

FURTHERING FATHERING: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

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The extent to which men are beginning to enact new, more flexible models of masculinity remains an empirical question. What we do know is that many men continue to adhere rigidly to traditional gender role ideologies, which have been consistently linked to a range of negative physical and psychological outcomes (Berger, Addis, Green, Mackowiak, & Goldberg, 2013; Levant & Richmond, 2007; O'Neil, 2008). Although these trends continue, there is one area of men's lives where such changes have been visible, quantifiable, and widespread: fathering. Such shifts, the focus of the current chapter, are substantial, are meaningful, and warrant critical analysis.

Despite increased visibility of the topic of fathering in mainstream and academic outlets, many of the nuances of the role remain unknown. This includes how completely men have moved toward more egalitarian parenting roles and how critical fathers are to healthy child development. On one side, Silverstein and Auerbach (1999) have argued that neither a father nor a mother, *per se*, is necessary to raise a healthy child. In a famous longitudinal study, 25% of at-risk Hawaiian children who went on to lead productive and positive lives had one key variable in common: the early presence of an emotionally supportive adult. In many cases, the responsible provider was neither their father nor mother (Werner & Smith, 1989). In contrast, Farrell's (2001) meta-analysis of how children fared after parental divorce suggested, quite clearly, that a father is essential for the overall well-being of a child's development.

While this debate continues, considerable problems and barriers with effective fathering have been documented. For one, there are still too many inactive, absent, or incarcerated fathers. Out of the approximately 24 million children, one out of three lives in biological father-absent homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Further, there are twice as many men living apart from their children than 50 years ago (Pew Research Center, 2011). Since 1991, incarcerated fathers and the number of children less than 18 years of age with a father in prison have increased by 77% to more than 1.5 million (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Other men, present in their children's lives, face other challenges. Men commonly report parenting skill deficits, a lack of support from partners or community, or increasing conflict surrounding work and family balance—a problem historically attributed primarily to working mothers. Still others struggle finding role models to learn more basic parenting tasks (Perez-Brena, Cookston, Fabricius, & Saenz, 2012).

Still, many studies of father involvement suggest a range of positive outcomes for children. In a meta-analysis of 16 studies and 22,300 individual data sets from birth to young adults (Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008), general positive effects included reduced behavior problems (Chang, Halpern, & Kaufman, 2007), improved socioemotional functioning (Levy-Shiff, Einat, Mogilner, Lerman, & Krikler, 1994), and better academic outcomes (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Analysis of specific subgroups suggested other benefits, including reduced adolescent smoking (Menning, 2006),

protection against future economic disadvantage, and lower risk of psychological problems (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004).

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Importantly, when discussing the current state of the fathering literature, changing cultural, sociopolitical, and economic trends need to be considered. Leading these considerations are changes in women's lives, specifically in terms of occupational roles and educational attainment. Women as primary earners in dual-income families with children increased from 11% in 1960 to 40% in 2011 (Pew Research Center, 2013). Further, women's increasing presence in the workforce, currently at their highest levels, has impacted men's involvement at home (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2013). Women now make up almost of half of the U.S. labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). In 2011, employment rates of married mothers with children have increased from 37% in 1968 to 65%, with recent reports indicating this percentage is as high as 71% (Hymowitz, 2011.) Such changes have paralleled growth in levels of higher academic degree attainment among women (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

From a larger economic perspective, the well-documented recession from 2008 to 2010 has had a significant impact. During this time, rates of unemployment increased more substantially for men than women, due primarily to the types of jobs traditionally held by men. This gender gap in unemployment widened in the United States, most clearly in 2009, when 10.5% of men in the labor force were unemployed, compared with 8% of women. Roughly 75% of the jobs lost in the recession were held by men, earning it the nicknames "he-cession" and "mancesion" (Strolovitch, 2013), and both have been linked to explanations for the growing number of stay-at-home fathers that has clearly occurred over the past 10 years (Rochlen, McKelley, Suizzo, & Scaringi, 2008).

Finally, there have been other examples of men in the exclusive caretaking role. Gay fathers, for example, are now more visible in our culture with increasing opportunities to become fathers.

The 2000 U.S. Census counted more than 600,000 same-sex couple households in the United States (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2003). In a qualitative study on gay fathers, Schacher, Auerbach, and Silverstein (2005) suggested that gay men's increasing visibility has played an active role in reshaping ideas about men's roles across multiple fathering groups.

When reviewing the existent literature, readers and researchers need to consider the precise applications of past research on new trends and samples of fathers. Clearly there is relevance for the applications of these findings; however, we are in an ever-evolving state of fathering, with new roles, expectations, and challenges for men to consider. Such factors call for both new research and newly noted limitations.

CHAPTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In consideration of the shifting landscape in parenting and the importance of the fathering, this chapter has several objectives. First, we aim to summarize the concept of fatherhood and father involvement, including relevant history, theory, and research. Next, we review what we know about how men are impacting children's lives through outcomes and processes of such interactions. This is followed by a detailed look at barriers to effective fathering, including men's mental health, substance abuse, and public policies. We then address the literature on parenting training and intervention. We end with a summary of the most salient limitations in an effort to guide further research.

FATHER INVOLVEMENT

Defining the concept of "father involvement" is complex, yet critical to understanding the current research trends. Employing primarily time-use studies, early research was limited to the frequency of a father's physical presence in the home (Pleck, 2012). *Paternal involvement* was first defined by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985). Definitions of father involvement from epidemiological studies included direct interaction (e.g., playing), accessibility (e.g., monitoring behavior from nearby), responsibility (e.g., providing or arranging care), and

economic support (J. Jones & Mosher, 2013). As the field matured, researchers included interactional concepts such as warmth, behavioral engagement, and control with children (Pleck, 2013). Arguably, the most commonly cited paradigm for conceptualizing paternal involvement has been offered by Lamb and colleagues (Killos, 2008). This model suggests three involvement factors—engagement, availability, and responsibility—each of which is addressed below.

Whereas Lamb's definition of father involvement has generated the most substantial research, some have argued that it excludes a critical emotional element. Palkovitz (2007) posited that restricting the definition of father involvement exclusively to the behavioral domain limits the true spectrum of fathering behaviors and narrows its conceptualization. The affective domain of fathering includes displays of emotion and affection (Palkovitz, 2007). Since then, these and related behaviors (e.g., hugging, kissing) have been included in the construct of engagement.

Based largely on Lamb's model, scholars have approached a number of different outcomes of paternal involvement. Many have focused on quantifiable outcomes, including the frequency with which fathers engage in various activities directly or indirectly related to childrearing (Lamb, Pleck, Char-nov, & Levine, 1987). Others have sought to capture the quality of fathers' involvement using indices such as sensitivity or engagement (Feldman, 2000). In a large-scale review of 18 longitudinal studies on the effects of father involvement on developmental outcomes, 17 reported positive associations. Major findings included a reduction in behavioral problems in boys and emotional ones in girls, improved cognitive development, and decreased delinquency in economically disadvantaged families (Sarkadi et al., 2008).

