Father on Board:  
A Social Cognitive Model of the Adjustment to Fatherhood in Families with Substance Use Issues 
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Overview

- Social Cognitive Lens on New Fatherhood
- Men’s Socialization to Fatherhood
- Men’s Peripartum Mental Health
- Assessment and Psychotherapy with New/Expectant Fathers
- Talking with Moms and Dads
- Assessing Father-Inclusiveness
- Q&A
- Interpretive Dance

A series of sexist, heterosexist, age-ist, and racist observations!
Key Factors in Men’s Adjustment to Fatherhood

Paternal Supports and Barriers
- Social Support
- SES
- Work/Life Balance

Paternal Inputs
- Health Status
- Masculine Socialization
- Culture

Efficacy Perceptions
- Partner’s Other-Efficacy
- Paternal Self-Efficacy

Paternal Performance Domains
- Co-Parenting Behavior
- Paternal Involvement with Infant

Paternal Outcomes
- Paternal Relationship Satisfaction
- Psychological Well-Being
- Paternal Parent Satisfaction

Basic Training for New Dads | www.newdadsclass.com | Daniel B. Singley, Ph.D.
Family Developmental Context

U-Shaped Curve of Marital Happiness

- Honeymoon Period 2 – 3 Years
- Raising Children
- Career Advancement
- Financial Burdens
- Saving for College
- Children Leaving Home
- 25 Years
- Fiscal Stability
- Grandchildren
- Retirement
- Second Honeymoon 35 Years
Men’s Socialization – “Daddy 1.0”

Traditional Masculinity (Brannon, 1976)

1. Antifemininity- “No Sissy Stuff”
2. Status and Achievement – “The Big Wheel”
3. Inexpressiveness and Independence “The Study Oak”
4. Adventurousness and Aggressiveness “Give ‘Em Hell”

• New Dad’s Role Is To Support Mom And Earn
• Uninvolved with Infants
Men’s Socialization – “Daddy 2.0”

**Generative Fathers** (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1996)
“The task of establishing and guiding the next generation.”

**Nontraditional Masculine Norms**
- Nurturing, Hands-On Care of Infant
- Emotionally Open to Mom and Baby

**Mental Health Implications**
- Changing Roles Brings Stress/Uncertainty
- One in 10 have depression; One in 20 have PTSD
- History of MH Issues/Abuse/Trauma
- Gender Role Conflict – ↑ MH probs, ↓ Help-Seeking
Fatherhood, Modeling, and The Generation Gap

• Changing Expectations of Father Involvement
• Popular Media Stereotypes of “Bumbling Dads”
• Engaged Dads Have Few Models
• Modeling and Vicarious Learning
Men’s Peripartum Mental Health Issues

• A public health/disparity issue
• Whole family perspective on reproductive mental health – general focus is on mom
• Beyond depression, anxiety, OCD – substance abuse, trauma
• Role changes/adjustments cause stress
• Mens’ socialization – gender role conflict
• Symptoms
• Many fathers thrive throughout the peripartum period!
Paternal Peripartum Depression Risk Factors

• Maternal Peripartum Depression
• History of paternal depression or other mental health issues
• Comorbid psychiatric problems
• Lack of support – social and from partner
• Dad not having ample time to bond with baby
• Men’s socialization to think of themselves as protectors/providers rather than nurturers
Male “Masked” Depression (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2000)

- Lower stress threshold
- Substance use
- Aggressiveness, low impulse control
- Feeling of being burned out and empty
- Constant, inexplicable tiredness
- Irritability, restlessness, dissatisfaction
- Difficulty making ordinary everyday decisions
- Sleep problems
- Feeling anxiety—especially in the morning
- Abusive, hyperactive, or antisocial behavior
- Depressive thought content
- Criticizing
- The “withdrawal response”

3-6 months postpartum, 42 percent of mothers and 26 percent of fathers exhibit signs of clinical depression.
Paternal Hormonal Shifts

• Decrease in testosterone
• Increase in cortisol
• Increase in estrogen (estradiol)
• Increase in vasopressin
• Increase in prolactin
• Dysregulation of any hormonal concentrations and/or amount of receptors in key areas of the brain may serve as a biological risk factor for mental health
Substance Use in the Perinatal Period (Twomey, 2007)

- Substance use issues reflect treatable mental health disorders for mothers and fathers
- Tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit substances
- Violence, domestic abuse, and financial problems are prominent concerns
- Treatment should integrate primary and behavioral health care with a focus on relationship issues
- Substance abuse programs ill-equipped for expectant/new parents, especially mothers
- Male masked depression – substance use
- Screen for sexual and physical abuse, domestic violence, and suicidal thoughts and actions
- Policies reflecting therapeutic attitude facilitate treatment-seeking.
- Fathers with a history of substance abuse can be highly-involved
Why is Fatherhood Involvement Important?

Parenting of children 0-5 is really just mothering, right?

- **Child Outcomes:**
  - Higher IQ, school readiness, social skills, emotional regulation, and empathy
  - Increased attachment, emotional security, popularity, independence
- **Paternal Outcomes:**
  - Fewer mental health issues
  - Increased confidence, parenting satisfaction, relationship satisfaction
- **Maternal Outcomes:**
  - Fewer mental health issues
  - Increased responsiveness, confidence, and affection
Barriers to Father Involvement

- Fathers’ AND Mothers’ Socialization
- Medical/Mental Health/Parent Educator Biases
- Low Self- And Other-Efficacy
- Anxiety/Gatekeeping
- Custody Arrangements
- Work/Life Balance
What Exactly Does Dad Contribute?

One-on-One High-Intensity Interactions Promote Emotional and Behavioral Regulation:

Comparison of Mothers' and Fathers' Play on Infant Central Nervous System Arousal

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What Else Does Dad Contribute?

• Rough-and-Tumble Play Teaches How to Deal with Aggressive Impulses and Physical Play without Losing Emotional Control
• Promote Independence, Orientation to the Outside World, and Achievement
• Children Develop Higher Levels of Independence, Self-Control, and Pro-Social Behavior

Impact of Gender:
• For Daughters - Protective Factor against Risky/Early Sexual Behavior
• For Sons - Decreased Externalizing and Behavioral Problems
Cultural Factors

• Multiple Dimensions of Culture
• Latin@/Hispanic Background
• Machismo, Marianismo, Familismo, Caballerismo
• Fragile Families Study - *First generation immigrant fathers were more accessible to their infants, but showed lower levels of engagement with and caretaking of their children compared to nonimmigrant fathers,***
Talking to Dad

• Couples work essential for substance users
• Meet them where they are
• Emphasize “doing” and “providing” – parenting skills
• Providing more than materially
• Providing for family starts with his own health
• Being strategic = proactive problem-solving (see handout)
• Weekly summit meetings with mom
• Get with a “team”
• Getting therapy a “coach”
What Can Moms Do?

• Manage own mental health
• Examine – does father reinforce healthy or unhealthy behavior?
• Set up Weekly “Summit Meetings”
• Encourage Dad to Hang Out With Buddies Get Social Support Guilt-Free
• Give Dad “Alone Time” with Baby ASAP
• Get Their Own Social Support Needs Met
Programmatic Father Involvement

Review the Organizational Checklist with an Eye Toward:
• How Is Your Organization Already Father-Inclusive?
• How Are You Lacking in Father-Inclusiveness?
• Given Time and Resource Constraints – What Is a Concrete Next Step to Enhance Father Inclusiveness in Your Setting?

• **See Handout for Checklist**
References


“You can’t babysit your own kid – that’s called ‘fathering.’”