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Father – Paternity

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Synthesis

How important is it?

Fathering practices have changed significantly over the past two decades in order to adapt to the changing economic, social, and cultural needs. Relative to a few decades ago, mothers are more likely to work outside of the home, thus requiring fathers to become increasingly engaged in the daily care of children. In addition, attitudes towards gender roles and expectations have also evolved over the years, in turn allowing fathers to play a more active role as caregiver. In fact, there is evidence that many fathers across the world are going beyond the breadwinner role and are increasingly involved in childcare and child rearing. While fathers continue to be one of the main sources of financial support, they also play a key role in the development of children by promoting their identity, cultural values, safety, social-emotional competence, and school readiness.

Looking at fatherhood across time and cultural settings is important as it broadens our understanding of the changing role of fathers, and contributing factors to their different level of engagement within the family.

What do we know?

The different trends in fathering can be explained by cultural, social, and financial factors. Cultural beliefs about gender roles and division of labour have an impact on family policies. For instance, in Sweden, fathers are entitled to 60 days of paid paternity leave. Similarly, in Spain, fathers are allowed 13 days of paternity leave and can get up to ten extra weeks. In addition to cultural beliefs, cultural values about family solidarity and integration (ex. familism) influence the level of father involvement. Relative to other minority groups in the United States, Latino fathers report higher levels of familism; they are described as highly engaged and responsible with their children.

However, regardless of these cultural beliefs and values, the extent of father involvement largely depends on the social and financial context. The Apartheid in South Africa, the Slavery in the United States, and the Indian Act in Canada are all examples of historical events and policies that have affected and continue to influence fatherhood practices. Given the poor employment

opportunities, many black fathers in South Africa are forced to leave their family in order to find work. Similarly, African-American fathers in the United States and First Nations/Métis fathers in Canada have a higher likelihood of facing barriers relative to Caucasian fathers, which in turn limit the time spent with their children. Examples of such barriers include parental separation, incarceration, poverty, unemployment, and patterns of seasonal work.

Finally, there is a popular belief that father absence is associated with negative outcomes in children. Yet, there is increasing evidence that a father's physical location and child involvement are two completely separate dimensions in the father-child relationship. According to research results, a high level of involvement by non-resident fathers (i.e., fathers who do not live in the same house as their children) may moderate the negative effects of their absence on their children's adjustment. Taken together, father absence does not automatically mean lack of involvement, and by the same token, mere presence does not always guarantee father engagement.

What can be done?

Early Childhood Programs

Fathers are encouraged to participate in fatherhood intervention programs, such as Kangaroo Care and Early Head Start. These programs are designed to help fathers develop healthy parenting skills, a secure father-child attachment relationship, and effective intervention strategies. These strategies are especially important when children are at risk for future behavioural and/or social-emotional problems. In order to increase fathers' participation, programs should include male staff and facilitators, provide a father-friendly environment, take into account cultural differences, and allow hands-on activities.

Policy and Research

Policies recommendations on fatherhood are more likely to be effective if they take into account the unique circumstances and needs of fathers and specifically target fathering skills as opposed to the larger umbrella of parenting skills. Furthermore, policies and interventions should be designed to support fathers who have limited opportunities to interact with their children. Finally, given that fatherhood is an emerging field of research, more prospective studies need to be conducted on the quality of fathering experiences, the types of effective interventions for

fathers, and the different needs of fathers across cultures.

Overall, programs, policies, and research need to reflect diverse fatherhood experiences, as they allow us to understand the ways in which culturally specific parenting practices are beneficial to young children, and family as a whole.

The Impact of Fathers on Children

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Introduction

Fathers are acknowledged as important influences on children in every society. What fathers do varies with respect to social context, which in turn shapes the variable impacts that fathers have on their children. Much of contemporary social science and policy research is concerned with fathers' impacts on children's socioemotional development.[1,2] Yet material contributions made by fathers ("breadwinning") remain central to an array of impacts on children,[3] including with respect to children's educational attainment and prospects for social success. Our aim in this entry is to briefly touch on the various impacts fathers have on their children.

Subject

Involved fathering is a defining characteristic of our species, with different features having evolved at different times and in different contexts.[4,5] Yet paternal behaviours and roles also vary across and within sociocultural contexts, in turn yielding an array of influences on children.[3,6,7] Fathers may provide protection, material resources (e.g., salary, livestock, inheritance), direct care (e.g., changing diapers, physical play), indirect care (such as arranging marriages in some cultures) and may serve as social models. Impacts on children may be measured in terms of fertility (number of children), survival and health, educational attainment, socioemotional development (e.g., emotional capacity, language development) and reproductive parameters (e.g., children's partnerships and fertility), among other outcomes.

Problems

While some scholars have decried how important two-parent families are to children's emotional and behavioural regulation,[8] others have suggested fathers' services are quite substitutable and without much measurable impact.[9] Such polarized views illustrate the challenges of specifying the key impacts of fathers on children, when and why they emerge, and how discussions can unfold without overly simplifying the complicated realities witnessed firsthand by service

providers and scholars of interdisciplinary backgrounds and interests.

Moreover, a key problem in understanding the impacts of fathers on children is methodological: most studies are correlational and of unclear generalizability. A few longitudinal prospective studies provide rigorous insight but often at the expense of simplification of concepts (variables) in a limited number of countries. Experimental interventions (e.g., of assessing impacts of an obesity intervention on fathers[10]) are rare, limiting the degree to which causal inference can be clearly drawn. Meta-analyses help in establishing robust patterns, but studies often use very different measures of both paternal involvement and children's outcomes, making comparisons difficult.

Research Context

Different disciplines and areas of practice have often had distinct interests in fathers and children. Applied social services may be concerned with the impacts of father absence on children's social development (including juvenile delinquency and engagement in criminal activities), on the reasons why men do or do not provide child support, or the role of father figures in child physical abuse. Other policy-oriented scholars may be interested in socially engineering more invested fathers with an eye toward enhancing child outcomes, such as increased high school graduation rates. Sociologists may be primarily concerned with socioeconomic and ethnic differences in father-child dynamics within Western countries. Evolutionary-minded scholars seek to understand the historical and adaptive bases of paternal behaviour and child development, including with respect to other animals. Anthropologists may pay more attention to the role of fathers in non-Western societies.

Key Research Questions

What are the impacts of fathers on children?

How do those impacts vary by social context?

How do changing family dynamics shape fathers' roles and influences on children's development?

What are the mechanisms by which fathers impact children?

Has the increase of unmarried cohabiting fathers as well as multipartnered fertility (having children with multiple partners) altered men's impact on children's outcomes?

Recent Research Results

The impacts of fathers on children can begin before birth (see[11]). Fathers may have heritable physiological impacts on their children via genetic and epigenetic mechanisms that begin to emerge shortly after conception[12] and which may influence maternal investment during pregnancy.[13] Older fathers tend to transmit more mutations to their offspring,[14] while early childhood paternal stressors predict children's adolescent gene methylation patterns (a type of chemical modification of DNA).[15]

The presence of fathers has mixed effects on their children's survival.[16] Oral histories from small-scale societies suggest that fathers help protect their children against enemy threats,[17] while in the U.S., having no father listed on the birth certificate increases the odds of infant mortality.[18] A primary risk factor for child abuse or infanticide in contemporary countries as well as smaller-scale societies is the presence of an unrelated male stepfigure, such as a boyfriend, reminding us that father figures' impacts on children can be deleterious too.[19,20]

An evolutionary perspective suggests that father involvement has been important in the increased fertility of human hunter-gatherers compared with the other great apes.[21-23] That observation contrasts, however, with a world today where fertility levels are plummeting in most countries, with fathers typically investing large amounts of resources and care in few offspring over prolonged periods.[6,24] In this latter case, the time and resources provided by fathers may help develop a child's social and educational capital, in turn helping him/her succeed socially as an adult.[25]

Fathers have an array of impacts on children's socioemotional outcomes.[2,26] Studies testing for these potential types of influences have considered both dichotomized father absence/presence and more continuous assessments of paternal care. Cautions in drawing conclusions in this literature include the challenges to isolate specific paternal influences on specific childhood outcomes, given the multitude of potential covarying factors.

A variety of studies suggest that fathers' engagement positively impacts their children's social competence,[27] children's later IQ[28] and other learning outcomes.[29] The effects of fathers on children can include later-life educational, social and family outcomes.[1,2,26] Children may develop

working models of appropriate paternal behaviour based on early childhood cues such as father presence,[30,31] in turn shaping their own later partnering and parenting dynamics, such as more risky adolescent sexual behaviour[32] and earlier marriage.[33] Paternal engagement decreases boys' negative social behaviour (e.g., delinquency) and girls' psychological problems in early adulthood.[34] Fathers' financial support, apart from engagement, can also influence children's cognitive development.[35]

While father absence has been associated with a host of negative children's outcomes, including increased risk of dropping out of school and lower educational attainment, poorer physical and mental health, and behavioural problems,[36-40] higher levels of involvement by nonresident fathers may assuage the negative effects of father absence on children's outcomes.[41,42] Quality of the parents' relationship before divorce, or of the pre-divorce father/child relationship, can also be an important factor: children fare worse following divorce when pre-divorce relationships were good and fare better when pre-divorce relationships were poor,[43,44] suggesting children are sometimes better off without a father if the father's relationship to the child or the mother was not good. The growing trend in multipartnered fertility, along with high rates of nonmarital births, means that many men are fathering children from multiple women at a distance,[45,46] a trait that is associated with greater externalizing behaviours and poorer health among children.[47]

Effects of children on fathers vary with respect to attributes of fathers and of children. Boys whose fathers engaged in physical play but without excessive direction were rated as more popular by their teachers.[48] Effects of fathers may vary across children's ages, with fathers of adolescent sons frequently playing important roles in those son's transitions, as seen among Arnhem land Australian aborigines.[49] Among the Aka hunter-gatherers of Central African Republic, males of varying ages report that they predominantly learned subsistence and social behavioural norms from their fathers.[50]

Stepfathers are widespread not only in modern industrial societies but also in subsistence-level societies as well.[6,51,52] Many studies have found that, compared with resident biological fathers, stepfathers invest less in the children who live with them, both in the United States[37,39,53] and other cultures.[54-56] Stepchildren are more likely to have emotional and behavioural problems than resident genetic offspring,[39,40] although there is evidence that children who have close relationships with their stepfathers have better outcomes.[41,57]

Gay fathers tend to be economically well-off, one means by which their children may garner social advantages relative to other children, while additional research has shown that children of gay fathers did not report differences in sex-typed behaviour compared with parents of other family configurations.[58] A large literature shows that parents tend to transmit values to their children along socioeconomic status lines, with middle class parents typically imparting different values from parents in lower socioeconomic strata.[59,60] However, little of this work has examined fathers in particular, as distinct from mothers.