Still other research on father involvement has focused more on what types of activities fathers engage in versus mothers. Some research has yielded findings suggesting that mothers still provide the majority of basic caregiving (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000), and fathers are more involved in play (Lamb, 2004). Further research has shown that fathers' level of involvement may increase as their children age (Gaertner, Spinrad, Eisenberg, &

Greving, 2007). Not surprisingly, maternal employment has been associated with greater levels of father involvement among dual-earner families (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999).

Measuring Father Involvement

As noted earlier, measuring father involvement presents considerable challenges. Time-use (or time diary) studies have traditionally been employed but are not void of controversy. The American Heritage Time Use Study has synthesized national samples of time diary-based studies in the United States since the 1960s, with a primary goal of creating historical comparable time-use statistics. In these efforts, respondents are asked to report which activities they perform daily. Recent U.S. time-use data show that on an average day, women spend 1.1 hours providing physical care compared to 26 min by men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Critics stress that these samples tend to be small and limited by problems with recall (Bianchi, 2000). Additionally, such studies tell us little about how fathers are actually spending that time, and these studies may miss data for nonresidential fathers. To address such limitations, researchers have shifted to measuring the frequency of father involvement activities that are most likely to promote positive child development (Pleck, 2012). The following sections provide a more thorough analysis of these activities and their relevance to father involvement.

Engagement

Pleck (2012) noted that the concept of engagement has often been used as a synonym for father involvement, and it has served as the basis for time diary research in the United States and Europe. One of the largest studies of parental engagement is embedded in the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study that follows 5,000 children born in the United States between 1998 and 2000 (Fragile Families, 2014). In this study, 75% of the children were born in an unmarried household, and father involvement is assessed at birth and over time.

Engagement, as defined in the Fragile Families data set, includes playing games, reading/telling stories, telling the child you love him/her, and so forth (Waller, 2012). Fathers are asked to indicate which

activities they participated in and the number of days they participated. Using a 0–7 scale, Waller's (2012) data showed that fathers' engagement in daily activities was 3.4, meaning that they participate in the activities about 3 days per week. Results suggested that married and cohabiting fathers looked after the child most often (54% and 62%, respectively), followed closely by boyfriends (49%). A separate analysis of the data showed that activities most often reported by fathers were teasing children to make them laugh, changing diapers, playing chasing games, and preparing meals (Cabrera et al., 2004). Another common form of engagement came through physical interaction, where the stereotype of the "rough and tumble" father has relevance. Although many fathers engage in higher levels of play, this pattern does not hold true across cultures (Parke, 2004) and challenges an essentialist view of how fathers interact with children.

Availability and Accessibility

Availability is defined as fathers' accessibility to the child, often measured in time. An example would be a father reading a book while his child played nearby. For several reasons, this variable has proven difficult to measure. In Cabrera et al.'s (2004) study of children from an Early Head Start program, availability and accessibility were linked to fathers' residence and relationship with mother. According to mother reports, only 32% of fathers not residing at home or no longer in a relationship with their child's mother had contact with their child at least a few times a week. Although fathers with no relationship with the mother have less contact with children, the authors added that more than one third had some contact, contrary to literature suggesting that father involvement is mediated by the relationship with mother (Bialik, 2008).

Further complicating researchers' understanding of fathers' availability occurs when investigators look closely at different demographic groups. Father involvement appears to be lowest at both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, a finding often reflected in the number of work hours reported by these two groups (Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Wealthy fathers and the working poor spend the least amount of time with children,

and dual-income families spend the most (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] Early Child Care Research Network, 2000).

Responsibility

Importantly, data suggest that more fathers are getting involved in what were once the day-to-day decisions made by at-home mothers. Such responsibilities include scheduling medical check-ups and attending parent–teacher conferences. A recent study looking at decisions parents made around a sick child situation supported this perspective. Data across the project indicated significant input from both parents, but results varied by residential status of the father. The order of responses by fathers having influence over decisions was 81% for married fathers, 68% for boyfriends, 66% for cohabiting fathers, 48% for fathers who were friends, and 35% for fathers not currently in a relationship with the mothers (Cabrera et al., 2004). An analysis of time diary data from 6,572 married fathers and 7,376 married mothers found that fathers are more likely to take responsibility for day-to-day care when their partners spend more time working or contribute a higher share of the couple's earnings (Raley, Bianchi, & Wang, 2012).

Of course, this increase in responsibilities can be a double-edged sword. Many fathers express an interest in increasing involvement, but many lack basic skills that mothers learned through socialization. Authors have commonly noted that many fathers report lacking confidence and self-efficacy in becoming more involved in childcare responsibilities, leading to significant barriers for effective coparenting involvement (Isacco, Garfield, & Rogers, 2010).

Perceived Confidence and Efficacy

Confidence and efficacy for parenting has been found to be a critical element in parenting outcomes and an important predictor of positive parenting behaviors (T. L. Jones & Prinz, 2005). However, there is a long-held perception that mothers and fathers bring unique skills and experiences to parenting at various developmental stages (Amato, 1994). One such assumption is that women are more comfortable with day-to-day infant care. Importantly, this perception appears to lack

empirical support and could be guiding practically relevant misperceptions and stigma about men. Frequently cited research by Lamb (1977) studied differences between mothers and fathers in infant caregiving skills via self-report and outside observation. The study found no observable differences initially in skills or parental self-efficacy. Differences in attunement to children's needs only emerged several years later, presumably because fathers at that time were spending significantly less time with children due to their work status.

Fathers' sense of self-efficacy in the parenting role has been commonly defined by their own belief in their ability to perform effectively as parents. Lamb and Oppenheim (1989) considered a father's skills and confidence as his perceived ability to read his child's signals, to know how to care for the child's wants and needs, and to understand how to respond appropriately to realistic expectations. Fathers who report more confidence in parenting report significantly greater satisfaction with their child and with responsibilities (Hudson, Elek, & Fleck, 2001).

A study by Vogel, Boller, Faerber, Shannon, and Tamis-LeMonda (2003) used Early Head Start data to explore fathers' stressors, psychological well-being, and their effects on fathers' parenting attitudes. Findings suggested that men mostly held positive views of themselves as fathers. More recently, research on stay-at-home fathers found similar results that fathers report no major differences from their spouses in their ability to provide nurturance, emotional support, autonomy support, and independence (Rochlen et al., 2008). Others suggest that confidence in parenting roles may be particularly challenging for certain subgroups of men. For example, stepfathers may face challenges that interfere with their confidence to parent effectively (Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2000). Robertson (2008) noted they must navigate relationships with stepchildren, a new spouse, and biological children.

CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS OF THE FATHER INVOLVEMENT CONSTRUCT

In one of the only systematic analyses of trends in academic attention to fathers, Goldberg, Tan, and

Thorsen (2009) showed increased focus and dramatic role shifts on fathers since the 1930s across 1,115 articles in key developmental psychology and family studies journals. In their review of cultural perspectives of the role of fathers, Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) reflected on how fathers changed from being viewed as patriarchal providers of morals and economic support to what we currently view as nurturing parents. Sociocultural changes in the latter half of the 20th century, which led to higher rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births, also resulted in a focus on the negative effects of father absence (McFadden & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). Pleck noted that through the early 1970s, "it seemed in psychological theory, fathers were considered absolutely towering figures in child development, but towering only by their absence, not their presence" (Oren & Oren, 2010, p. xiii), whereas today, research focuses on fathers across multiple contexts and outcomes. Although it is clear that fatherhood research has evolved in the last 80 years, it has not occurred without its challenges and criticisms.

"Father as Essential" Model

One of the challenges in reviewing the literature is navigating ongoing debates about what Pleck (2010) called the "father as essential" model. He has argued against the notion that men have unique and essential skills and roles they bring to parenting. However, he also has recognized that men and women have differential socialization experiences that influence the way they parent. Reviews of earlier literature provide robust support that households with a physically and emotionally present father result in children with more positive outcomes compared to those with absent fathers (Spicer, 2007). More recently, as outcome studies are published on children from same-sex parent households, challenges to the essentialist ideal are mounting. Patterson (2005) has suggested that children of same-sex parents (mostly lesbian couples) develop within normal limits on key psychosocial outcomes. Additionally, limited data on children of gay fathers suggests no significant differences between gay and heterosexual fathers' ability to parent (Armesto, 2002).

U.S. Centrism in Fatherhood Theory

As noted earlier, fatherhood research in the United States has historically been based on father absence and its effects on children. Much of the criticism of the early studies were that they were largely restricted to White, middle-class, married, heterosexual fathers who were coresidents with their child (Goldberg et al., 2009). As the field has progressed, focus shifted to include what were called “fragile families” with low-income, unmarried, and often non-White fathers. Lamb was one of the early researchers to expand studies on fatherhood to include contributions internationally, with subsequent anthologies on cross-cultural fatherhood following suit (Shwalb, Shwalb, & Lamb, 2012). Criticism remains that even in cross-cultural studies, many concepts are derived from Western norms and use measures simply translated into other languages.

Lack of Consideration for Intracultural Variation

Recent U.S. Census Bureau statistics predict that by 2050, the United States will be a “minority majority,” whereby the population that identifies as “White only” will compose only 46% of the total population (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009). This has significant implications to researchers’ understanding of intracultural variation in fathering. For example, Pleck (2013) noted that, currently, 20% of American fathers with resident children less than 18 years of age are foreign-born.

Yet, a recent review of the demographic characteristics of samples in fathering studies fails to reflect these important shifts. The majority of research on men of other racial/ethnic groups has focused on nonresident or unmarried fathers (Gadsden, 1999). Downer, Campos, McWayne, and Gartner (2008) appropriately noted the problem that minority status in research is often conflated with being of low socioeconomic status. This creates the additional problem of identifying the differential influences of poverty and/or minority status on children’s well-being. Without question, there is a need for further studies on a wide range of ethnic minority men. Further, subgroups of fathers facing additional challenges or disadvantaged in other contexts, including disabled fathers, gay fathers, teen fathers, and single

fathers, are also in need of further study (Oren & Oren, 2010). Notably, a few exceptions have examined the intersections of cultural norms, ethnicity, and parental involvement. For example, in a study of Latino men, machismo, acculturation levels, and ethnic identity were used to assess differences in paternal involvement (Glass & Owen, 2010). Results suggested that Latino fathers with more extreme macho attitudes (i.e., rigid, domineering) were least likely to demonstrate high involvement.

In an often-cited article, Parke (2004) outlined several reasons for the lack of a sophisticated cultural perspective on fathers. Primary in his argument is a universalist assumption that is not unique to the fathering literature but a problem in research and theory in the social sciences. This perspective assumes that processes noted for European American and middle-class fathers are generalizable to groups outside the majority culture. Recently, this assumption has been challenged by work in cross-cultural and intracultural work in general (Rogoff, 2003) and in fathering in particular (Bornstein, Putnick, & Lansford, 2011; Shwalb et al., 2012).

For example, one study challenged the well-established finding that physical play is the hallmark of fathers’ interactive style (Parke, 2002). In a variety of cultures (e.g., Taiwan, India, Africa, and Thailand), fathers were reported to rarely engage in physical play. Further, authors have noted infrequent differences in play style between men and women (Sun & Roopnarine, 1996). Cross-cultural observations allow researchers to reconsider fathers’ influence on children in non-Western cultures and can lead to more sophisticated designs to understand intracultural variation.

The importance of shifting researchers’ focus toward more sophisticated models of understanding culture in the context of parenting cannot be overstated. In 2010, 16.3% of the U.S. population were Hispanic (50.5 million); 12.6% were African American (38.9 million); 4.8% were Asian American (14.7 million); 0.9% were American, Indian, or Alaska Natives (0.5 million); and another 6.2% were other races (19.1 million; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Such shifting demographics allow for an opportunity to evaluate the generalizability of researchers’ fathering assumptions. Instead, fatherhood research needs to

move away from a cultural deficit model toward an understanding of intragroup variation. Further, focus needs shift to understanding the adaptive strategies that ethnic minority fathers and families successfully employ (Lamb, 1995; Parke, 2004).

Limitations in Recruitment

There are a number of challenges in recruiting participants for fatherhood studies. Researchers have long noted gender differences in voluntary research participant where women are significantly more likely than men to participate in studies (Dunn, Jordan, Lacey, Shapley, & Jinks, 2004). There is also evidence that recruitment is highest among persons who have a higher socioeconomic status, who have a higher level of education, and who are married (Galea & Tracy, 2007). This trend is mirrored in the difficulty of recruiting ethnic minority participants due to factors such as distrust based on historical mistreatment of minorities (Fouad et al., 2000) or immigrants wary of governmental institutions (Lauderdale, Wen, Jacobs, & Kandula, 2006).

Some of these concerns have been cultural in nature. For example, Parke (2004) noted that African American fathers from intact families are commonly underrepresented in some studies yet overrepresented in studies on nonresidential family households. Unfortunately, such problems can lead not only to sampling bias but to a problematic portrayal of the full range of African American fathers' involvement. To gain access to the full diversity of fatherhood models in the United States and elsewhere, creative recruitment strategies are needed. For example, Hofferth (2007) suggested study incentives to include paid childcare, structured time with children, and training opportunities that benefit both fathers and children.

