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## The Evolution of Fathering Research in the 21st Century: Persistent Challenges, New Directions

*Since the last decade review of the fathering literature in 2000, scholars across numerous disciplines such as demography, family studies, medicine, nursing, law, psychology, social work, and sociology have continued to produce a steady stream of work on fathering and father-child relationships. This literature is reviewed selectively with a focus on key developments, persistent challenges, and critical directions for future research. Significant developments include greater availability of large and nationally representative datasets to study fathers; expansion and evaluation of U.S. federal policy regarding fathers; thoughtful consideration of conceptualization and measurement of fathers' parenting; growth in research on coparenting, maternal gatekeeping, and fathering; increased attention to issues of diversity in fathering; and awareness of the effects of fathering on men's development. Persistent challenges and critical new directions in fathering research include full and routine inclusion of fathers in research on parenting, improved assessment and appropriate data analysis, adherence to evidence-based portrayals of fathers' roles in*

*children's development, generation and use of scientific evidence to guide policy-making, and sustained attention to diversity and fatherhood. These should be priority areas of focus as fathering research proceeds into the next decades of the 21st century.*

Since the last decade review of the fathering literature (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000), scholars across disciplines as diverse as demography, family studies, medicine, nursing, law, psychology, social work, and sociology have continued to produce a steady stream of research on fathering and father-child relationships. Selection of the work we review here was informed by database searches, identification of key influential works (e.g., books, edited volumes, special issues or monographs), and interactions with scholars at scientific meetings and working groups focused on fathers. We focus our review on theory and research pertaining to biological resident and nonresident fathers of minor children because this aligns best with our areas of expertise, represents the bulk of the research on fathers, and avoids overlap with other decade-in-review articles. We refer the reader to the decade-in-review articles on divorce, repartnering, and stepfamilies (Sweeney & Raley, 2020) and intergenerational ties (Fingerman, Huo, & Birditt, 2020) for research we were unable to cover here. In our review of the selected literature, we highlight significant developments during the past decade,

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*Key Words:* family process, family roles, father-child relations, fatherhood, fathers, unpaid family work.

persistent challenges, and critical directions for future research.

In particular, we first feature trends in fathering and influential conceptual models that have guided recent research. Next, we highlight significant developments, including greater availability of large and nationally representative datasets to study fathers; expansion and evaluation of U.S. federal policy regarding fathers; thoughtful consideration of conceptualization and measurement of fathers' parenting; growth in research on coparenting, maternal gatekeeping, and fathering; increased attention to issues of diversity in fathering; and awareness of the effects of fathering on men's development. Finally, we discuss persistent challenges and critical new directions in fathering research, which should be areas of focus as we move into the next decades of the 21st century. These include full and routine inclusion of fathers in research on parenting, improved assessment and appropriate data analysis, adherence to evidence-based portrayals of fathers' roles in children's development, generation and use of scientific evidence to guide policy-making, and sustained attention to diversity and fatherhood.

#### TRENDS IN FATHERING

Studies conducted since 2010 have focused on a number of significant trends or patterns in fathering. Some of the more important trends are the leveling off of fathers' time spent providing child care after a period of rising rates of involvement, increasing numbers of stay-at-home fathers, continuing large numbers of children who do not live with their biological fathers, and an increasing number of states exploring joint physical child custody as the presumption in divorce cases.

U.S. studies tracking fathers' time spent in child care rely on time-diary data, including the American Time Use Survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) and the earlier Americans' Use of Time study (Converse & Robinson, 1980). In 2012, all fathers (i.e., coresident and non-resident) between the ages of 25 and 59 spent an average of 20 minutes per day in physical child-care tasks (e.g., putting child to sleep) and 12 minutes per day in developmental child-care activities (e.g., reading to child; Sayer, 2016). Although this amount of time was similar to fathers' time spent with children in 2004, it is two to three times greater than the amount of

time fathers spent in these activities in 1985. Mothers continued to spend more time providing child care than fathers. In 2012, mothers spent slightly more than twice as much time providing physical child care and 1.63 times as much time providing developmental child care when compared with fathers (Sayer, 2016). Interestingly, mothers spent about four times as much time in physical child care as fathers in 1985, but twice as much time in developmental child care during that year. The ratio of mothers' to fathers' developmental child care has not changed much from 1985 to 2012, but the ratio of mothers' to fathers' physical child care has decreased substantially during this time period. This is largely because fathers have doubled their time in developmental and physical child care; mothers' physical child-care time has also increased during this period, but at a much slower rate.

One of the interesting advances in time use research during the past decade was researchers' focus on child-care time among mothers and fathers earning comparable salaries. Fathers in coresidential families spent slightly more than 7 hours per week in primary child care if the mother was not employed outside of the home and 9 hours in primary care per week if the mother was employed and earned from 60% to 99% of the fathers' earnings (Raley, Bianchi, & Wang, 2012). That is, the total amount of time these fathers spent with children was 73% that of mothers when mothers worked and their earnings were somewhat comparable with those of the fathers. These findings show evidence of increasing convergence in fathers' and mothers' time with children when parents have comparable earnings. Given that mothers tend to earn less than fathers in the United States, these data are consistent with the idea that gender plays an important role in mother and father disparities in child-care time (Connelly, 2016).

Comparative studies of fathers' involvement with children in different countries, although rare, have been conducted during the past decade. Hook and Wolfe (2012) compared partnered, employed, coresident fathers' time use in Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway. Norwegian fathers demonstrated the highest rates of physical care of children on weekdays and weekends, whereas German fathers were the least likely to provide physical care at these times. U.S. and U.K. fathers' engagement in physical care fell in between. Fathers in the four countries showed

similar levels of developmental child care (also referred to as interactive care); one exception was that U.S. fathers spent more time in this type of care on weekdays than fathers in the other countries.