Research Gaps

Global interconnectedness, including in the patient pool faced by clinicians and constituents served by policymakers, also means that more research on the cultural scope of fathering and its impact on children is warranted. For example, how do immigrant children fare when faced with a new social context to which their fathers' cultural values and behaviours must be adapted? How do cohabiting fathers differ from married fathers, and does their respective involvement with children impact children differentially? How does the growing trend in multipartnered fertility impact children? Much of our understanding on fathers and children's outcomes stems from cross-sectional or retrospective studies; we need more large, prospective studies, especially internationally, with greater ability to address causal inference. Lastly, as some men are pursuing fatherhood at later ages than ever, men with multiple partners may have children the same age as their grandchildren. What are the effects of aging fathers on children's outcomes?

Conclusions

Despite the increase in nonmarital childbearing and subsequent increase in nonresidential fathers, men continue to play important roles in their children's lives. Fathers can influence their children by providing direct care, as well as indirectly through financial support and social modelling. Father involvement has impacts which begin prenatally and extend through the child's life course. Men's investment in offspring can influence offspring survival, health, socioemotional outcomes, social competence, and educational attainment. Much of the research examining the impacts of fathers on children has compared father-absent versus father-present households, rather than degrees of father involvement. The literature shows that father absence tends to correlate with poorer children's outcomes, including lower education attainment, poorer health, greater emotional and behavioral problems, with effects lasting well into adulthood (as measured by socioeconomic status and marital patterns). However, it is unclear to what extent

self-selection has biased these studies, as men who remove themselves from a child's residence may differ in many unobserved ways from men who choose to remain.

Implications for Parents, Services and Policy

Human families, including roles of fathers, can be quite flexible: we should neither be too fixated on the effects of one caregiver (fathers) nor dismissive of the effects of these same fathers. We should situate fathers' effects in social and individual context, whereby (say) effects may be more pronounced and important in isolated nuclear families in low-fertility high social capital contexts, but less visible in extended families with higher fertility and more substitutable forms of childcare. Many features of male involvement are structured by the relationship with a child's mother, which can also inform fatherhood intervention policy.[61] Child characteristics (age, sex, disability, personality) vary and are part of variable father-child relations. Direct care can matter, but so does indirect care (such as 'breadwinning'), and both should be considered in assessing effects of fathers on children. The effects of fathers on children encompass a diversity of outcomes (e.g., socioemotional, behavioural risk-taking).

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Non-resident Black fathers in South Africa

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Introduction

Fatherhood in South Africa has attracted increasing scholarly and policy attention in recent years, particularly in relation to the high prevalence of children growing up in households where their biological fathers are not co-resident. Earlier research often framed this pattern primarily in terms of father absence and its potential consequences for children and families. More recent scholarship, however, has moved towards a more nuanced understanding of fatherhood that recognises the diverse ways in which fathers remain connected to their children despite residential separation and structural constraints.[1-3] This shift reflects broader efforts to understand paternal roles within the social, economic and historical conditions that shape family life in South Africa.

South Africa's family structures are strongly influenced by a combination of historical legacies, socio-economic inequalities and changing demographic patterns. Apartheid legislation limited the entry of Black workers into urban areas and their movement more generally. This resulted in long periods of separation of fathers from their rural families while working on the gold mines, often forming new partnerships in the city that led to the birth of additional children they were also expected to support. National survey data continue to show that many children do not live with their biological fathers, reflecting longstanding patterns of labour mobility, union instability and delayed marriage.[4] These patterns must be understood within the broader context of the country's political economy and social organisation, where extended family systems and multi-local households have historically played an important role in childrearing and family support. As a result, residential arrangements alone do not fully capture the nature of paternal involvement in children's lives.[5]

This paper examines the social and structural factors shaping non-resident fatherhood among Black men in South Africa and explores the ways in which many fathers remain involved in their children's lives despite living apart from them. The discussion considers the historical legacy of labour migration, the influence of poverty and unemployment on family formation and paternal roles, and the role of cultural norms and kinship systems in shaping father-child relationships. It also highlights the social significance of fatherhood and the different forms of engagement through which non-resident fathers contribute to the wellbeing, identity and development of their children.

Research Context and Results

Labour migration and non-resident Black fathers in South Africa

The advent of apartheid entrenched the economic and political dominance of the White minority through a system of racial segregation and labour control that fundamentally shaped patterns of family life in South Africa. Apartheid policies, including influx control, pass laws and the migrant labour system, deliberately separated Black men from their families by compelling them to seek employment in distant urban and industrial centres while their households remained in rural areas.[4,6] As Richter and Morrell[7] argue, these structural arrangements produced distinct experiences of fatherhood across racial groups, with Black men disproportionately affected by labour migration and residential separation from their families. Consequently, apartheid-era labour policies not only reorganised economic production but also transformed the social meaning and practice of fatherhood, particularly for Black South African men.[7]

Labour migration created a structural separation between sites of production and reproduction, making residential fatherhood difficult for many men. Under these circumstances, paternal responsibility became closely associated with the ability to provide financially for children and households from a distance by sending remittances. Financial provision thus emerged as a dominant measure of "good fatherhood", reinforcing the centrality of the breadwinner role in constructions of masculinity and paternal identity.[8-10] Although Apartheid formally ended in 1994, the spatial and economic inequalities produced by the migrant labour system persist. Contemporary patterns of employment, housing shortages and regional inequalities continue to require many men (and women) to work far from their families, thereby sustaining patterns of non-resident fatherhood.[6,11]

Many South African households therefore function as what have been described as “stretched” or “multi-local” family systems, in which members are distributed across multiple residences while maintaining emotional, social and economic ties.[4,12] In such arrangements, family members may reside in different households for reasons related to employment, education, caregiving responsibilities and housing constraints. These patterns of family dispersal remain common in both rural and urban contexts and are not necessarily indicative of family breakdown. Rather, they reflect adaptive strategies through which households manage economic insecurity and mobility. In practice, many fathers maintain connections with their children through periodic visits, remittances and participation in key family events, even when they do not live in the same household.[5]

Despite social and economic transformation since the end of Apartheid, labour migration continues to influence contemporary domestic arrangements in South Africa. In many economically marginalised areas, employment opportunities remain limited, forcing working age individuals to migrate to urban centres or other provinces in search of work.[13] As a result, many Black South African fathers face the difficult choice between living with their families in areas with limited economic opportunities or migrating to sustain household livelihoods. These structural constraints make it challenging for many fathers to simultaneously fulfil expectations of financial provision and residential presence within the household.

Poverty, unemployment and non-resident Black fathers in South Africa

In addition to labour migration, high levels of poverty and unemployment play a critical role in shaping patterns of fatherhood and family formation in South Africa. Evidence suggests that employment status and income strongly influence men’s ability to marry and co-reside with their partners and children. Men with stable employment and higher incomes are significantly more likely to enter marriage and establish independent households compared with unemployed or economically marginalised men.[14,15] Conversely, high levels of unemployment among young men have contributed to delays in marriage and an increase in non-marital childbearing, which in turn affects patterns of father-child co-residence.

South Africa continues to experience one of the highest unemployment rates globally, particularly among young people. Youth unemployment has remained persistently high in the post-Apartheid period, limiting economic opportunities for many men and constraining their ability to fulfil the socially expected role of family provider.[13] Under these conditions, men may

postpone marriage or avoid forming formal unions because of the financial costs associated with marriage and household establishment, including cultural obligations such as *lobola* (bridewealth) payments.[16] Amongst some tribal groups, a man may also bear the responsibility of his sisters' children if they are unmarried and need additional support.

Economic marginalisation can also have important psychological and social consequences for men's identities as fathers. Research suggests that the inability to provide financially for children can undermine men's sense of masculinity, self-worth and social status, given the strong cultural association between masculinity and the breadwinner role.[8-10] When men feel unable to meet these expectations, some may experience shame or social pressure that leads them to withdraw from family relationships or limit contact with their children. In some cases, fathers may distance themselves from families to avoid criticism or perceived failure to provide adequately.[8] However, it is important to note that many men also renegotiate fatherhood roles under conditions of economic hardship by emphasising emotional support, guidance and caregiving involvement as alternative expressions of responsible fatherhood.