FATHERS' INFLUENCE AND INTERACTIONS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILY

As recently as 1995, then President Clinton urged U.S. government agencies and departments to make a more concerted effort to include fathers in government-supported research on families and children (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and

Family Statistics, 1998). Recent data from a nationally representative sample of 3,928 fathers suggest important findings in fathers' interactions with their children (J. Jones & Mosher, 2013). For resident fathers with children less than 5 years of age, 96% ate meals with their children regularly, 98% played that often, 90% provided basic care such as diapering and bathing, and 60% read to their children. Although rates were lower for nonresident fathers, they were still higher than what is commonly misperceived by the public.

Despite the benefits of a large sample, this study failed to include fathers who were more than 45 years of age, and some trends suggest older fathers may be less involved than younger ones. Additionally, fathers responded to questions about parenting in general, so data fail to reflect any potential differences in involvement in households with two or more children. Even with limitations, the results are promising, and as fathers spend more time with their children, research has shifted to look at both process and outcome data. We define *process* as the quality or nature of the interaction between fathers and their families (e.g., sensitivity, emotional availability). *Outcome data* reflect affective, behavioral, or cognitive variables often included in involvement research.

Process Considerations

Quality of father-child interactions and communication. An important critique in the fathering literature pertains to whether researchers are truly measuring appropriate predictors of outcomes. Palkovitz (2007) has argued that rather than focusing researchers' attention in improving father involvement measurement, researchers should focus on the father-child relationship that likely moderates those outcomes such as the affective climate, the behavioral style, and relational synchrony between father and child. There is substantial support for responsive parenting in enhancing child development (Landry et al., 2012), with many studies focusing on maternal responses such as affective support and warmth, joint attention with their child (Warren & Brady, 2007), and a mother's ability to read and respond to cues of her children (Barnard &

Solchany, 2002). Spicer (2007) has argued that these characteristics are not unique to mothers and that benefits obviously extend to fathers.

A recent study by Ashbourne, Daly, and Brown (2011) collected interview data on 215 fathers from a multiyear, multisite project. The community–university collaboration found that fathers discussed being engaged in the present moment through nurturing and instrumental childcare tasks, including providing discipline, teaching, and shared activities that incorporated play or that were seen as unique to father and child. These authors further identified the importance of responding to children in unique ways based on individual differences, the learning that came with having more than one child, and responding to developmental changes. Limitations to this research were in the inconsistency in interviewer skills and lack of grounded theory in analysis.

Father–child interactions are often influenced directly by fathers' communication styles. Some research has demonstrated children's struggles in communicating with fathers compared to mothers. Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, and Perry's (2006) population-based sample of 4,746 students in public schools found that 50% of teens did not feel comfortable discussing emotional problems with their fathers versus only 25% for their mothers. Because this study used closed-ended rating scales in the quantitative design, little is known about adolescents' reasons they feel less comfortable. In another large study, data on substance use and communication with father and mother were collected from a national sample of 1,308 adolescents in 10th grade. After controlling for demographic variables, the association of mother and father communication with adolescent substance use varied by substance and gender. Among sons, higher quality father–child communication was protective against marijuana use, and mother communication was protective against smoking. In contrast, neither father nor mother communication was protective against substance use by daughters (Luk, Farhat, Iannotti, & Simons-Morton, 2010). Some hesitation in interpreting the data comes from limitations in adolescent self-report of substance use, which might be prone to poor recall or social desirability.

A more complex investigation into communication styles provides evidence that it may be influenced by demographic variables or cultural differences with respect to race/ethnicity. Some studies suggest that less educated fathers and fathers from other racial/ethnic groups communicate more often with their children about some health behaviors than White, educated, middle-class fathers (González-López, 2004; Lehr, Demi, Dilorio, & Facticeau, 2005). A main critique of these studies in health behaviors is that although designs include a focus on samples with variability in race/ethnicity, the majority of participants continue to come from two-parent households and limit the generalizability to other groups.

Fathers' sensitivity. Another emerging means of measuring father involvement is sensitivity, commonly referred to as a parent's ability to recognize and accurately interpret his or her child's signals and to respond in ways that are affectionate, well timed, and appropriately stimulating (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1974). Observational data suggest that fathers demonstrate similar amounts of sensitivity to young children as mothers and that supportive involvement is positively related to children's ability to engage in emotion regulation (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007). One meta-analysis indicated that paternal sensitivity was significantly associated with father–child attachment security, but this association was weak to moderate, and its magnitude was substantially lower than the parallel effect for mothers (De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997).

Other larger scale studies reviewed by Killos (2008) suggest that fathers who score higher on measures of sensitivity are more satisfied with their parental responsibilities and the behavior of their own children (Hudson et al., 2001; Sanderson & Thompson, 2002). Additionally, observational studies support links between fathers' sensitivity and children's outcomes in the form of reduced conflict in the classroom, lower rates of acting out, and higher social skills as rated by classroom teachers (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2004). A central challenge to research on sensitivity is that many of the studies rely on accurate self-report.

Designs that included ratings by significant others and actual observations of behaviors by both fathers and children would strengthen the reliability and validity of sensitivity as a critical parenting skill in outcome research.

Fathers' relationship with family and spouse. In addition to father–child relationships, another relevant area of research pertains to the impact of father involvement on other areas of the family dynamic, namely, parents' relationship with each other and their own well-being (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). In longitudinal data collected from a sample of fathers born in the 1930s, positive paternal engagement accounted for 21% of the variance in fathers' marital success at midlife and 6% of the variance in their later occupational mobility (Snarey & Pleck, 1993). In addition, engagement explained 14% of the variance in men's societal generativity (i.e., contributions to the community) in midlife. This four-decade study provided needed longitudinal data across father–child dyads; however, only first-born children were included in the analyses. Other studies demonstrate that father–child and father–mother relationships vary as family structures change and further demands are placed on paternal involvement (Kreppner, 1988).

Importantly, there is also a substantial literature base suggesting the challenges for couples and individuals with children, for both mothers and fathers. In their review of the literature, Mehall, Spinrad, Eisenberg, and Gaertner (2009) concluded that marital satisfaction and intimacy tend to decrease after the birth of a child, with marital satisfaction lowest among parents of infants. The quality of parental relationships—and in particular, marital satisfaction—has been associated with differences in fathering behaviors (Grych & Clark, 1999), including decreases in fathers' empathy for their children (Margolin, Gordis, & Oliver, 2004) and insensitive parenting (Kaczynski, Lindahl, Malik, & Laurenceau, 2006). The central limitation in this body of work includes significant variation in marital satisfaction due to other contextual factors such as employment status and the influence of family size.