There has also been a trend in fathers staying at home (stay-at-home fathers [SAHF]) to care for their children while mothers work (for an in-depth exploration, see Doucet, 2018). U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS) data revealed that the proportion of all fathers who were SAHF increased from 2.0% in 1976 to 1979 to 3.5% in 2000 to 2009 (Kramer, Kelly, & McCulloch, 2015). These findings were based on a conservative definition of SAHF; mothers worked at least 35 hours per week in paid employment during the past 40 weeks while fathers did not work in any paid job. Less conservative definitions of SAHF are likely to lead to higher proportions of SAHF among married couples (Livingston, 2014a), although such estimates are not currently available. For example, several researchers define SAHF as men who are primary caregivers of their children, but may also work part-time in paid jobs (Lee & Lee, 2018). Several researchers have also made a distinction between SAHF who are able to work and those who are not able to work because of disability or illness. Using CPS data, Kramer and Kramer (2016) found that the effects of mother's education (i.e., human capital) on the likelihood that fathers will be SAHF was greater if fathers reported staying home to take care of children rather than reporting staying home because they were unable to work. The households of SAHF are also much more likely to be economically disadvantaged than the households of working fathers (Livingston, 2014b).

One of the most striking trends has been the leveling off in the percentage of children who do not reside with their biological fathers. In 2017, 26.7% of U.S. children did not reside with their biological father (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). In 2000, the year when the last *Journal of Marriage and Family (JMF)* decade review of fathers was published, 26.6% of children did not reside with their biological fathers. The largest increase in the percentage of children not living with their biological fathers occurred between 1970 and 1980, when the proportion of children not living with biological fathers rose from 13.7% to 21.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

There has also been a trend for states in the United States to adopt joint (i.e., shared)

legal custody and joint physical custody (JPC) options in divorce proceedings; these changes have significant effects on fathers' involvement with children (Nielsen, 2018). Legal custody refers to parents' shared decision-making for children; physical custody refers to parents' coresiding with the child. JPC is defined as living arrangements in which children reside with each parent for at least 35% of the time (Nielsen, 2018), although some states have adopted a definition of JPC that routinely places children with each parent 50% of the time (Fabricius, Aaron, Akins, Assini, & McElroy, 2018). There is much variation among states in how joint versus sole custody of children is defined. Many states have also moved away from involving parents in custody litigation in favor of implementing parenting plans. As of 2017, only two states did not have joint custody laws (Meyer, Cancian, & Cook, 2017). Recent data in Wisconsin revealed that between 1989 and 2010, shared custody (defined as child spending at least 25% time with each parent) increased from about 11% to 50% of all divorce cases (Meyer et al., 2017). Most studies of JPC find that fathers and mothers report having better relationships with their children than parents with sole custody arrangements (Nielsen, 2018). In a recent review, JPC children had better well-being outcomes than sole-physical-custody children in 48 of 60 studies, even after controlling for the quality of parent-child relationship, income, and interparental conflict (Nielsen, 2018). The evidence in favor of JPC addresses a longstanding debate about what is in the best interests of children, although there is still considerable controversy about the benefits of JPC because parents seeking these custody arrangements tend to have better relationships with each other than sole-physical-custody parents.

#### INFLUENTIAL CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Many theoretical perspectives have been used to guide research on fathering during the past decade, including social capital (e.g., Booth, Scott, & King, 2010), identity theory (e.g., Pasley, Petren, & Fish, 2014), and family systems theories (e.g., Galovan, Holmes, Schramm, & Lee, 2014). However, a longstanding concern within the fathering literature has been the lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework to guide research on fathering (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Roggman, 2014). Welcome

developments in theoretical and conceptual models of fathering have taken place within the past decade. In particular, the focus on understanding fathers within ecological contexts has intensified.

For any parent, their parenting behavior and relationships with their children are affected by numerous contextual factors, including those within familial, social, psychological, and cultural domains (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, some researchers have argued that because the role of father is less well defined than that of mother, fathering is especially sensitive to the contexts in which it occurs (Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox, 2005). Within the context of the family, this idea is known as the father vulnerability hypothesis (Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010), and suggests, for instance, that interparental conflict has a more detrimental effect on father-child than on mother-child relations. Although empirical evidence in support of the father vulnerability hypothesis is mixed (Stevenson, Volling, & Gonzalez, 2019), during the past decade there has been an increasing emphasis on understanding fathering as situated within and inseparable from the contexts in which fathers and children are embedded.

This greater focus on fathers in context during the past decade was fueled by the publication of several influential works on fathering since the year 2000, including *Package Deal* (Townsend, 2002) and *Situated Fathering* (Marsiglio et al., 2005), which emphasized environmental supports for and barriers to engaged fathering. In particular, *Situated Fathering* was notable for its broadening of the notion of context beyond more typically examined familial and psychological contexts to include physical spaces, their social affordances, and their symbolic meanings. In 2014, Cabrera et al. (2014) published an expanded version of their ecological model of father-child relationships, originally introduced in 2007 and influenced by the ideas of Bronfenbrenner (1995) and Belsky (1984), which emphasized the environmental and psychological contexts of parenting, respectively. Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model incorporated nuances in context (e.g., distinctions between household socioeconomic resources, fathers' work, and fathers' social networks and community), reciprocal relations between fathering and child development, and changes in father-child relations over time and provides a roadmap for researchers to more deeply contextualize their

scholarship on father-child relationships and children's development.

Another important theoretical development in the past decade was the publication of Pleck's (2010) revised conceptualization of father involvement. In this article, Pleck argued that the research literature did not support the notion that fathers' greater time with children was necessarily associated with better child outcomes. Rather, Pleck expanded and refined the concept of father involvement (as originally introduced by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine [1985, 1987]) to include a greater focus on the quality of father-child interactions and relationships rather than a simplistic focus on merely the amount of time fathers spend with children. Pleck's revised conceptualization included the following five components of father involvement: (a) positive engagement activities, (b) warmth and responsiveness, (c) control, (d) social and material indirect care (i.e., activities that parents do for the child but not with the child), and (e) process responsibility (i.e., ensuring that the child's needs are met without necessarily being the one who directly meets the child's needs).

## SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

### *Availability of New Datasets*

Since the publication of the last *JMF* decade review on fathers, a number of new datasets have become available providing a wealth of data for fathering researchers. In 1996 and 1997, the U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics convened a series of conferences to assess the state of research on fatherhood, fertility, and family formation (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). These conferences led to an initiative known as the Developing a Daddy Survey project. One of the objectives was to increase "comparability across surveys, and provide an integrated view of father involvement that can inform the field and serve as a guide for future projects that measure father involvement" (Cabrera et al., 2004, p. 418).

