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Handbook
of the Psychology
# of Fatherhood

Springer

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We would like to dedicate the handbook to our fathers, grandfathers, spiritual fathers, and those in our lives that inspire us to study the psychology of fatherhood.

Foreword

The Virtuous Cycle of Progress Toward Understanding Fathers

While the number of fathers has remained consistent for the past 10 years, our understanding of the role fathers play in families has expanded exponentially. In 2020, almost 26 million men are fathers representing nearly 55 million children ages 0–18 (United States Census Bureau, 2021a). Yet it is only in the last several decades that scholarly activity around these fathers has begun to hit its stride. Searching the major scientific databases reveals this major shift in research to understand and include fathers and fatherhood as a dedicated research focus. Using search terms of "father*" or "fatherhood," the number of articles recorded in PubMed, the US government's clearinghouse for scientific literature, has increased from 66 for the year 1950 to over 2700 in the year ending in 2021, and a cumulation of over 49,000 PubMed publications in the ensuing years.

The result of this expansion of scholarly activity is an underpinning of the potential benefits and importance of the role fathers play in families from a variety of perspectives. Father involvement has been linked to improved maternal and infant health, including longer breastfeeding duration (Hunter & Cattelona, 2014), lower levels of maternal depression (Mallette et al., 2020), earlier prenatal care initiation (Martin et al., 2007), higher utilization of postnatal care services (Yargawa & Leonardi-Bee, 2015), and improved child developmental, psychological, and cognitive outcomes (Cabrera et al., 2018; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Beyond influencing the health of their families, fatherhood presents a critical opportunity for men to improve their own health (Salvesen von Essen et al., 2021). Healthy men are more likely to participate in childrearing (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007), support mothers in parenting (Price-Robertson et al., 2017), and have healthy children (Brophy et al., 2012). Fathers, even those in unmarried relationships, report a desire to "be there" for their offspring as the child grows and reaches milestones like entering kindergarten or graduating high school; this forward-looking perspective is reportedly directly related to taking on the new responsibilities of becoming a father (Garfield et al., 2010).

Building and sustaining this pipeline of scholarly work has highlighted the importance beyond simple scholarly publications to societal implications and community benefits. Several major family support programs now focus on

involving fathers, often with mandates for contacting and engaging fathers. These include the Office of Family Assistance's (OFA) focus on key qualities of fatherhood that are Family-focused, Interconnected, Resilient, and Essential and represent the backbone of the OFA's Fatherhood FIRE grants program. Home Visiting programs have also begun to focus on fathers both qualitatively (HHS) and with innovative technological interventions using text messaging (Hamil et al., 2021). Healthy Start, a national program designed to improve perinatal maternal and infant health outcomes, recently instituted a requirement that all programming include some outreach and inclusion of fathers, the first time in its 31 year history to make this requirement (*Fatherhood/Health & Well-Being*).

In the wake of these events—heightened awareness of fathers in society, increased scholarly activity aimed at understanding fathers and fatherhood, focused attention in programming to engage fathers as never done before—a book such as this makes sense. This is an opportunity to coalesce the extant literature on fatherhood in one place for the benefit of the practitioner. That enough literature exists in such abundance to allow for the bounty of chapters included in this handbook is testament to the dedicated work advancing the concept of fathers and fatherhood in families over the past several decades.

We might pause momentarily to consider the forces at play to allow for such a paradigm shift in understanding families with an appreciation of fathers. The figure below shows *the virtuous cycle of progress toward understanding fathers*, which we propose may play a role in advancing this conceptualization of fathers' involvement in families. Starting at the societal level—which is essentially made up of individuals within communities—a shift occurs. In this case, the role of fathers in families begins to receive more attention. This call for attention may come from any number of shifts within the society—pressures from within the home for a different role or set of responsibilities, work force changes affecting women and men, and expectations on the part of a new generation of parents wanting to do things "differently" from their own parents. Primed to identify, study, and report on emerging phenomena, the research community picks up on these shifts at the individual, community, and societal levels. The task of the research community then is to determine the best methods for studying, measuring, and articulating these shifts, their magnitudes, and impacts on certain outcomes. A typical evolution in research that may certainly have been the case in the fatherhood realm is a movement from anecdotal evidence to small-scale qualitative findings, which inform hypothesis, to larger-scale surveys, observational studies, and eventually longitudinal and intervention studies at population level samples. Findings along this research continuum lead to data briefs, opinion pieces, peer-reviewed publications, calls for action, and improved data collection, and form the foundation of facts and outcomes for advancing the field. Examples of the culminating activities include the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study (FFCWB) (Reichman et al., 2001), the Early Headstart Study (EHS) (Cabrera et al., 1999), the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Avenilla et al., 2006), and the more recent Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System for Dads (PRAMS for Dads, Garfield et al. (2018, 2022)).