There is also some evidence that marital quality may be a stronger predictor of fathering than

mothering (Leve, Scaramella, & Fagot, 2001), with men more likely to be involved in childrearing when satisfied in their relationships. Katz and Gottman (1996) referred to this process as a “spillover” effect, whereby husbands unhappy with their marriage and withdrawn from their partners may distance themselves from their children (Dickstein & Parke, 1988). However, there is some inconsistency in measuring marital satisfaction (e.g., single-item vs. validated scales), and correlational designs fail to explain how these relationships work over time.

Men's experiences as fathers. Masculinity researchers have theorized how traditional male gender norms can both support and conflict with expectations of fatherhood. Most of the literature comes from in-depth interviews of small samples, many from ethnographic studies and analysis of fatherhood narratives. For example, Finn and Henwood (2009) found that men who identified as “modern fathers” separated themselves from patriarchal traditions and some of the problems perceived in that approach. Some have argued that men's increased interest in caring for children appears to be one step toward gender equality in parenting and a departure from hegemonic masculinity (Johansson, 2011), but it does not always come without cost.

One notable, large-scale investigation of gender role strain and stress came from the Yeshiva Fatherhood Research Project (Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002). It involved interviews of 400 fathers from U.S. subcultures such as divorced fathers, gay fathers, Latino fathers, and evangelical Christian fathers. Findings suggested that expectations of good fathering that include the breadwinner role resulted in an overemphasis of working outside the home. Fathers who needed to “avoid sissy stuff” were less likely to assume equal responsibility for care duties typically viewed as women's work. Some men who viewed their roles as disciplinarians struggled with expectations to be more emotionally expressive and connected.

In a novel study design contrasting fathers' antenatal intentions and postnatal behaviors and attitudes, Miller (2011) found support for what he called “falling back into gender” (p. 1105). Even though men expressed plans to move away from hegemonic

masculinity as fathers, many fell short of those plans due to the legacy of structural arrangements. For example, spouses and their traditional gender role expectations strongly influence new fathers' roles and responsibilities, and pressures of the workplace and the value of paid work often override intentions to take paternity leave and to change schedules.

Still, there is some evidence that many men find ways to remake masculinity even in the face of economic struggles due to job loss. In an analysis of job loss, gender norms, and family stability in rural America, Sherman (2009) found that families with more flexible gender roles faced financial troubles and unemployment with less tension (e.g., reduced need for men to exert control over women) than those couples with more restricted role expectations. Given the variability in the results of these studies, there is significant room for research to explore the intersections of masculine identities with the transition to fatherhood.

Outcome Considerations

One of the biggest challenges in the fathering literature has been the problem in defining and measuring outcomes for children. We seem to know more about how men father, yet less is known about how this relates to its impact on children. In commenting on this point, Lamb (2010) noted that within the more extensive literature on mothers, there is a clearer description and delineation of what constitutes successful child outcomes and the processes that lead to them.

Fortunately, standards have been outlined that should advance such methodological challenges. These include the need for (a) data for father involvement and child outcomes from different sources, (b) longitudinal analysis, and (c) controlling the effects of mother involvement. In a review of 72 fathering studies, Marsiglio et al. (2000) reported that only eight studies controlled for the quality of maternal behaviors. As father and mother involvement are moderately correlated, the need to modify this research trend is particularly important (Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). Without controlling for mother involvement, the chance of overestimating the independent effect of paternal involvement increases significantly (Pleck, 2012).

Socioemotional variables.

Attachment. One of the most glaring omissions in the fathering literature is a lack of studies looking at father attachment to infants and young children. This area of research has generated considerable data among mothers and children (see review by Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 2008). Despite increased interest in fathers' contributions to child and family development (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004), the parenting behaviors responsible for a secure father-child attachment relationship are not yet well understood. Results from studies that have been initiated are quite positive and similar to those between mothers and children. For example, studies integrating father data have shown that securely attached children show fewer behavior problems (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999), greater sociability (Sagi, Lamb, & Gardner, 1986), and more reciprocated friendships (Verissimo et al., 2011) than those in insecure father relationships. Further, positive attachment to fathers may lower risks for internalizing and externalizing forms of psychopathology (Phares, Rojas, Thurston, & Hankinson, 2010). The majority of studies investigating attachment occur in children at the elementary school age or younger; little is reported about how these effects are maintained or change over time.

Emotional expression and socialization. One interesting area of research with some connections to children's outcomes involves parental emotional expression. Most of the limited data suggest that men show less clear emotional expressions to their children than mothers and that they mask negative and positive feelings to a greater extent, as evaluated by children and outside raters (Noller, 2001). Not surprisingly, these findings are consistent with noted gender differences in expressiveness (Brody & Hall, 2008; Levant, 1995, 2011). Some data suggest that mothers are more involved in socializing their children's emotions (Garside & Klimes-Dougan, 2002), whereas fathers more often have a role in punishing their children for displaying emotions, and they may also be particularly punitive when responding to son's display of vulnerable emotions such as sadness and fear (Eisenberg et al., 1999).

Further data suggest that both fathers and mothers discuss emotions with their daughters compared

to sons and more often discourage anger and aggression in their daughters (see review in Zahn-Waxler, Klimes-Dougan, & Slattery, 2000). In related work, Fivush, Brotman, Buckner, and Goodman (2000) found that conversations about emotional expression differed between fathers and mothers with their children. In particular, they found that mothers and young children's discussions about emotional experiences were significantly longer than those with fathers. Their results also suggested that fathers were more likely to use dismissive or distracting strategies in response to their child's discussions of emotions.

More broadly, this area of research has been limited by a lack of study on fathers and infants. Many scholars (Barry & Kochanska, 2010; Kopp & Neufeld, 2003) have stressed the importance of expanding studies of children's early experience beyond the infant-mother relationship to infant-father and mother-father relationship. This need is salient given an increased recognition of father-child emotional interactions as contributors to children's connections with peers and emotional stability (Isley, O'Neil, Clatfelter, & Parke, 1999).

Empathy. In a 26-year longitudinal study on parental involvement and child outcomes, Koestner, Franz, and Weinberger (1990) found that paternal involvement in childcare was the strongest predictor of empathic concern, or "the tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for others" (Davis & Oathout, 1987, as cited in Koestner et al., 1990, p. 709). The research team was surprised to find that paternal involvement accounted for the greatest percentage of unique variance in empathy scores than all three measures of maternal involvement combined.

Another area of research that has generated a significant amount of interest is in the area of empathic communication. In general, research supports the fact that women are perceived to be more empathic than men (de Minzi, 2013). Interestingly, different trends emerge when children evaluate the emotional expression and empathy of their parents. Boys and girls tend to agree that overall, their mothers are more empathic. Yet, young girls tend to perceive their fathers as being more able to take another's perspective and be empathically concerned than do

boys (Drevets, Benton, & Bradley, 1996). Such findings have been connected to socialization patterns, whereby girls and mothers are expected to be more careful and concerned with others' needs. In contrast, boys and fathers are expected to be more independent and less concerned with emotional states of others (Levant, 1995). There are some methodological challenges in using self-report data to assess differences in perceived empathic communication, specifically in studying gender differences. It is possible that even children experience confirmation biases and attend to empathic communication events as expected by gender stereotypes.