The Developing a Daddy Survey studies led to the development of a set of father involvement survey items for three new datasets: the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW), Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), and Early Head Start Fathers' Study. The longitudinal FFCW study was designed to examine the

conditions and capabilities of urban unmarried parents (especially fathers) and their children subsequent to the child's birth, the nature of the relationships between unmarried parents, the outcomes of children born into these families, and the effects of policies and environmental conditions on families and children. The FFCW followed a cohort of about 3,700 children born to unmarried parents and a comparison group of about 1,200 children born to married parents living in a stratified random sample of all U.S. cities with 200,000 or more people in the year 2000 (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001). The ECLS-B was designed to provide policy makers, researchers, child-care providers, teachers, and parents with information about children's early life experiences (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The ECLS-B is a nationally representative probability sample of 10,700 children born in 2001. It includes a rich set of questions asked directly and indirectly about fathers. The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.) was a large-scale evaluation of 3,001 families enrolled in the Early Head Start Program in 1996. The Early Head Start Fathers' Study examined the changing nature of the father-child relationship, the impact of fathering on a child's development, and ultimately how the Early Head Start programs included fathers. Researchers have used these rich datasets to conduct many theoretically driven studies of fathers, and as a result, our knowledge of fathering and fathers' contributions to child well-being have increased dramatically. Several additional nationally representative datasets with rich fatherhood data include the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, a school-based study of adolescents in Grades 7 to 12 in the United States in 1994 to 1995 (Harris, 2013), and the National Survey of Family Growth (Lepkowski, 2010), a national probability study of men and women 15 to 44 years of age in the United States focusing on pregnancy, child-bearing, health, and parenting. All but the FFCW datasets are available at the University of Michigan's Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research data depository (Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2019).

### *U.S. Federal Policy Regarding Fathers*

U.S. public policy targeting fathers was first introduced in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, 1996. This policy was largely focused on fathers as financial providers by including provisions to expand the enforcement tools available to the Office of Child Support Enforcement. Since the last decade review in 2000, U.S. public policy has moved toward greater recognition of fathers' caregiving and socialization roles in addition to their financial roles. In 1999, legislation included use of \$10 million of child support funds per year for programs to facilitate noncustodial parents' (mostly fathers') access to and visitation with children. The largest infusion of federal dollars for fatherhood initiatives occurred in the 10 years between 2005 and 2015. In each of those years, the federal government provided \$150 million, half for healthy marriage and relationship (HMRE) programs and half for responsible fatherhood (RF) programs for low-income parents. Whereas the HMRE programs provide classes on maintaining and forming positive partner relationships, RF programs offer classes on parenting and coparenting. In 2015, these grants emphasized the importance of activities related to employment, economic stability, and workforce development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). Grants were made to 90 organizations in 27 states and one territory.

Recognition has been growing in the HMRE and RF fields that programs can achieve better results by using evidence from rigorously designed research to inform practice (this trend has been widespread throughout federal government in recent years [see Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, 2014]). The push toward evidenced-based practice has resulted in the development of a number of institutes and large-scale studies to examine the effects of HMRE and RF programs on fathers and families. One such effort is the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (n.d.; see [www.frpn.org](http://www.frpn.org)). This project promotes the conduct of rigorous evaluations of fatherhood programs throughout the United States. Large-sale randomized control trials have also been funded by the federal government, including the Parents and Children Together impact and process study of four RF programs and two HMRE programs (Zaveri, Baumgartner, Dion, & Clary, 2015), and the Building Strong Families impact

study of more than 5,000 low-income couples attending one of eight programs across the United States (Wood, Moore, Clarkwest, Killewald, & Monahan, 2012). The results of these studies are just beginning to be published. A recent meta-analysis of 24 experimental and quasi-experimental studies of fatherhood and coparenting programs for low-income, unmarried, nonresident fathers revealed small but statistically significant positive effects for father involvement with children, parenting, and coparenting (Holmes, Hawkins, Egginton, Robbins, & Shafer, 2018). The strongest effect size was in coparenting skills. The programs did not significantly impact fathers' employment, financial well-being, or payment of child support.

Public policy regarding paternity leave has lagged considerably in the United States when compared with other countries. The Family and Medical Leave Act (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.) is the only U.S. federal policy guaranteeing leave for new fathers and mothers. The Family and Medical Leave Act provides new parents with 12 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave, but only for workers employed 25 or more hours per week in companies with 50 or more employees. Paid leave for fathers is available in 31 of 41 countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center (2016). Most countries offer 2 weeks of paid leave for fathers, although countries such as Japan (30 weeks of paid leave) and Korea (16 weeks) offer considerably longer periods of paid leave. Studies have not uniformly found that longer periods of paid leave are associated with higher levels of father involvement with children. U.S. studies have shown that fathers who take longer periods of paternity leave are more engaged with their young children (Petts & Knoester, 2018; Pragg & Knoester, 2017), and their partners report higher couple relationship satisfaction (Petts & Knoester, 2019). A large-scale study using data from the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey found that men's utilization of parental leave was associated with more frequent involvement in child care irrespective of the duration of the leave (Meil, 2013). However, research on paid leave in Australia did not show a significant association between length of paid leave and father involvement with infants (Hosking, Whitehouse, & Baxter, 2010). More research is needed to understand whether paternity leave is associated with father involvement as children get older and

with different types of father involvement (Petts & Knoester, 2018).

### *Conceptualization and Measurement of Fathers' Parenting*

Since the year 2000, the influence of Lamb et al.'s (1985, 1987) tripartite model of father involvement focused on engagement, accessibility, and responsibility has remained strong. Despite the call from researchers to develop and validate new tools to measure fathers' involvement with children (Day & Lamb, 2004), the development of these measurement tools has moved at a slow pace in the past decade. Several tools that have been developed are based on Lamb et al.'s (1985, 1987) conceptualization. Finnish researchers Halme, Tarkka, Paavilainen, Nummi, and Åstedt-Kurki (2010) developed a new measure to assess the characteristics of fathers' availability and engagement with preschool-aged children. These researchers identified unique engagement factors, including enjoyment of engagement, potential engagement, and daily confrontations linked with engagement.