This essential work feeds the next step in this virtuous cycle. Armed now with data, policy makers can respond to and advocate for change through evidence-based policies. A host of examples are available related to families more generally, and a growing number that are father focused. The first national summit on fatherhood held in 1994 by the National Fatherhood Initiative eventually led to President Clinton's 1995 memorandum on fatherhood in which he directed all federal agencies to "engage and meaningfully include fathers" (Sylvester & Reich, 2002). Fast forward 25 years, and while things have changed with the remarkable arrival of the first "second gentleman" of the United States, the debate remains on parental leave, paternity leave, and the continued need for support of mothers and fathers as they transition into parenthood (Fuchs, 2021).

What began in the community, was advanced by research findings, and ultimately was included in the policy agenda, which is now ready for the final step, funding. Certainly, funding is necessary to sustain the research and policy enterprises; however, major funding is necessary to implement research findings and policy decisions into large-scale, community practices. Key to this step is identification of programming and interventions that are evidence based and scalable to the populations of interest. Funding is also required for sustainability and to measure impacts over time in order ensure fiscal responsibility for resources dedicated to supporting individuals, families, and communities (Fig. 1).

As this cycle continues to spin, new inputs are added that require different or adjusted outcomes to be considered. The 1950s television show, (*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*) (Brooks & Marsh, 2007), that modeled a cis-gendered, heteronormative family consisting of a stay-at-home mother caring for children while the father works every day is far from the norm (if it ever was). In fact, only 26% of opposite-sexed married couples with children under age 18 today live in opposite-sexed married couples where the
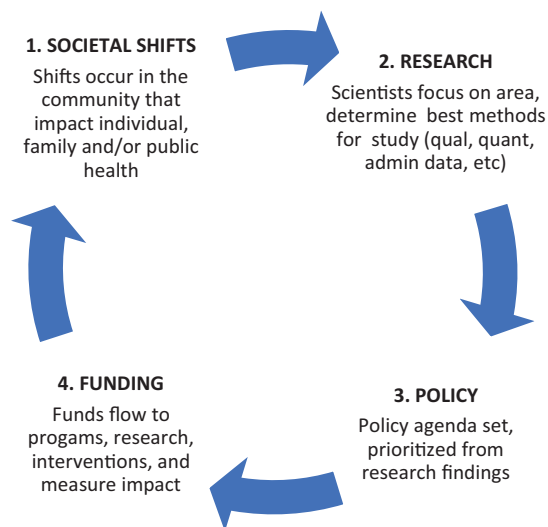

Fig. 1 The virtuous cycle of progress toward understanding fathers

mother is out of the workforce and only the father is in the labor force (United States Census Bureau, 2021b). A myriad of family structures now exist rivaled only by the diversity of fatherhood experiences. Fathers (and father figures) may be married or unmarried, single, at-home or incarcerated, immigrant or native born. In the past, the definition of fatherhood was often limited to cis straight men; however, fathers and father figures come from across the gender and sexuality spectrum, including bisexual, gay, transgender, and intersex. This variety can be celebrated by their beneficial contributions to families and children.

