Making “meaning” in families through the social construction of fathering

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Acknowledgements

The 392 families in the Parents and Youth Study

Graduate student collaborators: Andrea Finlay, Norma Perez-Brena, Andres Olide

My colleagues on the project: Ross Parke, Scott Coltrane, Sanford Braver, William Fabricius, Delia Saenz, Michelle Adams

Our interviewers who are too many to name
Lifetime prevalence rates of any disorder for 13-18 year olds

My three points

1. The evidence for differential socialization by mothers and fathers is inconclusive.
2. The *meaning* that adolescents make of relations with their parents may be just as important as the behaviors of those parents.
3. Boys and girls appear to make *meaning* similarity.
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Moderators of Gender Effects on Parents’ Talk to Their Children: A Meta-Analysis

Campbell Leaper, Kristin J. Anderson, and Paul Sanders
University of California, Santa Cruz

Two sets of meta-analyses of studies examining gender effects on parents' observed language with their children were conducted. One looked at studies comparing mothers and fathers in amount of talking, supportive speech, negative speech, directive speech, informing speech, and questions and requests. The other looked at studies comparing mothers' interactions with daughters versus with sons in amount of talking, supportive speech, and directive speech. Across studies, mothers tended to talk more ($d = .26$), use more supportive ($d = .23$) and negative ($d = .13$) speech, and use less directive ($d = .19$) and informing ($d = .15$) speech than did fathers. Also, mothers tended to talk more ($d = .29$) and use more supportive speech ($d = .22$) with daughters than with sons. Medium or large effect sizes occurred in most analyses when particular moderator variables were taken into account. Effect sizes varied, depending on aspects of the interactive setting, the child's age, sampling and measurement, and publication characteristics. The results are interpreted in relation to a contextual–interactive model of gender typing.

A meta-analysis of 172 studies attempted to resolve the conflict between previous narrative reviews on whether parents make systematic differences in their rearing of boys and girls. Most effect sizes were found to be nonsignificant and small. In North American studies, the only socialization area of 19 to display a significant effect for both parents is encouragement of sex-typed activities. In other Western countries, physical punishment is applied significantly more to boys. Fathers tend to differentiate more than mothers between boys and girls. Over all socialization areas, effect size is not related to sample size or year of publication. Effect size decreases with child's age and increases with higher quality. No grouping by any of these variables changes a nonsignificant effect to a significant effect. Because little differential socialization for social behavior or abilities can be found, other factors that may explain the genesis of documented sex differences are discussed.
1. The evidence for differential socialization by mothers and fathers is inconclusive

Maccoby & Jacklin – there is a remarkable degree of uniformity of the socialization of the two sexes
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Fathers are a funny lot

THE GOOD
- They promote offspring survival
- They boost children’s functioning
- Historically, they are becoming more involved in their children’s lives.

THE BAD
- About involvement – a small number * 4 is still a small number
- Men are more subject to individual and cultural variations in fathering than mothers

THE UGLY
- They are also more likely to be substance abusers, physically violent, or absent all together.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Biological, intact</th>
<th>Stepfather</th>
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<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>86</td>
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Down the road

- More women in the workplace

Current economic recession has been particularly hard for the employment rates of men.