Interestingly, these new measures have not kept pace with more recent definitions of father involvement that include references to engagement, warmth and responsiveness, control, and indirect care (Pleck, 2010). Moreover, they have not been responsive to calls from a number of researchers suggesting that the quality of fathers' involvement is more important than the amount of time (quantity) or types of involvement (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013). An exception is a new measure developed and validated to assess fathers' involvement in preschool-age child health (Garfield, Fisher, Barretto, Rutsohn, & Isacco, 2019). Based on a nationally representative sample, the new measure revealed four components of father involvement with preschoolers: general well-being, acute illness, emotional health, and role modeling. Despite these efforts to define and measure the father involvement constructs, a number of researchers have suggested that the field still does not have a general consensus on what the father involvement constructs are or how to measure them (Fagan, Day, Lamb, & Cabrera, 2014).

A number of theoretical and empirical advances have prompted scholars to further reexamine and reconsider the ways in which they conceptualize and assess fathers and their

roles in children's development. Chief among theoretical developments was a seminal article by Paquette (2004), who argued from an evolutionary perspective that fathers' relationships with children serve a different function than those of mothers. In particular, Paquette (2004) drew from attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969) to posit that children's attachment relationships with mothers serve primarily the safe haven function for children (i.e., a place to return for comfort when distressed), whereas children's attachment relationships with fathers serve more of a secure base function—to promote children's exploration of the environment and thus the competencies (i.e., emotion regulation, social skills) that are developed from experiencing challenges and interacting with the world outside the family.

Paquette (2004, p. 194) termed the father-child attachment an "activation relationship," and Paquette and Bigras (2010) developed a new assessment, the Risky Situation, as an alternative to the Strange Situation Procedure (the gold standard measure of attachment behavior in infancy), with the aim of better capturing the proposed unique aspects of the father-child bond. Initial validation data for the risky situation were provided by Dumont and Paquette (2013), who reported preliminary evidence that the father-child attachment relationship assessed in the risky situation is a better predictor of child social-emotional development than the father-child attachment relationship assessed in the traditional Strange Situation Procedure. Alternatively, Stevenson and Crnic (2013) used naturalistic observations to capture the father-child activation relationship and found that higher levels of "activative fathering" when children were age 4 were associated with lower child dysregulation during problem-solving and greater sociability at age 5.

During this same period, there was a resurgence of interest in aspects of father-child interaction that fathers may specialize in and that may be particularly consequential for children's development. In light of evidence that a greater proportion of fathers' time with children is spent in play versus caregiving activities (Kotila, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Kamp Dush, 2013) and that there are qualitative differences in fathers' and mothers' play (John, Halliburton, & Humphrey, 2013), research on fathers' play increased (see Cabrera & Roggman, 2017). On

the whole, fathers' stimulating play has been associated with positive child developmental outcomes (for a review, see St. George, Wroe, & Cashin, 2018).

The focus on fathers' play in conjunction with notions that fathers may occupy special roles in encouraging children's risk-taking and exploration combined to advance the literature on father-child attachment in particular. Using longitudinal data that followed children from infancy through adolescence, Grossmann et al. (2002) demonstrated the important role of fathers' sensitive and challenging play in children's attachment relationships with their fathers. This, together with the ideas of Paquette (2004), led to a reexamination of factors that may influence the quality of father-child attachment relationships. Lucassen et al. (2011) updated van IJzendoorn and De Wolff's (1997) meta-analysis and showed that fathers' sensitivity—a measure of early parenting quality derived from theory and research on mothers—was only a weak predictor of father-child attachment security. Moreover, Lucassen et al. (2011) did not find evidence that fathers' sensitivity combined with stimulation was more predictive of father-child attachment than sensitivity alone. However, the measures of stimulation included in those studies were diverse and not necessarily consistent with the stimulating aspects of fathers' parenting highlighted in the ideas of Paquette (2004) and others. Recently, Olsavsky, Berrigan, Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, and Kamp Dush (2019) reported that father-infant relationships were more likely to be secure when fathers engaged in greater physical and/or object stimulation of their infants during father-infant interactions, as long as fathers refrained from high levels of intrusiveness (parent-centered, overcontrolling behaviors).

Around the same time, other researchers began to heighten their focus on a specific aspect of fathers' play—fathers' greater propensity to engage in physically active and rough-and-tumble play (RTP) with children (Schoppe-Sullivan, Kotila, Jia, Lang, & Bower, 2013). In a meta-analysis, St. George and Freeman (2017) uncovered a moderate positive association between fathers' RTP and children's social competence. One potential concern with the focus on fathers' RTP could be the possibility of injury to children. St. George, Fletcher, Freeman, Paquette, and Dumont (2015)

reported that fathers who engaged in more frequent and extended bouts of RTP with their preschoolers and who encouraged their children's perseverance had children at lower risk of injury, whereas fathers who encouraged their preschoolers' risk-taking had children who were at greater risk for injury behaviors. Notably, Bocknek et al. (2017) showed that fathers' physically active play with their children during the preschool years is related to children's better self-regulation in a curvilinear fashion, such that moderate levels of active play appear to be most beneficial. Thus, greater attention to the quality of father-child RTP is warranted.

Australian researchers Fletcher, St. George, and Freeman (2013) introduced an observational assessment and coding scheme to capture the quality of fathers' RTP with children. Fathers are asked to play several physical games with their preschool-aged child (including a sock wrestle game, in which father and child each try to remove the other's socks without losing their own), and these episodes are videotaped and coded for aspects of the quality of the RTP. Fletcher et al. (2013) and St. George, Fletcher, and Palazzi (2017) both reported that higher quality fathers' RTP was associated with lower levels of parent-reported child behavioral difficulties. Father-child RTP quality coded with this scheme was also negatively associated with children's aggressive behavior in a study of urban Chinese families with 2- to 3-year-olds (Anderson, Qiu, & Wheeler, 2017).