Cognitive development and intelligence. Several studies have addressed the relationship between fathers' educational background, involvement with children's education, and academic achievement. Cabrera et al. (2007) found evidence that fathers who have more than a high school education have children performing better in a range of different developmental, social, and academic outcomes. In another study, Hawkins, Amato, and King (2007) found that resident fathers who shared activities and communication with their adolescents promoted stronger academic achievement and had fewer internalizing problems.

Further, Hernandez and Coley (2007) demonstrated that father involvement levels were similar across father versus mother reports, across resident versus nonresident fathers, and across African American versus Latin American fathers. Across groups, fathers' involvement predicted children's reading and math skills, whereby mothers' involvement was exclusively related to math skills. These authors emphasized that further measurement development is needed for more comprehensive measures of fathers' involvement and contributions to cognitive outcomes. There are confounds with socioeconomic status, and some of the cognitive gains may result from fathers (or mothers) having more time to spend with children on academic development.

Challenging behaviors.

Substance use. A number of studies have addressed fathers' styles, communications patterns, and involvement in children's substance abuse

patterns. As noted above, Luk et al. (2010) found that positive father–son communication resulted in lower rates of marijuana use in boys. In another study, Patock-Peckham and Morgan-Lopez (2009) investigated mediational links between parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive), parental bond (positive, negative), depression, alcohol use, and abuse. The results suggested that a poor parental bond with one's father was predictive of depression, which is commonly connected to substance abuse. In addition, they found that a positive parental bond with one's father had a significant mediating impact on authoritative fathering on depression and was found to predict decreased alcohol use problems for both genders. For women, a negative parental bond with one's father mediated the effect of having an authoritarian father on depression, which then increased alcohol use problems.

Overall, the authors suggested the results reinforced that having a father with an authoritative style can be protective against feelings of paternal rejection, which can lead to lower depressive symptoms and thereby decrease alcohol-related problems. For women, having an authoritarian father lacking in warmth contributed to feelings of being rejected by the father, again linking to depression and alcohol-related problems. Permissive mothers were more influential regarding levels of impulsiveness for women, whereas permissive fathers were more influential regarding levels of impulsiveness for men (Patock-Peckham & Morgan-Lopez, 2006). This cross-sectional design highlights some important possible pathways for parenting styles and adolescents' risky behaviors, but it needs to be replicated with repeated measures designs to see how these interactions affect parent–child relationships developmentally.

Antisocial behavior. Several longitudinal studies have examined the impact of fathers' behaviors on adolescent antisocial behavior. In one study by Vaden-Kiernan, Ialongo, Pearson, and Kellam (1995), 261 school-age children were followed with several measures of father and child data collected. Results suggested that fathers' antisocial behaviors predicted increases in children's externalizing and internalizing behavior problems, particularly for

families with a resident father. Furthermore, high levels of discipline exacerbated the negative links between fathers' antisocial behaviors and children's internalizing problems. Notably, these connections were more pronounced for shorter (1–2 years) versus longer (5–7 years) time periods. The authors noted that it might be due to changes in fathers' behaviors or other factors in school. In discussing these findings, the authors cautioned the effectiveness of policies and programs that seek to increase marriage or father involvement without attention to reducing problematic behaviors and parenting styles among fathers' behaviors (Vaden-Kiernan et al., 1995).

Further connections to antisocial or even criminal behaviors have been connected to father absence for resident and nonresident fathers (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). According to a report in *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 72% of adolescent murderers and 60% of rapists grew up without fathers (Cornell, Benedek, & Benedek, 1987). Ang's (2006) study of aggressive boys in Asian schools found that the highest correlation with aggression in boys is a poor relationship with the father. Finally, a number of recent studies have focused on the residential versus nonresidential status of fathers in determining children's behavior problems. In general, such studies have shown that fathers' antisocial behaviors are more predictive of children's externalizing problems when fathers reside with children or who maintain regular contact (Blazei, Iacono, & McGue, 2008; Thornberry, Freeman-Gallant, & Lovegrove, 2009). This finding suggests that there is significant need for more sophisticated research on the relationship between father involvement and antisocial behaviors, as some studies suggest absence puts children at risk, whereas others hypothesize that resident fathers' modeling of antisocial behaviors increase risk.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE FATHERING

Psychological/Mental Health

One important subset of the fathering research can be framed as barriers to effective parenthood and psychological well-being for adult men with children. Within this area, findings around prenatal and postpartum depression among men are particularly

striking, given that most studies have been conducted on mothers (Henshaw, Cox, & Barton, 2009). Yet, studies have shown that as many as 10.4% of fathers experience depression in the perinatal period (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010). Additional studies have shown that men who experienced depression in the postpartum period have a number of negative outcomes, including withdrawing from coparenting, feeling less respected by their coparent, and displaying lower levels of warmth and affection toward their children (Elliston, McHale, Talbot, Parmley, & Kuersten-Hogan, 2008).

In a recent study, Isacco et al. (2010) found that first-time fathers are at highest risk of depression from 3 to 12 months after the birth of their child. Risk factors parallel those reported by women, including prior history of depression and a partner with depression. Men's successful transition to fatherhood has been strongly predicted by the stability of their partners, with happier spouses predicting happier men (Van Egeren, 2004). Lutz and Hock (2002) found that quality of the marriage, fear of abandonment, loneliness, and employment variables collectively accounted for 43% of the variance in fathers' depressive symptoms.

Similar findings have been reported in a few meta-analyses. Kane and Garber (2004) reported on the results of six studies examining the relationship between paternal depression and father-child conflict. They found a moderate effect size of .20 across 499 families. Their conclusions suggested that depression is more substantially related to the presence of negative parenting behaviors (e.g., hostility, rejection) than the absence of positive behaviors (e.g., warmth, guidance).

Wilson and Durbin (2010) investigated the effects of paternal depression on fathers' parenting behaviors. A review of reported effects sizes from 28 different studies suggested that paternal depression had significant but small effects on parenting, with moderating effects that included child and father age as well as race/ethnicity. Moreover, effect sizes for the relationship between paternal depression and fathers' parenting behaviors were comparable to mothers'.

In one of the largest studies conducted to date, Rosenthal, Learned, Liu, and Weitzman (2013)

studied the characteristics of 7,247 fathers with children 5–17 years of age. The authors found the following variables to be predictive of paternal depressive rates: maternal depressive symptoms, living with a child with special health care needs, poor paternal physical health, and paternal unemployment. This was also one of the first studies providing strong evidence associated with paternal unemployment and depressive symptoms.