Here is where a handbook such as this comes in. While the topic of fatherhood is massive, it is far from monochromic; there is no one size fits all. How one comes to be a father, how a father interacts within a larger family context, and how he engages with this particular partner and child can impact the health and well-being of the father, child, partner, and family as a whole. Each chapter in this book strives to represent one key aspect of fatherhood, the proverbial group of blind people describing their one portion of an elephant for each other. The editors link together essential components for understanding fatherhood. These include conceptual chapters such as theory and methods, lifecourse and transitions, fatherhood subpopulations such as military and LGBTQIA+ fathers, and practical aspects of fatherhood such as the intersection of fathering with physical and mental health. Collectively, these authors' contributions lay the foundation to understand where the scholarship on fatherhood stands today in our country and point to new directions for the future.

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Acknowledgments

Working on an edited handbook during a global pandemic created some unexpected challenges and more opportunities for gratitude. We especially thank everyone at *Springer Nature* for their patience with this project. Similarly, we are grateful for the community of scholars that contributed high-level chapters to the handbook through personal and professional difficulties. We appreciate our families, partners, colleagues, and friends that have supported and encouraged us "to keep going."

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Theorizing Fathering: Past, Present, and Future

Kari Adamsons, Laura Cutler, and Rob Palkovitz

Although men have always been fathers and fathers have always been a part of families in varying forms and fashions, research and theorizing about fathers is a relatively recent development; instead, the bulk of parenting research and theorizing has focused on the ways mothers influence children. In fact, a 1985 article reviewing the theories used in fatherhood research began by observing that:

> The subject of fatherhood has not attracted much theoretical interest. Theoreticians not only tend to ignore fathers per se, they have managed to overlook issues raised by the fact that the father role is found in all societies, and that expectations and performance of this role vary widely from place to place (Benson, 1985, p. 25).

As recently as 2011, Johansson echoed similar sentiments, stating "There is today a lack of conceptualisations and theories of fatherhood" (p. 227). With most societies holding patriarchal structures, men's roles as workers, leaders, and "heads of household" have been assumed, but men's roles as parents were less prominent in research and theory. The limited research on men

as parents typically revolved around indirect or secondary forms of parenting, such as financial provision, discipline, or gender role models, rather than direct involvement in the care and nurturance of children's development. Benson (1985) went on to summarize theoretically based fatherhood research and noted that it had occurred under a wide variety of perspectives: systems, biological (instincts and genetics), Freudian, attachment, symbolic interaction, social learning, and exchange theories. However, his discussion provided more in the way of how these theories *could* aid in investigations of fatherhood than how they have done so, and this was echoed in his closing statement that "such perspectives do not so much answer the questions they raise as provide dramatic reminders that these issues deserve continuing attention" (p. 38).

A focus on fathers as influential parental figures in the lives of their children began to emerge in the 1970s. This was largely due to the increasing divorce rate coupled with a maternal custody preference (itself due to the popularity of the Tender Years Doctrine that children need their mothers in early childhood) and thus, the number of households with "absent" fathers. This led judges, practitioners, and researchers to query whether such father absence adversely impacted children. In the 1970s, gender roles were also in flux due to the feminist movement, further pushing research, theory, and families to consider the ways in which fathers might contribute more to

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parenting and therefore "free" mothers from the demands and obligations of motherhood (although feminists were somewhat divided on this issue, which will be discussed more later) or provide childcare while mothers entered the workforce in increasing numbers.

By the 1990s, fathers as a focus of research had gained substantial traction and had blossomed into a more "mainstream" topic, although at that point research diverged into two distinct paths. The first path consisted of what are often termed "parenting" researchers, who viewed mothers and fathers as interchangeable caregivers for children, and who therefore simply added fathers to their samples of mothers and added/included fathers in their overall theories of parenting. It should be noted, however, that such additions to samples typically were not in equivalent numbers to mothers, and particularly within generally underrepresented populations, fathers remained far less visible. The second path consisted of "fathering" researchers, who viewed gender as a distinguishing characteristic of parents that divided mothering and fathering into distinct cultures and contexts, and who therefore primarily researched and theorized fathers as unique, or at least distinct. Because this is a Handbook of the Psychology of Fatherhood, here we will focus primarily on the latter group and those theories which have focused on the specific roles, sometimes overlapping and sometimes unique, that fathers play in families.