The role of culture

Cultural norms and customary practices play a central role in shaping patterns of father involvement and residential arrangements in South Africa. Practices such as *inhlawulo* (the payment of damages to the woman's family when a child is conceived outside marriage) and *lobola* remain important mechanisms through which families negotiate relationships, legitimacy and responsibilities associated with marriage and childbearing.[3,16] These practices are deeply embedded in cultural traditions and serve not only to formalise relationships between families but also to recognise and regulate paternal responsibilities toward children.

However, the operation of these cultural systems is increasingly mediated by economic realities, and the interaction between cultural expectations and financial constraints can contribute to the residential separation of fathers and children. The costs associated with *lobola* and marriage negotiations may delay union formation, particularly for men facing unemployment or unstable incomes. As a result, many children born outside marriage reside primarily with their mothers, often within extended households headed by maternal relatives.[17] In such contexts, paternal involvement is not only shaped by cultural norms but may also depend on the willingness of maternal kin to facilitate and sustain relationships between fathers and their children.

These dynamics are further complicated by recent transformations in the nature of lobola itself. Scholarship has increasingly highlighted the monetisation and commercialisation of lobola practices, reflecting broader socio-economic changes in contemporary South Africa.[18] While historically grounded in systems of reciprocity and kinship-building, *lobola* has in some contexts become subject to inflationary pressures, status competition and market-like dynamics. The emergence of intermediaries, event planners and professional negotiators who facilitate *lobola* arrangements illustrates the growing institutionalisation and commodification of the practice. In turn, these developments may contribute to escalating expectations regarding bridewealth payments, intensifying financial barriers to marriage and formal union formation, particularly among economically marginalised men. Consequently, the evolving character of *lobola* may reinforce patterns of delayed marriage, non-marital childbearing and non-resident fatherhood, while also reshaping gender relations and expectations of masculinity and provision.

Within this context, processes of paternal recognition are also shaped by the fulfilment of cultural obligations. In some cases, fathers may not be recognised as legitimate parents until practices such as *inhlawulo* have been completed. Until these obligations are fulfilled, fathers may face restrictions on their ability to visit or spend time with their children within the maternal household. This highlights how cultural norms, while facilitating social order and legitimacy, may also regulate and, at times, constrain paternal access and involvement.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that these same cultural systems also provide mechanisms for sustaining paternal connections across residential boundaries. Extended family networks and kinship structures can facilitate ongoing relationships between fathers and their children, even in contexts of non-residence. Thus, cultural practices in South Africa simultaneously enable, regulate and, in some cases, constrain father-child relationships, reflecting a complex interplay between tradition, economic change and evolving social norms.

Role of Black non-resident fathers in South Africa

Despite the high prevalence of non-resident fatherhood, biological fatherhood continues to hold significant cultural, social and personal meaning in South Africa. Fathers play an important role in linking children to their paternal lineage, clan identity and ancestral traditions, which remain central components of social identity in many African communities.[8] Through these connections, fathers provide children with access to broader kinship networks and forms of social capital that can support identity formation, belonging and social recognition. In this sense, paternal

involvement is not only relational but also deeply embedded in systems of cultural continuity and social legitimacy.

However, when fathers are absent or only marginally involved, these culturally embedded roles may be disrupted, with important consequences for children's social recognition, cultural inclusion and physical wellbeing. In particular, boys who undergo traditional initiation rites without paternal acknowledgement or formal incorporation into their paternal lineage may experience marginalisation within customary systems that govern identity and belonging. Emerging evidence suggests that the absence of paternal endorsement in such processes can increase vulnerability to unsafe initiation practices, including heightened risks of illness, injury, dehydration, and, in extreme cases, amputation or death. These risks are compounded where regulatory oversight is weak and where social pressures discourage questioning of harmful practices. Thus, while cultural institutions remain important sites of identity formation, the absence of fathers may expose boys to both symbolic exclusion and material harm.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that African kinship systems have historically developed adaptive mechanisms to mitigate the effects of paternal absence. In many cases, fatherhood extends beyond biological ties to include forms of "social fatherhood," where men provide care, guidance and support to children within extended family networks or community relationships.[19] Such arrangements reflect broader kinship systems in which caregiving responsibilities are distributed among multiple adults, including uncles, grandfathers and other male relatives. While these systems can provide important sources of stability and continuity for children growing up in contexts of non-resident fatherhood, they do not fully substitute for the cultural and social roles uniquely associated with biological fathers, particularly in relation to lineage recognition and participation in key rites of passage.

Furthermore, research suggests that many non-resident fathers remain actively involved in their children's lives through financial support, social visits and communication. Fathers may contribute through remittances, the provision of clothing and school fees, or participation in important family rituals and decision-making processes.[20-22] Advances in communication technologies, including mobile phones and messaging platforms, have also made it easier for geographically separated fathers to maintain contact with their children. While non-resident fatherhood may present challenges for sustained involvement, these forms of engagement demonstrate that paternal relationships can be maintained across residential boundaries.

Conclusion

The high prevalence of non-resident fatherhood among Black South African men continues to reflect a complex interaction of historical, economic and socio-cultural factors, including labour migration, unemployment, delayed marriage, paternal mortality, and cultural practices relating to family formation. However, recent research continues to emphasise that non-residence should not be conflated with paternal absence or lack of involvement. Many fathers who live apart from their children maintain forms of engagement through financial support, social contact, caregiving during visits and participation in extended kin networks.
Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognises that fatherhood in South Africa is diverse, adaptive and relational, shaped by both structural constraints and evolving social norms. Programmes and policies seeking to support children's wellbeing should therefore focus not only on promoting co-residence but also on strengthening opportunities for positive paternal engagement across residential boundaries. Interventions that support employment opportunities for men, encourage cooperative parenting relationships, and recognise the role of extended family networks may help strengthen father-child relationships even in contexts of residential separation.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that contemporary fatherhood in South Africa is also characterised by tensions, contestations and unresolved challenges. Increasing rates of maintenance claims through formal legal systems reflect the financial strain experienced by many mothers and the uneven fulfilment of paternal responsibilities. Concurrently, the growing demand among men for DNA confirmation of paternity points to shifting dynamics of trust, responsibility and accountability within intimate relationships. These developments underscore that non-resident fatherhood is not simply an adaptive or functional arrangement, but one that may also reproduce conflict, inequality and insecurity within families. Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that acknowledges both the resilience of extended family systems and the need for stronger institutional, legal and social support mechanisms to promote responsible, equitable and engaged fatherhood.

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Aboriginal Fathers in Canada

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Introduction

First Nations, Métis and Inuit fathers in Canada are generally referred to as 'Indigenous fathers.' With the exception of studies cited in this article, there is no published scholarship on First Nations and Métis fathers' involvement in parenting. This absence mirrors the reality reflected in demographic and social survey findings that Indigenous men are the most socially excluded population in Canada. Their experiences of growing up and becoming fathers chart a unique trajectory embedded in historically conditioned social and economic circumstances that are the outcomes of ongoing colonial government policies that have disempowered Indigenous family and community systems in Canada.

Prior to French and British colonization, Indigenous Peoples lived in tribal communities with cohesive systems of governance, language, culture, clan systems and family structures.[1] These cultural groups had a robust sense of extended family: Elders' roles were integral to preparing boys to become men, fathers, and Elders themselves.[2] Colonial government policies had a devastating impact on Indigenous men's roles in family and community life. Most notably, the 1876 Indian Act gave the government license to remove First Nations children from their families and place them in 'Indian Residential Schools.' The explicit government mandate of these church-run schools was to strip Indigenous children of their cultural identity and connections to their land, family and community.[3,4] Many young mothers and fathers today were raised by parents who were first or second generation survivors of residential schools and consequently lacked parenting role models.[5] Vigorous efforts are being made in many First Nations and Métis communities to revitalize traditional, extended family systems and the culturally-based roles of fathers.[6,7]

Subject

Indigenous communities and organizations are making tremendous efforts to recover cultural knowledge that was all but lost since the century of Residential Schools, which ended in 1996. To

support healing from historic trauma,[8] some investments have been made by the Canadian government.[9] Funding for Indigenous health, education and social development focuses primarily on women and children. While some First Nations and Métis fathers are thriving members of vibrant families and communities, many continue to live on the margins of society, exacerbated by a lack of visible representation, advocacy, social research and programmatic support.

For the general population in Canada, there is little public investment in father involvement.[10] Existing programs are based on Euro-Western social service models and assumptions about the nuclear family, living in urban settings with access to resources typical of middle class households. These programs may be unsuitable for many Indigenous fathers, especially those living in poverty, with marginal literacy, no drivers' license, and sub-standard or no housing. As well, most Indigenous families seek support in helping their children to learn their Indigenous language as well as English or French, to understand nature and learn skills for living on the land, and to experience a spiritual connection to life.[11] Whereas fathers of European heritage tend to describe the birth of their child as an immediately life-altering experience, Indigenous dads may not develop a relationship with their child until she or he is in adolescence or older.[12] A number of historical and demographic conditions contribute to this trajectory: Indigenous men often become fathers during adolescence; a disproportionate number of incarcerated men in Canada are Indigenous;[13] substance abuse, patterns of seasonal work that requires periods of father absence; and a high rate of parent separation and divorce can interrupt fathers' connectivity with their children.[14]

Research Context

The little research that has been done on Indigenous fathers' involvement suggests that much could be learned that would contribute new concepts and challenge orthodox theories in the otherwise large literature on father involvement and family life. As well, evaluation studies of approaches to support Indigenous fathers could disrupt Euro-western assumptions about needs and goals for father involvement and improve practices in education, child care, health services, and corrections services. Efforts by social scientists to engage Indigenous men in research are particularly sensitive because of the troubled history of misrepresentation and abuse of Indigenous people by 'settler' agencies and anthropologists. Research efforts must be guided by Indigenous research ethics: extensive work has been done in Canada on ethical principles for research involving Indigenous individuals and communities.[15] While survey research and empirical methods are viable tools, community partnered research that uses participatory

methods are most likely to be positively received by Indigenous community leaders and funding agencies.[16] Research must be responsive to goals and needs identified by Indigenous people. Also importantly, research should focus separately on the experiences of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal fathers.