Substance Use and Abuse

Several studies have looked directly at the issue of substance abuse, with an emphasis on its impact on effective fathering. Overall, this literature suggests that compared to men who abstain from alcohol, alcoholic fathers report a number of problems, including greater aggravation toward their infants (Eiden & Leonard, 2000), lower warmth, and higher negative affect (Eiden, Leonard, Hoyle, & Chavez, 2004). According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, substance abuse is a factor in up to 70% of reported cases of child maltreatment (American Humane Association, 2014), and these children are at increased risk for poorer physical, intellectual, social, and emotional outcomes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

Using a longitudinal design, Finger et al. (2010) examined the relations between paternal alcoholism, psychopathology, marital aggression and harsh parenting behavior. Similar to other studies in this area, the researchers contrasted a sample of children with alcoholic and nonalcoholic fathers. Results suggested that paternal alcoholism, depression, and antisocial behavior (at 12 months of child age) predicted higher levels of marital aggression at 36 months. Interestingly, alcoholism and psychopathology did not predict harsh parenting with marital aggression included in the model. This suggested that marital aggression might have a mediating role between paternal risk factors and parenting outcomes, lending support to the impact of relationship quality on fathers' parenting abilities.

Domestic Violence and Abuse

In reviewing this literature, Stover and Morgos (2013) concluded that the relationships between father

involvement and children's psychological outcomes are far more complicated in violent homes. As has been cited elsewhere, exposure to violence has significant implications for children's beliefs about family roles and the belief that men should be dominant over women (Coley, Carrano, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011; Graham-Bermann & Brescoll, 2000; see Chapter 28, this handbook). Sadly, most fatalities for children and partners resulting from physical abuse are perpetrated by fathers or other male caregivers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

However, data on differences in rates of child abuse and neglect are equivocal depending on study design. In an 18-state database of 192,321 reported child abuse perpetrators in the United States, approximately 46% were male, and 54% were female (Shusterman, Yuan, & Fluke, 2005). After considering abuse occurring from more than one parent or guardian, 37% of maltreatment cases involved fathers compared to 64% for mothers. Researchers argue that this stems from mothers spending more time in the care of children, on average, than fathers. Regardless of perpetration rates, there are clear negative consequences of decreased physical health, increased mental health problems, and a variety of behavioral problems (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).

Several additional themes have been outlined that have placed fathers at greater risk of perpetrating abuse. Francis and Wolfe (2008) determined that abusive fathers had less educational achievement, lower financial status, higher levels of childhood trauma, and more current mental health concerns than nonabusive fathers. Also reported were a greater history of alcohol abuse, violent offender arrests, and higher weapon ownership. Further data suggest that abusive fathers reported more parenting stress and anger, greater likelihood of aggression when angry, and struggles with expressing empathy and perspective taking (Francis & Wolfe, 2008).

Public Policy Issues

In addition to the psychosocial factors above, large systemic barriers can also impact father involvement and warrant a review. While men continue to be the benefactor of privilege many areas, they arguably

face significant biases in their roles as fathers, most notably in regard to legal conflicts and custody battles (Artis, 2004; Maldonado, 2005). Authors and men's rights advocates have persuasively argued that legal systems too often have a "default" to the mother in custody trials, leaving too many men unfairly burdened with economic responsibilities and missed time with children (Rosen, Dragiewicz, & Gibbs, 2009). These perceptions seem to continue despite legislation changes to consider the "best interest of the child" (Elrod, 2006).

Second, policies continue to be in place that may be biased against fathers playing an equal or primary role in the caretaking of their children. Lewin (2009) noted that both legal and societal conventions seem to assume the mother as the most appropriate custodial parent. When in practice, this assumption translates in clear and negative ways on different subgroups of men, including teenage fathers, gay fathers (Mallon, 2004; Rabun & Oswald, 2009), and divorced fathers (Buser & Sternes, 2008), advocating for sole or shared custody of their children.

In addition to challenges with custody arrangements, workplace policies on parental leave are strikingly absent for fathers. The United States ranks last in a 38-country survey of parental leave policies, with 12 weeks of protected leave but no guaranteed paid maternal or paternal leave (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2014). Even though 15% of U.S. firms now offer some form of paid paternity leave (Society for Human Resource Management, 2013), many men opt to take little time off work for caregiving due to being seen as distracted and less dedicated to their jobs (Berndahl & Moon, 2013). In a parental leave study of faculty members across 40 American universities, only 12% of men opted to take paid leave compared to 69% of women (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012). In contrast, Sweden, a leading country in family-friendly policies, has initiated several programs encouraging more active parenting. In 2008, the Swedish government introduced a parental leave policy called the "gender equality bonus," which added protected days of leave. In the United States, while men are increasingly discussing their own unique strains of work-family conflict (Harrington, Van Deusen, &

Humberd, 2011) and hoping for opportunities to spend more time with family, many remain reluctant to ask for or act upon policies that are available (Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, & Spikes, 2012).

Research has been building that investigates the unique barriers that men may face in requesting paternal leave. Using an experimental design, Rudman and Mescher (2013) found that men who requested leave were viewed by participants as poorly committed to the organization and less eligible for performance rewards. More specifically, leave requesters suffered from “femininity stigma,” as defined by appearing weak and uncertain, and were viewed as lower on masculine traits such as ambitiousness and competitiveness. Developing policies to support fatherhood is one thing, but more understanding is needed to provide support for, or remove the barriers from, men seeing parental leave as a viable option for them.

FATHERS’ INFLUENCES ON PARENTING SKILLS AND IDENTITY

One final important area of analysis involves the processes by which men learn to become fathers. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently took the position that enhancing fathers’ roles in the care and development of children should be a key component in pediatric care (Coleman, Garfield, & the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2004). Previous work has demonstrated the importance for new fathers of learning through practice (Rochlen, McKelley, & Whittaker, 2010), with many men learning to parent through “practice, reading, watching television, falling in love with their children and using their common sense” (Steinberg, Kruckman, & Steinberg, 2000, p. 1269).

There has been additional attention in the literature to how fathers learn to parent from their own fathers, and contemporary fathers have reported feeling closer to their children than they were to their own fathers (Mehall et al., 2009). Guzzo (2011) was one of the first to investigate new fathers’ attitudes toward fatherhood as a function of their experiences with their own fathers. Using a national sample from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Survey ($N = 3,525$), the study examined

links between new fathers’ experiences being fathered and attitudes toward their current or planned fathering behaviors. After controlling for socioeconomic and demographic variables, men who lived with their biological father and perceived him as being involved reported more favorable attitudes toward father behaviors than men with different experiences (e.g., nonresident fathers or resident fathers with low involvement). In a similar study, Hofferth, Pleck, and Vesely (2012) conducted an analysis of 409 young men from the 2006 Young Adult Study of the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Results suggested that men whose fathers were positively involved with them when growing up reported more positive parenting of their own children.