This chapter will provide readers of the Handbook with a "lay of the land" in terms of the ways that theorizing fathering has evolved over time, as well as future directions for theorizing fathering. As noted by Roggman et al. (2002), "there is no Grand Unifying theory of fatherhood to effectively guide research on fathers" (p. 6); rather, numerous and varied theoretical lenses have been employed. We will not necessarily cover every theory and model that has been used to address fathering, but we will discuss prominent themes and trends. Fathering research, like most research, can be grouped into studies that examined the impacts/outcomes of fathering, explored predictors of fathering, and contributed to our conceptualizations of fathering; this chap-

ter will be organized according to the theoretical work done in each of these areas. Within each area, particular theories have been more or less prominent, and many theories have followed their own journeys over time. After reading this chapter, you should be aware of where we have been, where we are, and where we hope to see the field go in terms of the ways we theorize fathering. It is our hope that this chapter provides you with a variety of lenses through which you may view the subsequent chapters, as well as your research, so we can begin to address the often unanswered "why" behind the findings in our field.

Impacts of Fathering on Children and Families

Among the earliest studies were those that examined the potential impact of fathering on their children and, somewhat later, on mothers and fathers themselves. Driven by the aforementioned social changes, a number of theories were utilized or developed to help explain the mechanisms by which fathers could have a positive influence. Most of these studies took a systemic, developmental, or relational approach, although some theories contain elements from more than one of these. Each theory is discussed in more detail below.

Systemic Approaches

Systems Theory
Family systems theory emphasizes the interdependence of family members upon one another, with the behaviors and experiences of one person influencing the behaviors and experiences of all others in the system (Cox & Paley, 2003). Family members enact social positions according to implicit family rules, which tend to create homeostasis in family functioning over time. Multiple subsystems and alliances exist within families as well, including the mother–father relationship (both their overall relationship and as co-parents specifically), parent–child relationships, and

sibling relationships. Additionally, family systems vary in their level of boundary permeability, meaning how easily new members are allowed in, or old members are removed. Particularly early on, research on fathers from a systems perspective tended to come from the "parenting" camp of research, examining overall patterns of family interaction (Grigg et al., 1989; Jacobvitz et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2019), especially interactions within the marital subsystem such as marital hostility and conflict (e.g., Franck & Buehler, 2008; Richmond & Stocker, 2008), and their resultant influences on child outcomes. Research that took a "fathering" perspective focused heavily on the importance of involvement by noncustodial fathers (e.g., Kissman, 1997) and the importance of viewing divorced, separated, and unmarried parents with children as what Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) termed the "binuclear family," a family whose boundaries and systems extended over two or more households, rather than limiting our view to single households and deeming such families "single-parent families." However, no research has looked at custodial fathers as also being members of a binuclear family system with noncustodial mothers, a gap that could be addressed in future research.

Because of its emphasis on the interdependence of families, research from a systemic perspective has tended to be less focused on fathers' direct impacts on children's outcomes and more interested in the mediating and moderating pathways through which fathers and mothers influence children. Examples of such research include fathers' influence on the mother–father co-parenting relationship (e.g., Pech et al., 2020), mothers' parenting (Wang et al., 2019), and on family communication, parental hostility/marital conflict, and sibling conflict and behavior problems (Relva et al., 2019; Richmond & Stocker, 2008).

With parenting scholars tending to view (primarily married) mothers and fathers as interchangeable and fathering scholars viewing (primarily nonresident) fathers as unique, there has been a dearth of research examining the unique influence of fathers in married families

from a systems perspective. Palkovitz et al. (2014) utilized systems and feminist theories to support an argument that mothers and fathers differ in their influence on children due to essential differences in family roles and rules for men versus women, but they, too, noted the underutilization of systems theory in fathering research. Particularly co-parenting research would benefit from greater integration of the ways in which the mother–father system interacts in both coresident and nonresident father families and the ways mothers and fathers both influence their children in unique and overlapping ways. Also, systems theory has focused primarily on the family system, to the exclusion of other systems with which fathers interact and that can shape the development of their children (e.g., schools, work, and healthcare).