Recent Research Results

Recognizing the absence of knowledge about fathers in Canada as a whole, from 2004-2009, the Father Involvement Research Alliance (http://www.fira.ca/) undertook a national study of father involvement. The study included a component led by the first author, focused on Indigenous fathers' experiences, needs, and goals. Using a community-university partnership approach and participatory research methods, five First Nations and Aboriginal service organizations helped design the research ethics and consent protocols, methodology, survey tool and interview protocol. An Indigenous research team recruited and interviewed 80 Indigenous fathers in the partner communities. Interviews asked men to describe their living conditions, transition to fatherhood, roles, needs and goals with their children (both biological and social) and other family members, and understandings of factors influencing their experiences as fathers. The team transcribed and interpreted the data, and participated in meetings with the partner communities to conceptualize the findings and plan knowledge mobilization tools. Virtually every father's accounts of his struggles with developing and sustaining positive father involvement highlighted the destructive roles of Indian Residential Schools, child welfare involvement, adoption and loss of connection to their heritage culture, language, spirituality, and Elders. Nearly all fathers described father involvement as a set of skills that must be learned because they had not experienced positive relationships with men themselves as children. The study also pointed to institutional barriers that interrupt Aboriginal fathers' involvement with their children, including: lack of paternity designation on children's birth records and child welfare files; poverty; marginal or seasonal employment; incarceration; residential treatment programs that do not include family members; jurisdictional obstacles to accessing support services; disruptive child welfare interventions; and mother-centric outreach and services.[12] Most Indigenous fathers described their goal of learning and practicing culturally-based ways of caregiving, including for example the use of traditional foods, activities 'on the land', oral story-telling, songs and dance, and spiritual practices led by Elders and to re-create traditional, extended and blended family circles of care for children.[17]

In 2013, the Public Health Agency of Canada supported the authors to conduct a national survey of the spectrum of programs in Canada that promote Indigenous fathers' positive involvement.[6] The authors contacted 130 individuals or organizations believed to be operating programs for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis fathers and father-figures of young children (prenatal to 6 years old); 35 sustained programmatic efforts and promising practices were identified. A majority of these programs were grassroots initiatives run out of Aboriginal Head Start Programs, Friendship Centres and Tribal Councils, while a few were operated by federally funded programs for the general Canadian population. The study found that in the absence of a formal public funding stream for promoting positive father involvement, efforts to reach out to Indigenous fathers are often 'hidden' in other publicly funded programs, such as maternal and child health, early childhood care and development programs, community action for children, and prenatal and nutrition programs. Precarious funding was reported as the major obstacle to sustaining these programs. Other challenges were the absence of male-oriented, culturally based program guidelines or modules and a lack of qualified male program facilitators. The study also uncovered a diverse array of successful programs, each tailored to the available funding, specific culture, context and community-identified needs and goals.

Key Research Questions

1. Effectiveness research on Indigenous father support programs is needed to identify promising practices in diverse father populations and circumstances, sustainable models, and strategies for overcoming common obstacles faced by Indigenous fathers and by communities seeking to support them. There is clear demand from Indigenous communities for program funding and models that can be adapted to incorporate local cultures and respond to fathers' needs and goals.
2. Research should explore how First Nations, Métis and Inuit fathers define, measure, and understand determinants of 'success' in their journeys to become positively involved fathers. Ethical and culturally valid research should use Indigenous ('emic' - meaning from the perspective of the subject) goals and ways of measuring goal attainment, rather than imposing a dominant cultural lens.
3. Case study research could usefully explore new forms of family formation and mutual support involving Indigenous fathers that incorporate culturally-based values, concepts, forms of interaction and living together.[18]

Conclusions

The few studies to date on Indigenous fathers' journeys and community outreach services to Indigenous fathers are first steps in what could become a growing Indigenous father involvement movement. However, the field of fatherhood studies needs to open up mainstream conceptual frameworks and methodologies to comprehend the historical inputs, cultural foundations, and contemporary goals of Indigenous fatherhood. Father involvement research and social service programs are strongly driven by preconceived, Euro-western notions of what counts as 'involvement' – but whether these standards are always the most meaningful for diverse populations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, mothers or fathers is an empirical question. It is timely to open up the field of fatherhood studies to a greater range of fathers' expressions of caring, responsibility, and family participation.

Implications for Parents, Services and Policy

The research cited in this article confirms a pressing need for outreach to Indigenous fathers, including: sustained public funding to train Indigenous father support workers, operational funds for Indigenous-led program initiatives, and the creation and dissemination of culturally-based resources and adaptable program modules. Support efforts must be tailored to local community and family contexts, needs and goals. While this broad policy shift should be held as an overarching goal, immediate enhancements should be made to reach Indigenous fathers in the most likely points of contact. For example, prenatal and parenting education programs, maternal and child health programs, childcare and early childhood programs could shift from the predominant mother-centric bias to provide father-friendly environments, practices, and hours of operation, and more Indigenous staff. There is a distinct need for a cultural frame around services[19] and creative ways to harness Indigenous fathers' knowledge and skills in ways that reinforce their involvement and build on strengths.

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Interventions with Fathers

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Introduction

Father involvement in early childhood (EC) programs has increased over the last several decades supported by recent attention on the positive influences of fathers on children.[1,2] Program initiatives such as Early Head Start, and the fact that the majority of children ages 0 to 5 are enrolled in one or more programs in the U.S. make EC programs an important context for engaging fathers and supporting positive father involvement.[3] This chapter will review the different types of EC fatherhood programs and summarize what is known about the effects of these programs on fathers and children.

Problems

Programs serving fathers of young children have grown in response to two needs : (1) mothers are more likely to be employed outside of the home, thus placing demands on fathers to become increasingly involved in child care and child rearing, and (2) a growing number of biological fathers do not reside with their children and face significant challenges with being actively involved in their children's lives. Positive father involvement can be a protective factor[2] and promote child well-being in a number of ways.[4,5] The EC years are a critical period for building fathers' capacity to form secure attachments[6] promote social and emotional development, and influence school readiness and success.[3]

Research Context

Programs for fathers of young children have developed to address many different populations and needs[7] which lead to multiple goals and possible pathways to building fathers' capacity to influence their children. Although programs have proliferated to address the needs of fathers and families, there is also a need to evaluate their effectiveness in helping fathers become better parents and better partners.[8] Federal and state policy makers have placed increasing demands on programs to evaluate the effects these programs have on fathers and families and whether

they are worth investing public dollars.[9]

Key Research Questions

A key research question is what types of programs are most effective in helping fathers and their families. For example, researchers have raised the question of whether coparenting interventions (i.e., programs that address the mother-father relationship as it pertains to raising children)[10] are more effective than parenting education programs in assisting low income, unmarried fathers to maintain connections to their young children.[11] Another practical research question is: What program format is most effective in attracting fathers? Berwick & Bellotti[12] reviewed father participation levels in different activities in Head Start programs as one approach to answering this question. Another key research question is timing of program intervention. For example, are perinatal services to non-resident fathers (e,g., parenting classes before or shortly after the child's birth) more effective than providing parenting services later during the EC period in helping fathers to stay involved and form close bonds with their children? A final key question is what dosage is optimal for meeting program goals for fathers. This question also begins to address costs and benefits of programs. Programs focused on low-income unmarried fathers may be very costly when case management is a necessary component but the benefits may also be higher than a short-term parent education program.

Recent Research Results

Research results can be organized into two types of fatherhood interventions: primary and secondary prevention programs. Primary prevention programs help fathers to develop healthy parenting skills and to form close relationships with their children before there are problems with the father-child relationship. Secondary prevention programs target fathers and families where children are at risk for future problems due to family issues, developmental challenges or signs of signficant behaviour/emotional problems.

Primary prevention interventions with fathers of young children whose partners are involved in home visitation services (i.e., programs that teach parenting skills and provide support to fathers in their own homes) have become increasingly popular in the U. S.[13] To date, only descriptive studies have been conducted of these programs. For example, in their study of 64 families, Ferguson and Vanderpool[14] found that fathers' average total risk factors were lower at the end of the home visitation program than at the beginning of the program. Without a control or comparison group, it is not possible to state that this program was definitively associated with

lower risk for fathers. There are also universal access programs related to EC programs that can serve as child abuse prevention and may also promote positive social and emotional development, early literacy, and school readiness.[6,15]

Primary prevention fatherhood programs are now common in Head Start centers throughout the U.S., but few have been subjected to outcome studies. The Head Start and Early Head Start Programs are national programs that serve low income children ages 0 to 5 years and their families. Fagan and Iglesias[16] explored the effects of Head Start fathers' participation in a program that included three components: classroom volunteering, attendance at organized fun activities, and a monthly support group. Fathers in the intervention group showed significantly greater gains in direct interaction and support for learning activities with children at home than the comparison group of fathers, but only if the fathers were at least moderately involved in the program. In another study, fathers with children enrolled in Early Head Start employed significantly more complex social play interactions with their 24-month-olds than did fathers with children in a control group.[17] These studies suggest possible benefits to fathers who become involved in Head Start, but more studies are needed to replicate these findings and to demonstrate how fathers and children are affected by participation.

