

The Role of the Father in Child Development

- ❖ Why study father involvement? How do we?
 - Theoretical framework of father involvement
 - An ecological (Bronfenbrenner) approach
 - Direct vs. Indirect (systems framework)
 - Descriptive results
 - What is the role of the father?
 - Predictors of (and barriers to) father involvement
 - Consequences of father (un)involvement
 - Promoting positive father involvement
- ❖ Why study father involvement?
 - 1970's
 - Doubt as to importance of fathers
 - Didn't really study them
 - Thought they just provided food
 - 1990's
 - No more doubt as to their importance
 - Realize they do have a role
- ❖ How do we study father involvement?
 - Quantitative reports (mom & dad)
 - Survey
 - Time diary - record everything they do (How much time spent with kids?)
 - Qualitative observations and interviewing
 - Absolute
 - Time spent with kids alone versus relative involvement

- ❖ Theoretical framework of father involvement
 - Engagement - direct interaction (caretaking, play) and affective component
 - Not smoking and unengaged while playing with kid
 - Accessibility - availability (potential for interaction)
 - Responsibility - resources for the child
 - Can provide for kids
 - Can take to doctor when they're sick
- ❖ Descriptive Results (in general...)
 - Fathers spend less time with children than mothers (all 3 domains)
 - Father involvement has increased over time (all 3 domains)
 - Fathers are more likely to be involved in dual-earner households than father-earner only households.
- ❖ What is the role of the father?
 - (colonial times) - all powerful patriarch, but fully-involved
 - (industrial times) - breadwinner
 - (sexual revolution) - nurturing father
 - (today) - multidimensional father (like moms today)
 - Do fathers parent differently?
 - Domain - specific interactions with children
 - Play>caretaking
 - What makes a dad a "deadbeat" dad?
 - Unemployed (not paying child support)
 - Disciplinarian? - both parents have potential to discipline
 - What about a father primary caregiver?
 - They do most to take care of kid
- ❖ Direct vs. Indirect (systems framework)
 - Direct effects:

- Father-child interactions
- Playing, communicating
- Indirect effects:
 - Co-parenting
 - Economic support
 - Marital satisfaction
 - Parents feel the others' support
- ❖ Predictors of (and barriers to) father involvement
 - Psychological factors
 - Child's characteristics
 - Social support
 - Marital support, satisfaction
 - Community/cultural influences
 - Institutional practices and public policies (welfare, child support)
- ❖ Individualistic Factors
 - Dad factors:
 - His motivation. Am I motivated to be a father?
 - Efficacy - Am I ready to be a dad? Can I do it?
 - Depressive symptoms - no availability, too wrapped up in their depression
 - Modeling or compensation (own father's involvement)
 - Attitudes about masculinity
 - Child factors:
 - Gender... might be more involved with a son rather than a daughter
 - Biological relationship to father (stepchild, biological, adopted) - will become fixated on current partner's child.
 - Temperament
- ❖ Social Support
 - Maternal gatekeeping
 - Not a good marriage so mom just doesn't want the father in the child's life