Ecological Theories

Similar to family systems theory, ecological theories (primarily Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework) emphasize the interdependent influences of multiple contexts on children's development. Unfortunately, also like family systems theory, research using this perspective has focused heavily on the family system and its impacts on children's development rather than truly examining the full ecology of fathering and interactions between fathers and external institutions and influences (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, churches, government policies and laws, and cultural beliefs). In fact, there are only two articles that propose ways to examine such non-familial influences (Cabrera et al., 2007, 2014, discussed more below).

Regarding family influences, Pleck wrote in 2007 about a number of theoretical perspectives that could illuminate the processes by which fathers benefit children, with bioecological theory playing a prominent role. He noted, "In Bronfenbrenner's concept of proximal process, development is an inherently relational event, rather than an event taking place within the individual" (Pleck, 2007, p. 199), and he saw fathers as not only being proximal process partners in children's microsystems but also as being a *unique* microsystem partner for children. A

number of studies took this approach, for example, examining the role of fathers as socializers of ethnic and racial identity (Park et al., 2020) and fathers' impacts on children's behavior and well-being in a variety of family structures, including samples of married (Hanetz Gamliel et al., 2018), married/unmarried, and biological/nonbiological fathers (Black et al., 1999), single-mother and single-father families (Hilton & Devall, 1998), and even the influence of biological fathers on children in foster care (Vanschoonlandt et al., 2012).

Only one study has examined fathers' influence on mothers rather than children using an ecological perspective (Fagan & Press, 2008), investigating fathers' work-family crossover and its impact on mothers' work-family balance. They found that when fathers reported bringing more stress home from work, mothers reported lower work-family balance. However, future ecological research could do more to examine fathers' influences on relationship partners beyond just children, as it is far more common to examine children's outcomes. This is due in large part to the fact that policymakers typically are more interested in protecting children than in "just" supporting adult well-being. In fact, the first author once heard a legislator comment in a state legislative hearing specifically about supporting fathers, "we're only here because fathers impact kids; we aren't particularly concerned with supporting fathers only for their own sake."

The only scholars to look outside the family microsystem have been Cabrera and colleagues, who suggested two ecological models of fathering, examining predictors of fathering and the impact of fathers on children in 2007 (Cabrera et al., 2007) and then again with an updated model in 2014 (Cabrera et al., 2014). The 2007 model was more simplistic; it incorporated Belsky's parenting model (1984) with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework and examined the ways fathers' histories (cultural, biological, and their own rearing) influence their economic resources as fathers, which influenced fathers' parenting, which influenced children's outcomes. Fathers' parenting also was hypothesized to be influenced by mothers' parenting and

the co-parenting relationship. In the first model, the focus remained heavily upon individual and family microsystem influences on fathers and, consequently, on children, with no real attention paid to external systems and influences, with the possible exception of fathers' cultural history. It was not until the 2014 model that broader meso- and exosystem influences were more centrally considered, with fathers' social networks and community; fathers' work; and broader social, cultural, political, and economic conditions being added to the model as influences on fathers or fathers' parenting in direct and indirect ways. The authors noted that "our original heuristic model did not fully incorporate reciprocal developmental influences or the idea that parent-child relationships are embedded in complex, dynamic systems" (Cabrera et al., 2014, p. 343), and so this updated model represented an improvement in theorizing about fathering influences from an ecological perspective.

However, even with the proposed theoretical models from Cabrera and colleagues and the empirical support that they cite for their proposed model, little to no empirical research has examined how systems outside the family affect the ways that fathers impact their children from an ecological perspective. Therefore, current research has yet to tap the true potential of ecological perspectives for fathering research. Cabrera et al. (2014) also specifically noted a dearth of research using an ecological perspective to examine cultural differences in fathering, something that ecological perspectives are particularly well-suited to address (see chapters "The Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender: Applications to Asian American Fathers" and "Cultural and Sociopolitical Influences on African American and Latinx Fathers", this volume, for research regarding cultural differences in fatherhood).