A small number of secondary prevention programs for fathers of young children have been conducted and evaluated.[18] For example, Parent–Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), a short-term, evidence-based, training intervention for parents dealing with preschool children who display behavioural problems was evaluated in the Netherlands using a quasi-experimental design.[19] The results showed a large effect on fathers' reports of child behaviour problems at the completion of the intervention. More research is needed before conclusions can be made about the efficacy of these programs.

Magill-Evans, Harrison, Rempel, & Slater[20] conducted a review of 12 studies conducted between 1983-2003 on interventions with fathers of young children (0-5). The interventions included a variety of programs from health care interventions (kangaroo care, infant massage) to parent discussion and training groups. The studies had to include a pretest and post-test design or the use of a control group. The programs that were identified as having promise for implementation were kangaroo care, infant message, guided observation of child behaviour with modelling and parent-child interaction time along with parent group discussion/support. The conclusions also asserted that dosage is important and that multiple exposures are more likely to be effective.

Research Gaps

There seems to be a general consensus that more rigorous research of different types of interventions would add to our knowledge about which programs for fathers of young children would be most effective. Some additional questions emerge about the use of theory to guide intervention design. What are the theoretical models that can guide research – Social Capital and Fathers, Attachment Theory, Parent Skills Training, Behavior Management, Family Systems and co-parenting dynamics, and possibly Neuroscience and the role of hormones. How do these match different populations and goals for fathers and children? How do we compare the efficacy and value of programs with different goals and outcome measures?

The background of the practitioner (education, training, and experience) also is important to study.[7,12] Most evidenced-based programs used credentialed and experienced practitioners to deliver the original program. This raises concerns about how to bring these programs "to scale" without the same level of staff preparation and experience.

Conclusions

- EC (0-5) is a critical period for family formation.[21]
- The primary focus for programs during the EC years should combine both co-parenting relationship goals and parenting skills for fathers to address positive father involvement.[10]
- For some target groups (teen and young unmarried fathers) there will be additional goals related to fathers' role as breadwinner and related job training and educational goals for fathers.
- Pregnancy and the transition to parenthood is a time when children are most vulnerable and education and support for fathers is limited. This is an area where health care providers, EC and family educators, infant mental health and social service providers can all play a role in engaging fathers in the services that they offer.
- The content and format of programs for fathers will vary depending on the target population and specific goals. There are many different pathways to supporting positive father involvement, father-child, and co-parenting relationships.

Implications for Practice

Two recent reviews of the practice and research literature around fathering interventions include many specific strategies to inform practice.[7,21] Both of these reviews cover more than

programs for fathers of young children (0-5) but are filled with concrete strategies for programs designed to engage fathers.

- Clarity about the theory, logic and goals of a program are essential before evaluation can occur. Practitioners and researchers should collaborate to articulate the program goals and possible ways to assess outcomes.
- Parent-child activity is a valuable way to attract and include fathers in EC settings.[11]
- Programs for fathers should be tailored to meet the specific needs of fathers and evidenced-based curricula will need to be adapted to fit different populations.
- Dosage of program time should be enough to have an impact without limiting accessibility due to demanding too much time and/or commitment from fathers.
- The male friendliness of the environment including some male staff are critical to successful programs.
- Implementing successful recruitment strategies are a first step in creating effective programs.
- Considerations around staff background and characteristics are important. All staff need support, consultation opportunities and continued professional development opportunities.

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Fathers

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Introduction

Although fathers have received increased attention in developmental research studies, the centrality of mothers has remained largely uncontested. In several cultural settings children grow up in close contact with multiple caregivers in the family and community, but these caregivers are also discussed far less in developmental studies. The putative role of the father almost always has been viewed in terms of the breadwinner role in diverse ecological settings.

Involvement of fathers in the family beyond the role of breadwinner has been a matter of historical and socio-cultural tradition and personal choice, resulting in several options of paternal investment and developmental pathways of influence in the progeny.[1] Most of our beliefs about a father's participation in childcare draws from societies where monogamy prevails, and even these pairs are not always permanent.[2] In non-industrialized cultures, monogamous relationships are a mere 17%, with polygyny being the most prevalent form.[3] Given this historic and cultural diversity in marriage and family constellations, it becomes essential to widen the template for understanding the role of the male parent in the lives of children.

Considering other species, biological limitations have not prevented fathers among insects, birds and mammals to become intensely involved in the task of feeding. However, along with others (e.g., offering protection), feeding is one of the many activities that facilitate reproductive success. Among humans, the roles of mothers are more clearly defined across cultures, namely that of primary caregiver. Expectations from men who become fathers have been more variable. Over time, many traditional role expectations have been questioned and altered to suit changing economic, social and cultural needs. Although increasing numbers of women are seeking employment outside the home, they continue their role as the primary caregivers and home-makers. Increasingly, men are also stepping beyond their traditional roles to participate in childcare and child rearing. Today the ideals and practices of fatherhood are more contested and variable, and undergoing greater transition than those pertaining to motherhood.[4]

Subject

In order to understand the changing needs within families and consequent implications for children, it becomes essential to revisit and review the role of the father in children's care and socialization. Research from different species points to the fact that fathers can range from being absent parents to intensely involved regurgitating feeders for their offspring. Findings from anthropological research also indicate intense closeness to high involvement among hunter-gatherer societies.[5] Fatherhood is not a normatively fixed role but a negotiated experience due to changing family practices. Becoming a father is situated in emotional, social, and ecological domains.[6]

Examining family practices, cultural norms, and social contexts reveals how fatherhood is enacted every day and the extent of different levels of involvement and investment lead to a better understanding of the history and culture of fatherhood.

Problems

The diversity and range of situations in which fatherhood is being constructed today create multiple positions for fathers to respond to their responsibilities to family members. Ecological, economic, social and cultural demands must be addressed with a renewed and nuanced understanding of fathers (men), fathering (parenting), and fatherhood (the conceptions and beliefs).[4] In comparison with the diversity of lived fatherhood, academic understanding in developmental psychology remains rather uninformed, finding most of its inspiration from white, middle-class educated parents in Europe and America. In a critique of the discipline, similar complaints about our examination of mothers have also been addressed.[7]

Research Context

Cultural traditions and beliefs guide the roles, positioning and involvement of fathers in the family. In most parts of the world the identity of a child is intrinsically linked to the father, although small pockets of matrilineal communities provide significant contrast. In many countries the biological role of men has greater significance than their social and cultural role as fathers. The nature and extent of father's involvement depends on economic activities and cultural practices such as marriage and residential patterns, husband-wife proximity, cooperation and contribution to subsistence and level of material accumulation,[8] as well as presence of other family members. Patterns evolve in adaptation to the ecological and historical

roles and relationships within cultures. Depending upon the sociocultural context, fathers may be authoritarian, nurturing, caring, affectionate, and distant or completely detached.[9] In between these socially guided themes and historically constructed guidelines, fathers go about their lives across the world, fulfilling their responsibilities toward family members with varying degrees of commitments and liabilities. Recently, the entry of the State as an important player in guiding family relationships, for instance in Scandinavian countries, where policies have essentially included the childcare component, have placed importance on the participation of the father in children's lives.

Key Research Questions

Contemporary family studies necessitate a deeper and more extensive exploration into the experience and construction of fatherhood. From macro-studies of demographics of family life to case profiles of individual fathers, every level of research could provide important insights into fatherhood. Some key questions are listed below:

- What are the universal and variable conceptions of fatherhood?
- What are the roles and relationships of fathers in different societies?
- How do family structures and institutional expectations affect father's positioning within the household?
- What is the subjective experience of fathers in different cultures?
- What can we learn from ethnographic accounts of fathers in different ecological settings?
- What are the patterns of father-child involvement in different cultures?
- How does fathers' everyday engagement contribute to children's development and wellbeing?

Recent Research Results

Today, many fathers in different parts of the world are going beyond the provider role to greater involvement in childcare. Changing attitudes, occupation patterns, trends and media reports have sustained and even initiated some of these transformations. For instance, as caregivers, fathers are active in child rearing, caring, feeding, cleaning, and offering protection to children.

While society expects fathers to be involved in childcare, yet traditional masculine expectations are for men to prioritize earning income. Workplaces continue to see fathers mainly as providers, and childcare is viewed as the mother's role.[10] These pressures produce psycho-social tensions between ideals of involved fatherhood and the material realities of men's work practices.[11]

As a result, within families, fathers often position themselves as helpers or facilitators rather than active day-to-day carers or co-parents, at the same time they identify themselves as involved fathers.[11]

These trends imply a greater negotiability of parenting roles among family members in different cultural communities. Studies also show, countries such as Russia9 and Brazil report a high level of resistance to any change in traditional roles for men and women; and in the UK[12] the 'new man' as a father is more of an ideal than reality. In India, Southern Africa and Russia, where other family members such as grandmothers are available for childcare, the role of the father has changed more slowly. From a global research study, it was found that despite an increase in fathers' participation among educated families, it was still the mother who upholds the responsibility for the care of her children.[13]

Research highlights fathers' distinct developmental contributions. Fathers' engagement in cognitive and socio-emotional caregiving contributes to children's positive development, identity formation, and sense of security.[14] Studies based in the US, Brazil and Australia describe the essential role of fathers in the lives of children. For instance, emphasis has been placed on their impact on development[15] and their uniquely male contribution to the social and personality development of children. Father-infant play, often characterized by higher intensity interactions, promotes exploration and independence, differing in quality from the interactions observed with mothers that promote safety.[16] Across the life-span, fathers play a critical role in building resilience by acting as role models in conflict resolution, meaning-making, and adaptive responses to stress.[17]

Fathers' beliefs about their roles and expectations are predominantly related to safety and security. Their subjective experiences as fathers include responsibility of providing opportunities and guidance, and expressing emotional closeness.[18] However, empirical research rarely focuses on the 'quality' of the fathering experience. Online communities and caregiving content promote strategies of self-care, social connection, and intentional caregiving practices as components of responsible fatherhood.[19] This new digital reality expands paternal identity and intensifies

expectations of emotional labour.