Others focused on capturing the high levels of arousal and peaks of positive emotion that may be characteristic of father-child interaction (Feldman, 2003). In particular, Bureau and colleagues (Bureau et al., 2014) developed the Laughing Task procedure in which a parent is asked to make their child laugh without using toys. Notably, several studies assessing parent behavior in this procedure, including play sensitivity, indicate that both mothers and fathers behave similarly (Bureau et al., 2014) and that parent play sensitivity in this task is associated with child attachment security similarly for mothers and fathers (Bureau et al., 2017). These results challenge the notion that fathers' play is uniquely predictive of father-child relationship quality and child development. This is not the only research that contradicts the conception of father-child relationships as unique. Menashe-Grinberg and Atzaba-Poria (2017) demonstrated that the observed playfulness

(e.g., creativity, humor, imagination) of mothers and fathers during play with their infants and toddlers was similar. In addition, Majdandžić, de Vente, and Bögels (2016) developed new observational and survey measures to assess challenging parenting behavior from infancy to toddlerhood and reported more similarities than differences between mothers' and fathers' challenging parenting behavior.

In the past decade, researchers have also focused on the ways in which fathers may support children's cognitive development in addition to social-emotional development. Some of this work has pointed to ways in which fathers may provide unique support for children's language development. Conversation-eliciting speech (e.g., requests for clarification, *wh*-questions) appears to be produced more frequently by fathers than by mothers, and thus may challenge young children's language development in ways that promote growth (Leech, Salo, Rowe, & Cabrera, 2013). Indeed, low-income African American fathers who posed more *wh*-questions to their toddlers had children with stronger vocabularies and verbal reasoning skills (Rowe, Leech, & Cabrera, 2017). Teuffl, Deichmann, Supper, and Ahnert (2019) reported that both fathers' observed language use during shared book reading (i.e., repeating or imitating children's utterances) and the quality of the father-child attachment relationship were important contributors to toddlers' expressive language skills.

### *Coparenting, Maternal Gatekeeping, and Fathering*

One area of intense focus in the past decade has been on the coparenting relationship as a context for fathering behavior. Coparenting relationships are those involving individuals who share responsibility for rearing particular children (Feinberg, 2003), and the quality of these relationships is chiefly characterized by the extent to which coparents support versus undermine each other's parental roles, parenting behavior, and relationships with children (Kotila & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2015). Although most coparenting relationships involving fathers are with children's mothers, and thus have been the primary focus of research, fathers may also coparent with other parental figures, including stepparents and grandparents (Palkovitz, Fagan, & Hull, 2013).



Consistent with family systems perspectives (Minuchin, 1974), which position the coparenting relationship as the family's "executive subsystem" and a guiding force in family and parent-child relationship dynamics, father-mother coparenting relationship quality has been shown to matter for fathers' engagement in parenting and father-child relations across numerous studies conducted within the past decade (Kotila & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2015). Regarding fathers who reside with their children, Hohmann-Marriott (2011) used data from the ECLS-B to demonstrate that more cooperative coparenting was linked with greater father involvement with toddler-aged children for both married and unmarried coresident parents. Similarly, Brown, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, and Neff (2010) found greater resident father-infant attachment security when fathers' coparenting relationships with children's mothers were more supportive.

Research that has examined nonresident fathers has shown even stronger and more consistent relations between coparenting and fathering behavior. Much of this work has focused on the positive, supportive aspects of coparenting relationships and utilized the FFCW study data. Carlson, McLanahan, and Brooks-Gunn (2008) showed that positive coparenting predicted nonresident fathers' greater involvement with their children over time. Fagan and Palkovitz (2011) extended this work by comparing relations between coparenting and father involvement by fathers' residency and relationship status with children's mothers. They found that fathers' perceptions of coparenting support were associated only with greater father engagement in parenting over time for fathers who were not romantically involved with their children's mother. Moreover, Fagan and Lee (2011) reported that supportive coparenting was especially important for adolescent fathers' engagement with their children compared to adult fathers' engagement. The importance of coparenting to adolescent fathers' engagement was confirmed in a sample of adolescent mothers, fathers, and their children; adolescent mothers' perceptions of a positive parenting alliance (i.e., coparenting relationship) with their children's fathers were closely linked to fathers' greater engagement with their infant children (Fagan, 2014).

The conflictual, or undermining, aspects of coparenting relationships and relations with

fathering have received less attention, and results have appeared more nuanced. Waller (2012) used data on a representative sample of unmarried parents from the FFCW study to derive coparenting styles and showed that conflictual coparenting portended a larger decrease in father involvement in childrearing over time compared with disengaged coparenting. Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan (2011) examined reciprocal relations between observed supportive and undermining coparenting and father involvement in caregiving and play activities with preschool aged children. Interestingly, they found that paths from coparenting behavior to father involvement were not significant, although father involvement did predict subsequent observed coparenting behavior. In particular, greater father involvement in play was associated with increased supportive and decreased undermining coparenting behavior over time, whereas greater father involvement in caregiving was associated with decreased supportive and increased undermining coparenting behavior over time. Another article using the same sample but focusing on parents' perceptions of coparenting behavior reported that greater father involvement in caregiving was associated with less perceived supportive and greater perceived undermining coparenting behavior—but only in single-earner families in which fathers worked for pay outside the home and mothers did not (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010). Notably, Fagan and Cabrera (2012) uncovered highly similar findings using longitudinal data from the ECLS-B. They reported that fathers' engagement in physical care activities with their 9-month-old infants foreshadowed greater subsequent coparenting conflict, whereas fathers' engagement in cognitively stimulating activities with their infants predicted lower coparenting conflict later on.

The notion that certain types of father involvement in childrearing might increase, rather than decrease, coparenting conflict brings to mind the concept of maternal gatekeeping, one facet of the coparenting relationship (Schoppe-Sullivan & Altenburger, 2019). Maternal gatekeeping was catapulted to wider recognition by Allen and Hawkins (1999), whose study popularized the term and introduced a conceptualization of maternal gatekeeping that emphasized its negative functions and roots in gendered family identities and roles. In an early study published not long after the last *JMF* decade

review on fathering, Fagan and Barnett (2003) demonstrated that greater maternal gatekeeping (defined as mothers' desires to control parental decision-making) was associated with less father involvement in childrearing. Similarly, Meteyer and Perry-Jenkins (2010) reported that greater maternal gate closing was related to less father involvement in child care after the transition to parenthood. Recently, Altenburger, Schoppe-Sullivan, and Kamp Dush (2018) showed that greater maternal gate closing was associated with greater relative declines over time in the observed quality of fathers' parenting behavior with their infants, indicating the potential for maternal gate closing behavior to not only affect the amount of time fathers spend with children or the frequency of their engagement but also the quality of father-child relationships, which has been more closely linked to child development outcomes than quantity of paternal engagement (Pleck, 2010). Greater maternal gate closing has also been linked to fathers' perceptions of poorer adjustment in the couple relationship via feelings of less closeness in coparenting (Olsavsky, Yan, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Kamp Dush, 2019).