In addition, although a number of studies claim a foundation in bioecological theory, it has been far more common for studies to mention bioecological theory than to truly *use* bioecological theory in terms of actually examining proximal processes and variability in various systemic influences. It is more often employed as a

discussion point and as a way of framing findings than as a true theoretical foundation for studies of fathering (guiding research questions, design, sampling, and interpretation, rather than just interpretation). This is a common problem with the bioecological theory, and frankly, theory overall, and not limited to fathering research (Tudge et al., 2016). However, the commonality of a weakness makes it no less of a weakness, and future research and the field would benefit from the true integration of bioecological theory.

Relational Approaches

Attachment

The primary focus of relationally based theorizing has come from attachment theory (see also chapter "Fathers and Family Systems", this volume), which was one of the early theories used to address fathering. Formed in the wake of WWII deployments, particularly by women, the core tenet of attachment theory is that all children form an attachment relationship with their primary caregivers in the first 1–2 years of life, which shapes children's trajectory of expectations and behavior in relationships over the life course (Bowlby, 1969, 1973). Sensitive, responsive caregiving leads children to develop a secure attachment style, indicative of a sense of predictability of the world and trust that others will meet the child's needs and resulting in children feeling safe to explore the world around them, knowing they can return to the "safe haven" of their parent. In contrast, inconsistent or nonresponsive/neglectful parenting leads children to form an insecure attachment, characterized by either clinginess (anxious ambivalent), nonchalance and lack of comfort-seeking (avoidant; Ainsworth et al., 1978), or a third, less common category that was added later and which was typical of children from abusive homes (disorganized; Main & Solomon, 1986).

Bretherton (2010) suggested several stages of attachment research on fathers, each of which addressed different questions. Beginning in the 1970s, researchers focused on the nature of attachment, testing first whether fathers could serve as attachment figures for children. Once it had been established that they could, comparisons were then drawn between mothers and fathers to investigate whether fathers were equally important attachment figures or secondary to mothers, the comparative quality of mother versus father attachment for children, and what intergenerational relationship qualities might be passed on from mothers versus fathers. Finally, research examined whether the outcomes of attachment for children differed by parent.

In addition to these proposed stages of theorizing, fathering attachment research also has diverged in the aspects of attachment assessed. Most scholars, and especially those from a "parenting" perspective, have assessed the importance of child-father attachment for a variety of children's outcomes, such as effortful control (Warren & Barnett, 2020), academic achievement (Chen, 2017a), suicidal ideation (Nunes & Mota, 2017), adolescent secure base use (Jones & Cassidy, 2014), and procrastination (Chen, 2017b). Recently, however, some scholars have pushed attachment research in a relatively new direction, emphasizing the "base of exploration" aspect of attachment as a unique way fathers contribute to child development via their encouragement of risk-taking, being disruptive and unpredictable, and encouraging children's exploration of the outside world (Paquette, 2004). Paquette and Bigras (2010) expanded upon this idea, suggesting the Risky Situation as a companion assessment to the traditional Strange Situation to assess the degree that such "activation" is present in the father-child attachment relationship. They suggested that activation levels could either be optimal (leading to children's safe exploration of their worlds), overactivated (leading children to ignore limits and boundaries placed upon them for safety reasons), or underactivated (leading children to be hesitant to explore and go beyond their comfort level). Research testing such an approach to attachment is just beginning to get underway, with promising results that support an additional way fathers influence children's development (Lee et al., 2020a; Volling et al., 2019).

In addition to research on activation, attachment research on fathers also has been expanding

via a biobehavioral approach and investigations into the neuroscience of attachment (Palm, 2014). For example, Feldman (2012) has demonstrated the differential impact of oxytocin on mothers' versus fathers' behaviors, with oxytocin leading mothers to demonstrate more affectionate parenting behaviors but fathers to encourage children's exploration, stimulation, and arousal, both of which can promote children's secure attachment. Such research could help elucidate the neurochemical mechanisms behind fathering behaviors and father-child attachment.