Fatherhood as a life experience is a new theme being advocated in countries like Brazil, where the role of the father as a caregiver, a loving and affectionate figure for children, and a considerate responsible father is being emphasized. For instance, instead of socializing boys to compete for authority, they are encouraged to build empathic relations.[20] Such proactive efforts are reported in different parts of the world as well.[4,21]

Research on fathers sometimes goes beyond the biological, co-resident father to fathering in diverse circumstances. Variations in economic status and financial stability, and demands of employment have given rise to the phenomenon of 'floating fathers'[22] where fathers emigrate in search of work and are frequently not available to the family. Sometimes, the physical[23] and even social separation of the lives of men from those of women and children is characteristic of family life.[24] As a Brazilian study reports, the adult world that children engage with is largely a female world.[20]

Multiple fathering as a phenomenon is observed in several countries. However, this has different interpretations across cultures because the role of the father is socially sanctioned. 'Flexible family boundaries, as found in India and Bangladesh, allow for other members of joint families to engage in the care of children.[25,26] Where marital relationships are fragile or multiple households emerge and evolve as fathers divorce/separate or remarry, step-fathers and non-residential fathers are engaging in the care of children. In Australia, it was noted that men have been taking on the role of being 'social fathers' to other men's children as men and women are less likely to be married than in the past or men are getting older before fathering children.[27] In Southern Africa, where the fertility rate is high, and the number of off-spring is quite high, biological parents have fewer interactions with offspring. In such cases, children have 'multiple fathers' in the form of uncles, which is a role expectation of men.[24]

Children's own narratives portray fathers as mainstays, protectors, and inspiring figures within the family,[28] suggesting paternal presence carries symbolic and relational significance beyond the distribution of tasks.

Research Gaps

Fatherhood is an experience that is important for family life, personal development and social dynamics. Another recent trend has been for young individuals, and even couples to choose not

to have children. Although in earlier times this would have been related to some medical condition, this is no longer so. Increasing numbers of young people in the developed world are choosing not to have children. Why has becoming a mother or a father become so daunting for some people? One of the most significant conundrums of demographic patterns relates to fertility. Why do the poorest populations of the world have the highest fertility rates? Although some speculations are advanced,[29] these mysteries are far from solved. This, among other issues, remains an area for investigation in future research. Other areas of interest that have not received adequate attention are listed here:

1. Cultural variations in father-child relationships across the life-span.
2. Ethnographic studies on the dynamics of father-child interaction and fatherhood as a life experience
3. The impact of migration on fatherhood both for the individual as well as the family in different settings, for example, diaspora studies.
4. Studies depict employed fathers as part of a nuclear family cohabiting with children. Most studies examine employed fathers within stable, residential nuclear households, with limited attention to diverse or non-cohabiting family structures.
5. Limited studies exist on the diverse pathways through which fathers contribute to children's development - including caregiving, teaching and mentoring, cultivating children's social networks, and the maintenance of family stability.

Conclusions

Fatherhood is a key area of study for gaining knowledge about the human social experience of family life and future developments. For this purpose, knowing more about how societies have organized parenting and fathering is essential. We have gathered information about fathers in diverse cultural settings and different historical periods of mankind. This provides us with information that goes beyond our own ways of doing things, and also widens our understanding of paternal roles and relationships. Research in this field must keep pace with changing social processes as well as stable patterns in the care of children by parents. In this article, we have been able to provide a glimpse of research from different parts of the world to elaborate on the variety of experiences and expressions related to fatherhood. However, a lot more work needs to be done in this regard, and we need to persist in ways that are responsive as well as informative

for the future.[30] The human experience is about adaptation, and diversity has been an essential feature of the survival of biological entities; something similar needs to be understood about cultural processes as well. The more adaptive we are as a species, the better we will adapt to and survive under newer physical and cultural conditions. For this purpose, remaining informed about and responsive to diversity is key!

Implications for Parents, Services and Policy

The implications for fathers is having a better understanding of their role in providing a secure marriage, a symbolic home, and meaningful interactions for the well-being of children.

Services related to parenting should include advocacy of the rights of a father. The state as well as families should shift from the understanding that fathers play a complementary role to that of a crucial role in child development. Programs that value fathers as active caregivers, mentors, and emotional anchors are essential to sustaining their engagement.

Social and economic policies should highlight the fact that fathers are central agents in the family's well-being. This must be reflected in workplace policies, childcare provisions, and social protection schemes that recognize diverse family forms.

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Latino Father Involvement in the United States

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Introduction

Latinos are the fastest growing and largest ethnic group in the United States (U.S.). According to the U.S. Census, Latinos are those people who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2010 questionnaire ("Mexican," "Puerto Rican", or "Cuban") or of another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, including from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic. People who identify their origin as Latino may be of any race. It is not surprising, then, that Latinos are highly diverse in country of origin, nativity, socioeconomic status (SES), and immigration experience.[1,2,3] As a group, Latinos are, on average, less educated and have lower incomes than their White counterparts.[4] However, compared to other minority men of similar income and education, Latino fathers are more likely to be resident.[5] Despite the rapid rise in nonmarital births among Latinos,[6] most of these births are to parents who live together (cohabiting). That is, most Latino children live in households where fathers are accessible and share in their daily care.[7] In spite of the demographic risks, Latino children also experience protective factors (two-parent households). Thus, examining the role of Latino fathers in children's lives requires understanding both risk and resilience processes.

Subject

There is indisputable evidence that economic and social disadvantage are linked with suboptimal developmental outcomes.[8,9] However, much of this literature does not consider the variability in children's functioning within poor and ethnic minority children. One protective factor that is key in early childhood is positive father involvement.[10,11] While there are multiple influences on a young child's development, parents, including fathers, are the most proximal and important influence on children and can directly and indirectly affect their development.[12] Aspects of positive father involvement beneficial for children include warm, responsive, and sensitive interactions, literacy support, and appropriate control.[13,14,15,16] In addition, research has identified culturally specific beliefs (e.g., strong family values) and practices (e.g., meal times) that

promote social, behavioural and emotional regulation, and linguistic development in their children.

The Research Context

Overall, the body of research on Latino families and children has focused on Mexican American samples, the largest Latino group in the U.S., or on Latino samples more globally without specifying country of origin. When researchers examine within group differences, findings show striking variability in cultural beliefs and values, SES, father residence and involvement, and, consequently children's developmental outcomes.[17,18] Because most of the research is not theoretically framed and has focused on low-income samples of convenience, it does not always disentangle the effects of SES from ethnicity. Thus conclusions tend to be overstated, confounding SES and ethnicity, and obscuring variability. With this caveat, most of the findings reported here are based on Latinos as a group and do not explore variability by SES or nativity status that might influence results.

Key Research Questions, Findings, and Gaps

Studies of Latino father involvement often address the following questions[19]: (1) How are Latino fathers involved in their children's lives? (2) What factors explain variability in father involvement among Latino fathers? And (3) How is Latino father involvement linked with their children's development?

1) How are Latino fathers involved in their children's lives?

There are several ways to answer the question. The first step is to determine the frequency of father involvement. National data show that contemporary fathers are more hands-on than they were in previous decades and, consequently, more involved in the daily care of their children.[20] For example, U.S. Census Bureau[3] data reveal high levels of fathers' shared book reading of children between ages 1 and 5 years. Similarly, among Latinos, national data show that compared to White fathers, Latino fathers are more involved in physical play (e.g., peek-a-boo).[21]

Second, researchers often compare mothers to fathers to gauge the degree of father involvement. While mothers and fathers share similar roles, research focused on mothers and fathers does not acknowledge that there are also differences. Based on reviews of the literature, the emerging thinking is that mothers and fathers are similar in some ways, different in others,

and that for some domains their contribution might be complementary.[22] Both parents have been observed to engage in sensitive and stimulating interactions with their children.[13] Reported differences often reflect differing levels of intensity of engagement rather than type. Fathers, including Latinos, are more likely to engage in physical play and encourage risk-taking than mothers,[23,24] and use higher quality language in interactions with their children than mothers.[25,26,27] These differences, however, also show that mothers and fathers make unique contributions to their children's development, over and above the influence of the other parent. Research investigating complementary (interaction effects) is just emerging and it shows that these effects might be domain specific (e.g., father caregiving can buffer the negative effect of maternal depression on infant distress).[28]

Third, researchers often compare involvement of Latino fathers to involvement of other ethnic minority or majority groups.[29] When compared to White or other ethnic minority fathers, Latino mothers report that their children's fathers are highly engaged (i.e., accessible, engaged, and responsible) with their children, spending, on average, more than one hour more with them (ages birth to 12 years) during the weekend, and engaging in more responsibility activities (i.e., care-giving, discipline, decision making).[29,30,31,32]

2) What factors explain variability in father involvement among Latino fathers?

Researchers have focused on demographic characteristics to understand variability in father involvement. Men's education and income are strong predictors of father involvement,[33] although may be less important among Latino men. A study found that Mexican American fathers' education was not associated with father involvement.[34] Perhaps there was not sufficient variability to capture any influence of education on fathers. This finding could also signify that cultural expectations of what it means to be a good dad may trump education. Another demographic factor consistently linked to father involvement is father residence.[35,36,37] Compared to nonresident fathers, resident fathers have more access to their children on a daily basis.