Subsequent theory and research emphasized that mothers can open as well as close the gate to fathers (Adamsons, 2010; Austin, Fieldstone, & Pruett, 2013; Cannon, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, & Szewczyk Sokolowski, 2008; Puhlman & Pasley, 2013). For instance, Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, and Sokolowski (2008) found that maternal encouragement of father involvement in childrearing mediated the association between supportive coparenting and fathers' engagement in child care during the first few months of their child's life. Moreover, Zvara, Schoppe-Sullivan, and Kamp Dush (2013) showed that fathers who received greater gate opening from mothers felt more influential in health-related decision-making for their infant children. However, Fagan and Cherson (2017) showed that it is important to distinguish further between types of maternal gate-opening behavior. Although maternal encouragement of father involvement was associated with greater subsequent father engagement with children, maternal facilitation of father involvement (i.e., mothers' demands for greater father involvement, likely sparked by lower levels of father involvement to begin with) was associated with lower subsequent father engagement with children.

The most recent research on maternal gatekeeping has explored the question of which factors influence the extent to which mothers open or close the gate to fathers' engagement with their children. Likely suspects with empirical support include maternal psychological characteristics (e.g., poorer psychological functioning; Schoppe-Sullivan, Altenburger, Lee, Bower, & Kamp Dush, 2015), gender role attitudes (e.g., more traditional attitudes; Kulik & Tsoref, 2010), and marital relationship quality (Christopher, Umemura, Mann, Jacobvitz, & Hazen, 2015). However, mindful of the "backlash" against the notion of maternal gatekeeping (Walker & McGraw, 2000), recent research has examined fathers' as well as mothers' characteristics as predictors of gatekeeping, emphasizing the dyadic and reciprocal nature of mother-father coparenting relations. For instance, several studies have provided evidence that mothers may close the gate to fathers because of fathers' lower parenting competence (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2015) or because in some cases fathers may be legitimately perceived as dangerous to children (Zvara, Mills-Koonce, Cox, & Family Life Project Key Contributors, 2016).

#### *Increased Attention to Issues of Diversity in Fathering*

There has been a great deal of interest in non-resident fathers during the past decade as evidenced by the large number of published and unpublished reports using FFCW data. One particularly interesting advance has been a growing body of studies about nonresident fathers' multipartnered fertility. Nationally representative data show that rates of multipartnered fertility range from 12.3% of all men aged 40 to 44 (based on the Survey of Income and Program Participation; Monte, 2017) to 13% of men aged 41 to 49 (based on data from the 2006–2010 National Survey of Family Growth; Guzzo, 2014). FFCW findings show that nearly 60% of unmarried mothers surveyed at the birth of one of their children had a child with a different partner by the 9-year follow-up (Fomby & Osborne, 2013).

Evidence points to racial/ethnic differences in the likelihood of multipartnered fertility. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Guzzo and Furstenberg (2007) found that African American mothers who had their first birth outside of marriage

were almost twice as likely as unmarried White mothers to report having a second child with a new nonresidential partner when interviewed between ages 19 and 25 years. Research also suggests that fathers' multipartnered fertility is associated with less optimal parenting (Bronte-Tinkew, Horowitz, & Scott, 2009) and more personal problems such as depression (Turney & Carlson, 2011). Harknett and Knab (2007) suggested the logistics of parenting multiple children residing in different households make it difficult for fathers to address adequately the caregiving needs of all of their children.

There is wide variability in nonresident fathers' contact with children over time; some fathers are persistently in or out of contact with children, whereas others decline and some even increase their levels of contact (Cheadle, Amato, & King, 2010). Many studies have addressed the question of why some nonresident fathers are able to stay involved with their children while others struggle with involvement (for an in-depth treatment, see Edin & Nelson, 2013). FFCW data showed that nonresident Black and White fathers spend more time and are more engaged with children aged 1 to 9 than are nonresident Hispanic fathers (Ellerbe, Jones, & Carlson, 2018). Most nonresident fathers in the FFCW study were never married to the child's mother. FFCW studies revealed that nonresident fathers who have more financial resources, are more consistent in making formal support payments, and provide greater informal child support are significantly more involved with children (Carlson, VanOrman, & Turner, 2017; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2018; Turner & Waller, 2017). An interesting finding was that the association between higher child support arrears and lower nonresident father involvement was mediated by lower father-mother relationship quality (Turner & Waller, 2017).

A number of studies have examined the association between nonresident fathers' risk and resilience and engagement with children. Fagan and Lee (2012) found that higher levels of fathers' risk (e.g., unemployment, depression, low education) during infancy were associated with less nonresident father engagement 4 years later, and higher fathers' resilience (e.g., social support, participation in one's church) during infancy predicted more subsequent involvement. Moreover, the negative effect of early risk on later engagement was buffered by higher levels of father involvement during

infancy. Predictor studies have also found that a decline in mothers' and nonresident fathers' coparenting relationships is one of the main reasons that fathers are not engaged with their children (Carlson, Pilkauskas, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2011), although it is also important to note that there is considerable variation in quality of coparenting relationships following a divorce or separation, with some fathers and mothers improving, some declining, and some staying the same (Goldberg & Carlson, 2015). Researchers have suggested that these studies have implications for programs that serve fathers. Specifically, programs should intervene early with fathers (i.e., during infancy) to improve the quality of parents' coparenting relationships and encourage fathers' engagement with young children (e.g., Feinberg & Jones, 2018; Pruett, Pruett, Cowan, & Cowan, 2017; Rempel, Rempel, Khuc, & Vui, 2017).

