagan, J., & Iglesias, A. (2000). The relationship between fathers' and children's communication skills and children's behavior problems: A study of Head Start children. *Early Education & Development, 11*(3), 307-320.

Father Restrictiveness/ Harshness and Controlling behaviors

- Intrusive resident fathers have children who are more oriented-engaged at two years of age (Bayley Scales of Infant Development, Second Edition – behavior ratings scales).

Source: Cabrera, N. J., Shannon, J. D., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2007). Fathers' influence on their children's cognitive and emotional development: From toddlers to Pre-K. *Applied Developmental Science, 11*(4), 208-213.

- Four- to five-year-old children whose resident fathers respond to them with negative affect share less, are more aggressive, and avoid others.

Source: Carson, J. L., & Parke, R. D. (1996). Reciprocal negative affect in parent-child interactions and children's peer competency. *Child Development, 67*, 2217-2226.

- Resident fathers who exhibit low quality parenting behaviors (i.e., lack of positive affect, low task orientation, and intrusiveness) and have lower levels of father involvement (measured by engagement in interactive play and care activities, responsibility for making decisions regarding children, and accessibility), have children who are more likely to exhibit insecure attachment styles.

Source: Brown, G. L., McBride, B. A., Shin, N., & Bost, K. K. (2007). Parenting predictors of father-child attachment security: Interactive effects of father involvement and fathering quality. *Fathering, 5*(3), 197-219.

Externalizing Behaviors

Father Warmth/ Sensitivity/ Closeness

- Resident fathers' warmth and control in involvement with infants moderates the effects of maternal depression and is associated with fewer subsequent internalizing behavior problems in children during kindergarten.

Source: Mezulis, A. H., Hyde, J. S., & Clark, R. (2004). Father involvement moderates the effect of maternal depression during a child's infancy on child behavior problems in kindergarten. *Journal of Family Psychology, 18*(4), 575-588.

Father Supportiveness

- High levels of resident father support (e.g., hugging, praising) of 5- to 18-year-old children are associated with fewer child behavior problems at home (e.g., running away, trouble with police, emotional/behavioral problems, and parent reports of how difficult the child is to raise) and at school (e.g., repeating a grade, getting suspended/expelled).

Source: Amato, P. R., & Rivera, F. (1999). Paternal involvement and children's behavior problems. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 61*(2), 375-384.

Father Engagement

- Resident fathers' active care (i.e., more hours spent feeding, bathing, dressing, and putting child to bed) with difficult-to-raise children is positively associated with fewer behavior problems among pre-school aged children (as measured by the Behavioral Problems Index, BPI) as grade-schoolers, independently of mothers' care.

Source: Aldous, J., & Mulligan, G. M. (2002). Fathers' child care and children's behavior problems: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Issues, 23*(5), 624-647.

- Mother's reports of their kindergarten and first grader's externalizing behaviors (measured by the CBCL/4-16) are lower in families in which fathers are highly involved (in general involvement, child care responsibilities, socialization responsibilities, influence in child rearing decisions, and availability, measured by the PICCI). However, highly involved fathers report higher externalizing behavioral problems among their children than do less involved fathers.

Source: Culp, R. E., Schadle, S., Robinson, L., & Culp, A. M. (2000). Relationships among paternal involvement and young children's perceived self-competence and behavioral problems. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 9(1), 27-38.

- Increases in resident father involvement are positively associated with better math skills (measured by Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement-Revised) and fewer behavioral problems (as measured by the Social Skills Rating System, SSRS) among pre-school aged children.

Source: Fagan, J., & Iglesias, A. (1999). [Father involvement program effects on fathers, father figures, and their head start children: a quasi-experimental study](#). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 14(2), 243-269.

Father Restrictiveness/ Harshness and Controlling behaviors

- Preschool boys with insecure attachments to their fathers were rated by both mothers and fathers as having more externalizing behavior problems. Both fathers' harsh parenting and father-son attachment classification (but not positive involvement) significantly predicted the likelihood that boys were referred to clinics for early conduct disorders.

Source: DeKlyen, M., Speltz, M. L., & Greenberg, M. T. (1998). Fathering and early onset conduct problems: Positive and negative parenting, father-son attachment, and the marital context. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1(1), 3-21.

- Fathers' warmth and control in involvement with infants moderates the effects of maternal depression and is associated with fewer subsequent internalizing behavior problems in children during kindergarten.

Source: Mezulis, A. H., Hyde, J. S., & Clark, R. (2004). Father involvement moderates the effect of maternal depression during a child's infancy on child behavior problems in kindergarten. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18(4), 575-588.

Financial Support

- Low-income African American fathers who contribute more financially to their three-year-old children's households have children with higher receptive language scores (as measured by the PPVT-R).

Source: Black, M. M., Dubowitz, H., & Starr, R. H. (1999). African American Fathers in Low Income, Urban Families: Development, Behavior, and Home Environment of Their Three-Year-Old Children. *Child Development*, 70(4), 967-978.

Other Forms of Involvement

- Resident fathers' parenting satisfaction/ efficacy is positively associated with fewer behavioral problems (measured by the CBCL) among low-income, African American three-year-olds.

Source: Black, M. M., Dubowitz, H., & Starr, R. H. (1999). African American Fathers in Low Income, Urban Families: Development, Behavior, and Home Environment of Their Three-Year-Old Children. *Child Development*, 70(4), 967-978.

- Resident fathers who have a permissive style of discipline (measured by the Self Report Measure of Family Functioning for Children Revised, SRMFF-C-R) have preschool children who exhibit higher levels of externalizing behavior problems at school and at home (as assessed by the Behavior Assessment System for Children, BASC).

Source: Jewell, J. D., Krohn, E. J., Scott, V. G., Carlton, M., & Meinz, E. (2008). The differential impact of mothers' and fathers' discipline on preschool children's home and classroom behavior. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 10(1), 173-188.

Health/ Physical Development

Father Warmth/ Sensitivity/ Closeness

- Girls whose resident fathers exhibit greater affection during the preschool years have later pubertal timing (assessed in grade seven), compared with girls whose fathers are less involved and less affectionate.

Source: Ellis, B. J., McFadyen-Ketchum, S., Dodge, K., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (1999). Quality of early family relationships and individual differences in the timing of pubertal maturation in girls: A longitudinal test of an evolutionary model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(2), 387-401.

Father Engagement

- Girls whose resident fathers spend more time engaged in child care activities during the preschool years have later pubertal timing (assessed in grade seven), compared with girls whose fathers are less involved and less affectionate.

Source: Ellis, B. J., McFadyen-Ketchum, S., Dodge, K., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (1999). Quality of early family relationships and individual differences in the timing of pubertal maturation in girls: A longitudinal test of an evolutionary model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(2), 387-401.