The quality of the couple relationship (e.g., romantic, co-parenting) also supports father involvement among Latinos.[31] Latino fathers who report lower levels of co-parenting conflict are more engaged in caregiving and reported less negative parenting than fathers reporting higher levels of co-parenting conflict.[38] A study concluded that differences in type of father engagement between Mexican American and other Latinos (e.g., Puerto Rican, Cuban) were attributed to couple relationship quality (controlling for SES and acculturation).[39] This is also true for Latino

mothers; the quality of the relationship with their partners is an important predictor of their own involvement.[32]

Research on Latino parenting has also highlighted the importance of cultural values, such as familism, defined as valuing family solidarity and family integration.[40,41] On average, Latinos have been found to report higher levels of familism compared to individuals of other ethnic groups.[42] A growing correlational body of work shows Mexican American fathers who hold high familism values (i.e., family rituals) report being more involved (monitoring, interacting) with their children than fathers with lower familism values.[34]

Cultural beliefs about gender roles and division of labor within the family also seem to be related to positive parenting. Fathers who hold less traditional gender roles (i.e., men are not more integral to society and the family than women) are more involved in all aspects of parenting (e.g., monitoring, supervising) than fathers who hold more traditional beliefs.[34]

3) How is Latino father involvement linked with their children's development?

Research that examines specifically how Latino fathers' involvement and investment in their children benefit children is consistent with general findings on parenting, which are mostly based on mothers. Research specifically on Latino fathers may also offer important insights into culturally specific practices that may promote children's positive development.

Based on investment theories, fathers' income and education are linked to better children's cognitive and social outcomes. These effects seem to be both direct and indirect through its influence on the quality of home experiences parents provide for their children, especially mother-child interactions.[43] These findings should hold for both resident and nonresident fathers. Children who live with both biological parents have higher levels of academic achievement, get more schooling, have better behavioral outcomes, are less likely to be involved in delinquent behaviors, and are more likely to have friends.[31] Although less tested, evidence shows that nonresident fathers' resources may also operate in the same way to influence their children's development.[44] It is important to highlight that these findings have not examined whether the pathway from parents' resources to children's outcomes is also channeled through father-child interactions. Although evidence shows that fathers engage in age-appropriate sensitive interactions with their children, it is unclear whether this explains the association between parents' resources and children's outcomes.[13,23,45,46,47]

In addition to fathers' human capital, there is also evidence that cultural values and beliefs might be directly and indirectly, through increased father involvement, associated with children's psychosocial functioning. For instance, optimism – positive expectation for the future[48] – and familism may be particularly important characteristics of Latino parents that contribute to their children's socioemotional development.[49,50] A study found that Mexican American mothers' and fathers' own reports of optimism were directly and concurrently associated with their teen's peer competence.[51] Similarly, Latino mothers and fathers who highly believe that familism is important have children who exhibit good psychosocial functioning (social problem solving skills, social self-efficacy),[41,52,53,54] have fewer depressive symptoms and are more engaged in school.[55]

Implications

The growing body of research on Latino fathers suggests that, on average, they are highly involved with and responsible for their children. This relatively high level of involvement is beneficial for children's positive social, behavioural and emotional regulation, and linguistic development. Additionally, Latino families' cultural values about the importance of the family and a general sense of optimism are implicated in important ways in how involved fathers are with their children and, in turn, children's wellbeing. A finding worth repeating is that more Latino fathers, unlike other minority fathers, live with their children and partners. Being resident and accessible to their children can protect them from the negative effects that economic adversity, prevalent in single parent households, can have on family functioning. Moreover, two-parent families are more able to provide support and stability than single-household families. The focus on two-parent families among Latinos also highlights the importance of the relationship quality to family functioning.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that Latino children live in impoverished environments that place them at risk for poor school performance, high school dropout, and psychosocial maladjustment.[56] Although Latino children tend to exhibit high social skills and live with two parents, which are strengths, their academic problems in school begin early and are largely related to living in economic disadvantage.[39,57] In this context, positive Latino fathers' involvement has the potential to protect children from the negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on their development, but it is not a panacea. Policies and programs should not discount the importance of an involved father, but should also consider the demographic context of Latino families in the US. Understanding the sources of resilience (involved father) and risk (poverty) in Latino children's wellbeing will strengthen efforts to improve their lives.

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Commonalities and Diversities of Fathering. Overall Commentary on Fathering

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Introduction

Over the last twenty-five years, researchers have amassed substantial knowledge of fatherhood, fathering, and the influence of fathers on children. Although debate remains within and across fields as to whether fathering should simply be subsumed within the broader field of "parenting," [1] or whether fathers and mothers each engage in unique behaviours and influence their children in differing ways,[2] it is generally accepted that fathers are a potentially important source of influence on the development of young children.[3,4] However, the nature and mechanisms of fathers' influence in various contexts and domains remain less explored. The articles contained in this section each address aspects of the diversity of fathers (Latino fathers in the U.S., Black nonresident fathers in South Africa, First Nations and Métis fathers in Canada, changing fatherhood ideals in countries such as Brazil, Russia, Bangladesh, and Australia) and the multiple pathways of influence they have on young children, as well as the characteristics of successful interventions and policies with fathers of young children.

Research and Conclusions

Fatherhood, among humans as in the animal kingdom, is not a singular phenomenon. Cultural and societal proscriptions intermingle with personal circumstances and beliefs to create diverse patterns of fathering behaviour. Oppression creates its own legacies that many fathers are challenged to find ways to overcome. As noted by Makusha and Richter, nonresident Black fathers in South Africa face challenges stemming from the legacy of Apartheid, having to migrate in order to be employed, and the social obligations of inhlawulo and lobola, which limit the ability of many fathers to be physically present in their children's lives. Nonresident Black fathers in the US face the legacy of slavery and issues of systemic racism and discrimination, including disproportionate incarceration and poverty, which also limits their ability to be physically present in their children's lives. In both countries, however, even when unable to be physically

present, nonresident Black fathers often contribute to their children's lives in other ways, such as via financial contributions (formal and informal), emotional connections, and providing a sense of identity and family/community belonging.[5]

Oppression also can exist in the form of majority cultures imposing their beliefs and expectations upon all fathers, regardless of fathers' own culturally-specific beliefs and traditions. Ball and Moselle pointed out the difficulties faced by Indigenous fathers in Canada who are attempting to recover, re-establish, and pass forward cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices that were all but eradicated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Taking children from Indigenous families and placing them in Indian Residential Schools eliminated the ability of Indigenous men to transmit language, spiritual beliefs, or to maintain relationships of children with extended family and community Elders, issues which are only barely beginning to be addressed by current policies and programs. Karberg and Cabrera noted contextual challenges facing Latino fathers in the U.S., who tend to emphasize the importance of familism and optimism and to therefore be coresident with their children and the children's mothers, to have relatively high involvement in their children's lives, and to have relatively lower rates of divorce and relationship dissolution. At the same time, these Latino fathers reside in a country which has the second highest divorce rate among all industrialized nations and which emphasizes individual achievements and happiness over family solidarity and obligations. Achieving a balance between acculturation with majority values and fidelity to their own personal beliefs and practices can be a difficult task for many Latino fathers.

Research, as well as policy, needs to be vigilant not to regard culturally diverse families and fathers through a singular cultural lens. This is particularly important to illuminate the strengths of fathers, rather than assuming a deficit perspective when researching a cultural minority. We know from past experience that using one culture or set of ideals as the gold standard to which all others are compared leads us to misunderstand or miss completely a variety of culturally specific behaviours that are beneficial to children in diverse families (e.g., the racial socialization practices of parents of color in the U.S.), just as comparing mothers to fathers historically has led to fathers "coming up short" in our assessment of their parenting abilities.

Gray and Anderson, and Chaudhary, Tuli, and Sharda each discuss fathering from a broader perspective, looking across cultures rather than within a specific context (and in the case of Chaudhary et al., even to fathering among animal species). Both note that fathers still retain breadwinning as a central role, but that most countries are demonstrating notable shifts away

from this being the only role that fathers play, towards a definition of fathering that includes more nurturing behaviours. Recent cross-cultural research supports the efficacy of such a shift, suggesting that paternal warmth and affection perhaps should be the new universal standard of fathering. A meta-analysis of 66 studies in 22 countries indicated that paternal warmth, even more so than maternal warmth, is strongly associated with child psychological adjustment and well-being.[6] However, how fathering is enacted also remains variable by context. Some countries have adapted to new economic realities and societal demands by relying on multiple fathers as the norm. For example, Australia has seen an increase in social fathering being done by other men, and due to high fertility rates, families in Southern Africa use uncles in this role. Other countries instead have adjusted their expectations of biological fathers (e.g., Brazil emphasizing the loving affectionate role of fathers). Across countries, Gray and Anderson highlight the numerous ways that fathers, including non-resident fathers,[7] influence children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. However, these influences are moderated by numerous characteristics, including sex of the child, child age, fathers' SES, marital status of the parents, and father-child relationship quality. As such, even the "global" aspects of fathering can and should be specified in greater detail and are more nuanced than it might appear at first glance.