Finally, one of the most important areas of research in this area involves parent training programs. In identifying the importance of such research, several large-scale national organizations and initiatives have cited central needs within such intervention projects. These include the Healthy Marriage Initiative, which stresses the importance of addressing domestic violence, and the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative, which emphasizes healthy behaviors and positive parenting techniques for fathers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

In an impressive meta-analysis that looked at some of these themes, Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, and Lovejoy (2008) reviewed 26 studies that addressed whether including fathers in parent training improved outcomes, and the extent to which men and women benefited from parent training interventions. Results suggest that studies that included fathers reported significantly more positive changes in children’s behavior and desirable parenting practices. Upon completion of training, effect sizes for training that included fathers was higher than mother-only training ($d = 0.48$ vs. $d = 0.20$, respectively). Compared with mothers, fathers reported fewer desirable gains from parent training immediately upon completion ($d = 0.68$ vs. $d = 0.37$, respectively). The authors concluded that although most men benefited from training, the need to better understand how programs might better meet the unique needs of fathers is needed.

FURTHERING FATHERHOOD RESEARCH

Several limitations of research have been noted throughout this chapter. Below, we underscore such themes with an emphasis on suggestions that may advance this vast area of research. We begin by noting that in the overwhelming majority of studies on father involvement, interventions, and predictive studies, racial/ethnic minority fathers are consistently less prevalent than their White counterparts. Of those focused on cultural diversity, many are restricted to gay fathers or economically disadvantaged men of color (see review in Marsiglio et al., 2000). There is also a shortage of studies that address subgroups of fathers that are increasing in numbers and visibility. These include stay-at-home fathers, divorced fathers, widowed fathers, incarcerated fathers, and teen fathers. A recent book entitled *Counseling Fathers* (Oren & Oren, 2010) contains excellent reviews and theory-based recommendations for how to work clinically with these men, and it outlines much needed research on specific subgroups. There is a considerable need for research aimed at generating a better understanding of what factors facilitate positive adjustment to these new roles. Such information can serve useful for intervention development or simply information dissemination among such subgroups.

Next, with the exception of the Fragile Families data set, many samples studied are on intact, socioeconomically advantaged families, often with higher rates of resident fathers. Socioeconomic status could be a major confound, with higher socioeconomic status a better predictor of positive outcomes for father involvement than any specific effects due to parenting behaviors. Additionally, few studies on two-parent families adequately control for the effects of mothers on both child outcomes and fathers' behaviors. To address these shortcomings, we need more research aimed at addressing how more diverse families, from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, are functioning. Given that fathers living away from their children remain a common dynamic, studies looking at how and in what capacity these men are able to stay involved and maintain a healthy father figure in their children's lives are sorely needed.

Study designs, commonly employed to date, also have considerable advantages and disadvantages. Much of the process and outcome studies reviewed were correlational. A general lack in true experimental designs makes it difficult to untangle complex interactions in parenting and child development. Future research in parent training and interventions is an ideal area for more experimental designs. A promising area of work includes new fathers support groups, in which some work has been initiated (Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, Elek, & Shipman, 2003), yet infrequently compared with control groups or only limited to antenatal support and education. Relatedly, a shift to more quantitative studies is warranted. Qualitative methods are critical to understanding new phenomena. Yet, the field would benefit from building on these studies and shifting to larger quantitative designs to assess validity in the assumptions and instrumentation. There is also a shift in the social sciences with respect to reporting statistical data. For example, in their meta-analysis of father involvement outcomes, Sarkadi et al. (2008) noted that the statistical analyses on the large longitudinal data sets often selected one variable of interest (e.g., academic achievement) that showed statistical significance without serious discussion of practical significance.

One major critique of previous fatherhood studies is that many of the parenting measures are based on instruments normed on mothers (Doucet, 2006). Barber, Stolz, and Olsen (2005) noted that parenting research focused on mothers while assuming their parenting behaviors were universal, and that we now study fathers in a way that may fail to capture differential effects on children of those same behaviors. In one of the few comparative studies on parenting instrumentation, Adamsons and Buehler (2007) investigated measurement equivalence of items for mothers and fathers across a range of variables. They found that eight of 10 items were stronger indicators of acceptance for fathers than for mothers, with every item demonstrating systematic bias toward mothers. As a result, more instrument development initiatives could be beneficial to the literature, normed and evaluated specifically on fathers. Promising constructs that may be unique in their psychometric properties in need of development include

work–family conflict and efficacy in caregiving at different developmental ages of children.

Moreover, it is critical to conduct similar studies across other common parenting variables with more diverse samples, and only a limited number of studies have looked at scalar equivalence between fathers of different racial/ethnic groups (Knight, Tein, Prost, & Gonzales, 2002). At a minimum, more research is needed to address whether measures commonly used in parenting research yield similar validity and reliability data across different racial and ethnic groups. Relatedly, critics such as Parke (2004) have argued that the current parenting measures are biased toward samples that meet the traditional family ideal and fail to account to large variability in modern family structure. For example, in her studies on African American families, Gadsden (1999) showed that fathers and families who do not conform to the traditional roles or parenting practices of the majority culture are often pathologized in studies.

Notably, there have been some efforts underway to develop and validate father-specific measures. Two such scales are the Nurturant Father Scale (Finley, 1998) and the Father Involvement Scale (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). Both use retrospective ratings by adolescents or adult children on their perceptions of their fathers' parenting behaviors and the nature of their father–child relationships. Several studies have confirmed the factor structure of the scales on similar college samples, including a sample of African American young adults (Doyle, Pecukonis, & Harrington, 2011; Finley, Mira, & Schwartz, 2008). Future validation studies would benefit from designs using father–child dyads to assess consistency between perceptions. However, this type of research, although difficult to conduct, is an important next step in the literature given the increased diversity and roles of fathers that are quite apparent.

An excellent example of this type of research can be seen in the work of Brownson and Gilbert (2002). Using discourse theory to develop the Discourses About Fathers Inventory, Brownson and Gilbert developed a four-factor scale assessing men's understanding of fathers as family leaders, equal parents, competence (or incompetence) in caregiving, and work–family role conflict. A total of 1,006

ethnically diverse fathers of elementary school children answered 56 natural language questions about fatherhood. Unfortunately, to date, no follow-up studies have been conducted to confirm the structure of the scale or to identify any potential themes that may have been missing during development of the original scale. Additional research using the socially constructed narratives men have about fatherhood show promise as a way to identify potentially unique parenting practices or expectations of fatherhood.

In closing, it is clear that men are fathering in different ways and spaces versus past generations, and significant strides have been made in understanding fatherhood. Yet, without question there remain considerable opportunities to improve the breadth, depth, and scope. Further, we cannot overstate the importance of considering shifting cultural, economic, social, and political tides in conducting such research in the efforts to better understand the lives of fathers and their impact on families.

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