Researchers have also focused more attention on incarcerated fathers during the past decade due in part to the large number of incarcerated fathers (for a review, see Adams, 2018). The United States incarcerated approximately 2.17 million people in prisons and jails in 2015 (Kaeble, Glaze, Tsoutis, & Minton, 2016). The vast majority of incarcerated adults were men, and more than half reported having children younger than the age of 18 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Despite the increased interest in incarcerated fathers, researchers have suggested that little is known about how these fathers experience their role as a parent (Dyer, Pleck, & McBride, 2012), although Dallaire and Kaufman (2018) suggested that the incarceration experience may result in devaluation and less commitment to the role of being a father (see also Hart, Roy, & Charkoudian, 2017). Little is also known about fathers' experiences postrelease. Qualitative research has suggested that unaddressed childhood trauma and postrelease stress are the most significant barriers to a successful transition at reentry (Skinner-Osei & Stepteau-Watson, 2018).

Increasing attention to diversity of fathering is also evidenced as a result of the increasing number of gay men who are raising children (Reczek, 2020), although the research literature on gay fathering is currently small, and largely focused on White gay fathers, with little attention paid to gay, racial/ethnic minority fathers (Patterson, 2017). The Williams Institute (2016) found that 20% of gay male couples are raising children.

Gay men can become parents through adoption, surrogacy, divorce in the context of heterosexual relationships, or coresidence with a heterosexual partner. Goldberg's (2012) qualitative study with 70 gay fathers provided important insights into how gay fathers reconfigured their roles as partners and workers once they became parents (half of the couples adopted a child); how they perceived their changing relationships with friends, family members, and the larger society during the transition to parenthood; and how they managed their multiple minority statuses in the context of their larger communities. A recent meta-analysis of 10 studies examining effects on children revealed that children of gay fathers had better outcomes than children of heterosexual parents, although the authors noted that the differences may have been attributed to gay fathers having higher socioeconomic status (Miller, Kors, & Macfie, 2017). Studies that have been published since this meta-analysis have similarly found that gay fathers display attachment patterns with children that are comparable to or more secure than patterns of attachment between heterosexual fathers and children (McConnachie et al., 2019; for a review, see also Parke, 2013).

Within the past 10 years, a growing body of research has focused on fathers in different parts of the world. Li and Meier (2017) published a review of studies examining the contributions of perceived paternal and maternal acceptance to various indicators of child adjustment among samples of families from 127 studies conducted in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America; several were multinational studies. The findings revealed that both paternal and maternal acceptance predicted child outcomes. Although studies such as those reviewed by Li and Meier (2017) are useful for understanding the impact that fathers have on children worldwide, they say little about cultural influences on fathers. Although we do not have space to fully review this literature here, Lamb, Shwalb, and Shwalb (2013) published an excellent volume with chapters about fathering in many parts of the world.

#### *Effects of Fatherhood on Men's Development*

Fifteen years ago, Palkovitz (2002) demonstrated that men's adult development is closely linked to the manner in which they learn and grow in their paternal responsibilities. Grounded

in Erikson's theory of bio-psycho-social development, Palkovitz (2002) suggested that one of the most important research questions is how men develop when they become fathers. Since Palkovitz's (2002) groundbreaking study, researchers have demonstrated the importance of fathers' development and well-being. For example, from 8% to 16% of men report postpartum depression (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010). Some men also experience increased depression during their partners' pregnancies. Fathers' depression during pregnancy and after the child's birth can have negative effects on both the mother and child (Junge et al., 2016). Significant correlates of fathers' postpartum depression include negative emotions, financial concerns, balancing work-life demands, low education levels, and marital problems (Kumar, Oliffe, & Kelly, 2018). Unfortunately, researchers in Australia found that there are few mainstream treatment options for fathers with postpartum depression and anxiety (O'Brien et al., 2017).

Fathers' physical health may also be influenced by parenthood. Most research literature on fathers' health seems to focus on the transition to parenthood. In a comprehensive review of parenthood and fathers' and mothers' health, Saxbe, Rossin-Slater, and Goldenberg (2018) reported that the transition to parenthood is an inflection point for body weight trajectories. Mechanisms that seem to influence fathers' weight gain during the transition to fatherhood include changes in sleep, physical activity, testosterone, and stress (Saxbe et al., 2018). A cross-national study of fathers in six Asian countries found that fathers who were more involved with their children from infancy through adolescence were more likely to report positive general health and life satisfaction and less likely to report depression (Chan, Emery, Fulu, Tolman, & Ip, 2017). More research is needed to understand better the association between fathers' parenting and their health; in particular, this research should focus more on quality of father-child relationships and health than on amount of involvement and health. In addition, research on older fathers and their relationships with their adult children reminds us that father-child relationships continue to evolve through the lifespan (e.g., Kalmijn, 2013; Noël-Miller, 2013; Pillemer, Munsch, Fuller-Rowell, Riffin, & Sutor, 2012); thus,

research on the role of fathering in men's adult development should not be limited to father-child relationships when children are young.

#### PERSISTENT CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite impressive progress in research on fathering during the first decades of the 21st century, fathering research faces both persistent challenges and exciting future opportunities. As pointed out by Cabrera, Volling, and Barr (2018), one persistent challenge is that most parenting research still defaults to a focus on mothers. One reason for this is that researchers often designate mothers as children's primary caregivers because they continue to spend more time with children (even though fathers' time with children has increased dramatically, as reviewed earlier), thereby treating mothers as the representative parent in a family. However, knowing that the quality of parent-child relationships is more important than the quantity of parental involvement (Pleck, 2010) makes it especially challenging to defend exclusion of fathers from parenting research on the basis of parenting time. Moreover, children have relationships with mothers, fathers, and other caregivers that differ in quality (Dagan & Sagi-Schwartz, 2018), and if our goal is to understand the effects of parenting or parent-child relationships on children's development, by only focusing on mothers we risk overestimating their effects.

Another reason that fathers are not routinely studied is that collecting and using data from them adds a challenging layer of complexity to research. For instance, the FFCW study data on fathers—although available—are sometimes excluded from particular articles because of greater attrition or missing data among fathers that render the samples smaller and less representative (e.g., Carlson et al., 2008; Geller, 2013; Kotila & Kamp Dush, 2012). Thus, some articles about fathers may not include any data provided by fathers themselves. Clearly, large, representative samples are important; however, their advantages do not necessarily outweigh the disadvantages of losing fathers' perspectives and the risk of providing an incomplete, even distorted view of parenting and children's family environments. One important approach to including fathers' voices is the use of mixed

methods (e.g., Tach, Edin, Harvey, & Bryan, 2014). Fathers should not be "absent" parents from the literature on parenting.