Implications for development and policy

As is the case with policies that affect any large and diverse group of individuals, sweeping policy recommendations regarding fathers are difficult to come by. The needs and resources of and opportunities available to fathers vary dramatically, by socioeconomic status; race, ethnicity, and country of origin; family structure; age; and a multitude of other factors. Policies will be most effective that understand and take into account the unique circumstances of fathers, rather than attempting to be "one size fits all." Fagan and Palm noted the need for differing goals depending upon the population of fathers being assisted; for example, unmarried teen fathers have greater need of educational goals and job training than older married fathers. As they aptly state, "There are many different pathways to supporting positive father involvement, father-child and coparenting relationships." Successful policies and interventions will take advantage of and build upon these multiple pathways, assisting fathers in creating unique trajectories to being successful fathers. Fagan and Palm also pointed out some of the ways in which fathers are best engaged in programs that are distinct from the ways in which we have traditionally engaged mothers (e.g., allowing hands-on activities and father-child interactions so that fathers can

“practice” techniques, inclusion of male staff and facilitators). Creating “father-friendly” programs and policies, rather than generic parenting programs and policies, is crucial to positively engaging fathers with their children.

Another example of the importance of policies that specifically target fathers is found in the arena of paternity leave. In Sweden, fathers are granted 60 days of paid paternity leave that is reserved specifically for them, as well as an additional 420 days of leave that can be taken by either fathers or mothers during the child’s first 8 years[8] (Sweden is currently attempting to increase fathers’ designated proportion to 90 days). Since the introduction of the 60 “daddy days” of leave, Swedish fathers have been much more likely to take paternity leave, whereas fathers/families tend to allocate most of the “joint” time to mothers. In Iceland as well, parental leave is divided into thirds, with mothers receiving three months, fathers receiving three months, and the remaining three months being available to either parent. This leave was implemented in phases between 2001 and 2003, and by the end of the implementation the average paternity leave taken by men in Iceland had increased from 39 days to 83 days.[8] Similarly, in Spain, fathers are granted thirteen days of paternity leave and may get up to ten additional weeks of maternity leave transferred to him, but very few men use any leave beyond the designated thirteen days.[9] As with other policies and programs, the key to involving fathers during the transition to fatherhood appears to be having policies that target fathers specifically, as otherwise fathers will tend to defer to mothers and see their own involvement and time with children as less important and optional.

Conclusion

These articles highlight the importance of fathers to their children’s development and outcomes, as well as the multiple pathways fathers can take to being “successful” fathers. Policies that promote positive father engagement and that support men as fathers, in and of themselves, need to consider the specific needs and goals of different populations of fathers. Too, policies and interventions need to specifically target fathers, rather than merely grouping them under the larger umbrella of parenting programs or policies. Doing so will promote both fathers’ own health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of mothers, children, and families, and will serve to strengthen the societies in which fathers are embedded.

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Fathering in Diverse Cultural Contexts: An Emerging Picture. Overall Commentary on Fathering

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Introduction

As emphasis on cultural, cross-cultural, and indigenous perspectives on family socialization processes gain traction in the psychological sciences, there has been greater interest in research on father-child relationships across cultural communities.[1,2] These essays chronicle the different ways in which men are involved in children's lives and the implications of varying levels of paternal involvement for childhood development across a few cultural communities. The authors discuss local and particular aspects of fathering and the evolving nature of how men embrace their diverse roles in families. These roles and responsibilities co-occur with other life events (e.g., economic challenges, discrimination, oppression, cultural transplantation) and are often driven by internal scripts or ethno-theories about masculinity/manhood that are contested and changing. To this end, there are cultural pathways to fathering wherein men place emphases on different socialization goals and practices across communities to achieve common ends—the health and wellbeing of families and children.

Diverse Mating and Marital Systems

Although much of the fathering research base is confined to European and European-heritage families and the dyadic, co-parenting model, what is evident is that across cultural communities, fatherhood and fathering occur in diverse family constellations with different residential patterns and levels of pair-bond commitment.[3,4,5] That is, men become fathers in diverse mating and marital systems with possible conceptual separation between parenting and partner roles in some cultural communities.6 Moreover, fathers and mothers join forces with diverse other individuals (siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, other male adults) in several cultural communities in attempts to meet the varying needs of children. For instance, Chaudhary et al., Ball and Moselle, and Makusha and Richter highlight the roles of multiple caregivers in the

context of horizontal and vertical relationships within systems of extended living arrangements that are culturally sanctioned and convey the importance of non-parental socialization agents in young children's lives. Far from seamless, some of these non-parental figures work in a complementary manner with fathers in extended living arrangements, as alternative caregivers in nonresidential father living situations, and as surrogate caregivers when fathers migrate to other geographic locations for employment reasons to meet the economic needs of family members. At the moment, the contribution of fathers to childhood development relative to these other figures in these dynamic caregiving systems is not clearly delineated and we continue to examine the significance of paternal involvement relative to patterns of mothering most of the time.[7]

Variations in Paternal Investment and Involvement

Just as paternal presence should not be equated with psychological presence, non-residential fatherhood does not exclude men from becoming involved with their children. Fathers may be physically around but are not emotionally available to children. At the same, some non-resident fathers may find unique ways to provide in-kind resources and stay in touch with their children. Of course paternal involvement varies by context and in terms of patterns of behaviours that have evolved in response to the demands of the local ecology.[3] As all of the authors point out, fathers offer protection, provide material resources, and engage in the direct and indirect care of children. Further, levels of paternal involvement are invariably influenced by economic status, residential patterns, hegemonic models of masculinity, how men were fathered themselves, and the nature of the pair-bond. Yet in most cultures around the world men still see their primary role as economic providers and this undergirds a good deal of their responsibilities in families and drives the quantity and quality of their involvement with children. Paternal involvement ranges from men assuming roles as helpers to being highly engaged in the socio-affective and cognitive aspects of their children's daily lives.[1]

In rare cases, exceptions also exist where fathers are more involved than mothers in specific aspects of caregiving. A case in point is the Aka, a foraging group in the Central African Republic. Aka fathers held their infants about 22% of the time and soothe and display more affection to them than mothers did. There are also challenges to the much touted role of fathers as playmates to children and the affectional distance that fathers in certain Asian communities have presumably assumed in the socialization and education of children. In a number of cultural communities (e.g., some foraging, Indian, Taiwanese, Thai) around the world fathers rarely

engage in the rough stimulating play observed among European American fathers,[8] and in a few settings mothers exceed or engage in equal amounts of play with children as fathers do.[9,10] Likewise, in some Asian societies fathers and mothers do not differ much in the display of affection to young children. In short, there is indication that fathers are becoming increasingly involved in the socio-emotional aspects of caregiving but in a number of developing societies this largely occurs at the insistence of mothers and children.

Links Between Paternal Involvement and Childhood Development

As suggested by Karberg and Cabrera, father involvement can serve a protective function against childhood risks. Researchers are beginning to demonstrate ways in which different dimensions of father involvement are linked either directly or indirectly (e.g., through relationship quality, family solidarity) to childhood outcomes. Among seminal attributes, warmth and sensitivity as a construct appears to impart similar influences on childhood development across societies.[11] Along with economic resources and educational attainment, the primacy of paternal warmth and sensitivity in shaping childhood developmental trajectories cannot be overstated. The foundational aspects of warmth and sensitivity provide a platform for other aspects of meaningful engagement (e.g., cognitive stimulation, room to explore new objects and experiences). On the flip side, there are some troubling trends. Long periods of paternal separation from the family (e.g., among Black South Africans, Arab men in the Middle-East) and intermittent contact with family members can have deleterious effects on children's cognitive and social development. Additionally, family social and structural dynamics change in unanticipated ways when men leave their families behind to seek better economic opportunities or when they enter new intimate relationships[12,13] The complexity of these living arrangements are only now drawing the attention of researchers in a world community that is on the march and in which families are living transnational lives.

Fathering and Interventions

Fathers bring developmental assets to children but can place children at risk as well. As noted already, mere presence does not guarantee heavy psychological investment. Thus, researchers have developed primary and secondary fatherhood and family intervention programs to strengthen family relationships and different dimensions of father involvement in children's lives. Based on family science and ecological models,[14,15,16] that focus on proximal (e.g., parental characteristics and competence, belief systems) and distal processes (neighborhood quality) in

the lives of families in diverse structural arrangements, and based on emphasis placed on protective relationship factors (e.g., constructive conflict strategies, social support) that guard against poor parenting and neighborhood conditions, researchers and community-based organizations have developed interventions that target parenting among men. The overriding goal of these programs is to improve father-child relationships with the hope of improving the everyday lives of young children and maximizing their developmental potential.

Fagan and Palm provide a good synopsis of the impact of these programs on childhood development outcomes. Across a range of programs (e.g., Kangaroo care, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, participation in early education programs, massage) the results appear promising in reducing paternal risk factors and behavioural difficulties in children. However, the effect sizes of programs have been rather small. This could be attributed to the difficulties associated with methodological issues and lack of uniformity in measurement strategies. Fagan and Palm identified the pregnancy and transition to parenthood period, the early childhood years (0-5), the content of programs, and staff training as important elements in designing successful fatherhood intervention programs. In a similar vein, Ball and Moselle emphasize the need to consider issues of cultural sensitivity and appropriateness in designing social programs for Indigenous fathers in Canada. Obviously more rigorous and different research designs (e.g., mixed-methods) would also enhance our understanding of the impact of fatherhood interventions in maximizing children's life chances in at risk home and neighborhood environments.

Conclusion

A major challenge in fathering research is defining cultural pathways to childhood development. Across cultures, families aspire to imbue their children with the skills necessary for life within their cultural communities. Describing how this is achieved and what role men play in this process were major goals of these articles. Today we know much more about father involvement and childhood development than just a decade ago. Fathers contribute in meaningful ways to children's immediate cognitive and social development and later educational achievement and social adjustment, thereby attenuating risks to children especially in challenging ecological niches. Studies of father involvement have grown in their sophistication, and so too will theory construction in this line of work.

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