Another persistent challenge for fathering scholars is assessment and data analysis. This topic is a significant focus of the recent Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) monograph edited by Volling and Cabrera (2019). Researchers who employ survey techniques, and those who design large-scale survey data collections, should take care to use measures of fathering and related constructs (e.g., coparenting and maternal gatekeeping) with strong psychometric properties. In particular, the past decade has seen the development of more sophisticated measures of nonresident fathering that capture multiple dimensions of father involvement (i.e., engagement, accessibility, responsibility) with distinct versions for fathers of children of various ages (Dyer, Kauffman, Fagan, Pearson, & Cabrera, 2018; Fagan, Dyer, Kaufman, & Pearson, 2017). Fagan, Kaufman, and Dyer (2019) found that measuring nonresidential fathers' telephone and social media contact is as important as measuring face-to-face contact. Thus, these newer measures should replace more dated measures of contact.

Given renewed attention to the quality of father-child relationships (Pleck, 2010), well-validated survey measures that assess this aspect of fathering from the perspectives of fathers and children are needed. Moreover, exciting work on observational assessments of fathers' parenting behavior is currently underway, and we should know much more about the best ways to assess fathers' (and mothers') parenting quality before publication of the next decade review. Although studies that focus only on fathers will remain necessary and important (as will studies that focus only on mothers), studies that include mothers, fathers, and children allow the application of family systemic theoretical and data analytic techniques. More consistent adoption of systemic approaches promises to furnish a more nuanced understanding of parenting and family relationships and stronger applications of this knowledge (Cabrera et al., 2018; Cabrera & Volling, 2019; Cowan & Cowan, 2019; Dyer, Day, & Harper, 2014). With the advances in the conceptualization and measurement of fathering behavior that have been made in the past decade and those that promise to follow soon, the design and collection of a

new nationally representative dataset focused on fathers and with a rich collection of questions on parenting behavior, parental leave, expectations for and satisfaction with parenthood, and family system relationships would be a worthwhile investment.

We also offer a word of caution regarding claims of “father uniqueness” or the “essential father.” Pleck (2010, 2012) offered a compelling argument that fathers are very important to children’s development, but not essential, given that many children experience positive development without the involvement of a father or father figure. Moreover, the notion that fathering and mothering are unique constructs is not substantiated (Fagan et al., 2014). However, claims that fathers make unique contributions to children’s development persist (e.g., Jeynes, 2016), as do theories that fathers and mothers serve different functions as parents, and often attribute these purportedly unique effects to evolved differences between males and females (Paquette, 2004). Strong evidence would be necessary to substantiate claims of father uniqueness, and the existing literature does not provide that evidence. Thus, we urge scholars working in this area to adhere to the evidence when describing the roles of fathers in children’s development.

An important direction for future research is the generation and use of scientific evidence to guide policy. As previously discussed, the U.S. federal government has invested considerable financial support for programs for low-income nonresident fathers since 2005, yet only a small number of evaluations of these programs have been conducted to determine their effects. Holmes et al. (2018) concluded in their meta-analysis that there is a continued need for evaluation of these fatherhood programs to determine their impact on fathers and families, best practices for addressing the needs of fathers, and ways to improve the capacity of programs to serve fathers.

There is also a need for researchers to conduct policy studies addressing the considerable and persistent changes occurring in family life. The worldwide trends for mothers to work outside of the home in paid jobs and for fathers to assume greater responsibility for child care point to the need for researchers to study policies that support fathers’ ability to care for their children. Paternity leave is one such policy that has received little attention in the United States (compared with studies in other countries) and

should be a focus of research because of its potential to support fathers and families from the very start of a child’s life, but other policy studies are also needed. In particular, the growing trends for fathers (and mothers) to do paid work at home and to have flexible work hours have the potential to better support fathers’ roles as parents, but more needs to be understood about these phenomena and the conditions under which they contribute to positive parenting.

We also emphasize the need for continued research on diversity and fatherhood. The last decade has revealed the “many faces” of fathering. We urge researchers to continue their study of gay, nonbinary, and genderqueer fathers (for a review, see Carneiro, Tasker, Salinas-Quiroz, Leal, & Costa, 2017), SAHF, nonresident fathers, and racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse fathers and to expand further into newer areas of study, including the roles of biological and social fathers (e.g., Barton, Kogan, Cho, & Brown, 2015), fathers of children with special needs (e.g., Kayfitz, Gragg, & Orr, 2010), and fathering in migrant and transnational families (e.g., Hoang & Yeoh, 2011; see also Van Hook & Glick, 2020).

Much more needs to be understood as well about the intersectionality of diverse groups of fathers (Doucet & Lee, 2014), the multiplicity and fluidity of fathering identities and their enactments (e.g., Yarwood, 2011), and the many layers of social ecology that shape fathers’ relationships with children (Cabrera et al., 2014). The understanding that men can hold multiple fathering roles simultaneously (e.g., resident biological children, nonresident biological children, resident stepchildren) is beginning to grow. For instance, using data from the National Survey of Family Growth, Arsenault and Stykes (2019) demonstrated that traditional dichotomous (e.g., resident vs. nonresident) definitions of fatherhood were not appropriate for one in five fathers and that fathers with complex fathering roles were more likely to be non-White and socioeconomically disadvantaged. Moreover, although fathering researchers have tended to focus on socioeconomically disadvantaged fathers from more urban areas and intersections with race and ethnicity, research on fathering in the ecology of more rural areas, which may face particular social and economic challenges, is also increasing (Brandth, 2016; Miller & Azar, 2019; Mills-Koonce et al., 2015; Pancsofar, Vernon-Feagans, & Family Life Project

Investigators, 2010) and will continue to be an important area of inquiry in the next decade.

The *JMF* decade-in-review article published in 2000 by Marsiglio et al. (2000) stated that the prospects were promising for the development of a rich body of scholarship on fathering in the subsequent 10 years. Twenty years later, it is evident that a great deal has been learned about fathering. Yet, there are still many gaps in the research literature and much more to do in the service of understanding and supporting the important roles that fathers assume in their families.

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