IPARTheory

Although a great deal of relational research has taken an attachment perspective, Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory (IPARTheory; Rohner, 1975, 2021) also has researched the influence of both mothers and fathers extensively for the last 45 years. Originally focused on parents but later expanded to include all important interpersonal relationships, IPARTheory focuses on the cross-culturally universal influence of parental acceptance (warmth and supportiveness) and rejection (hostility, aggression, and neglect) on child outcomes and extending into adulthood and old age (Rohner, 2021). Unlike many theories, IPARTheory has done a great deal of research on the influence of fathers both in combination with and as unique from mothers and has found that father acceptance/rejection, over and above maternal acceptance/rejection, is strongly associated with a variety of children's outcomes, including internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, school achievement, prosocial behavior, self-esteem, loneliness, and overall psychological adjustment (e.g., Caliendo et al., 2017; Giovazolias & Malikiosi-Loizos, 2018; Hussain & Munaf, 2012a, b; Li & Meier, 2017; Miranda et al., 2016; Putnick et al., 2015; Rohner, 2014). With an extensive international/cross-cultural research base, IPARTheory provides perhaps the best evidence of the universal impact of fathers on children via the quality of their relationships and whether their children feel "cared for," as well as the long-lasting impacts of these relationships on the entire life course.

Although such direct associations have been well-researched and supported cross-culturally, future research using IPARTheory could benefit from the investigation of potential moderators of these associations and operationalization of the constructs of acceptance and rejection. For example, there is evidence that "parental warmth" is conceptualized and expressed differently by mothers and fathers in the USA (Adamsons & Buehler, 2007). However, such examinations have not been conducted for the constructs of acceptance and rejection across genders or cultures. Therefore, it is unknown whether acceptance or rejection might be expressed differently across genders or cultures or whether gendered or cultural expectations differ around specific forms of accepting or rejecting behaviors. For example, perhaps a lack of physical affection is perceived as more rejecting when it comes from mothers versus fathers or in more expressive versus restrictive cultures, due to higher expectations for physical affection from some groups relative to others. Most research using IPARTheory has examined the universal impact of children's perceptions of parental acceptance or rejection rather than possible differences in the specific behaviors that created such impressions.

Developmental Theories

The primary developmental theoretical approach in fathering research has been life course theory. Life course was an early entrant to theorizing about fathering, dating back to Reuben Hill's work and his assertion in 1970 that fathers serve as "generational bridges". Roy (2014) built upon this, noting that fathers, and also likely mothers, "reconstruct patterns of parenting across time and maintain durable intergenerational mechanisms of socialization into parenthood" (p. 322), as fathers learn how to parent or how not to parent from their own experiences of being fathered. Key to life course theory is the idea of linked lives, that "lives cannot be defined independently; choices and chances are shared socially" (Roy, 2014, p. 325), and such interdependence has

long-lasting implications for fathers and children. As noted by Roy (2014), the family and work experiences and transitions fathers experience all have implications for their children both in the immediate short term and in the long term. For example, a father losing or gaining a job could have implications for his child's ability to attend college in the future, influencing their later employment opportunities.

A life-course approach to fathers' influence on children has focused on a number of diverse outcomes and processes, including the intergenerational transmission of outcomes between fathers and children (e.g., Thornberry et al., 2009), "off-time" events such as adolescent fatherhood (Recto & Lesser, 2020), and the influence of fathers on maternal and child health (Lu et al., 2010) and in families that experience divorce (Ahrons, 2007; Hogendoorn et al., 2020). The role of time, whether via longitudinal or cohort studies, tends to be central to life course approaches to fathering. However, as noted by Roy (2014), there is little work done on older fathers and fathers of adult children, with most focusing on fathers of younger children or the transition to fatherhood. Further research on transitions within fathering (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009) and the latter end of the life course would be beneficial.

Essential Father Theory

One last theory that is helpful to understand as a historical note is the essential fatherhood theory. Just as it sounds, this perspective held that fathers play a unique, essential role in children's development that cannot be filled by mothers or other individuals (e.g., Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996). Largely reactive to the increase in "father-absent households" due to increases in divorce and nonmarital childbearing in the 1970s and 1980s, this perspective had its roots in emphasizing the key role men, and only men, play in socializing sons and the importance of marriage for tying men to their children and convincing/requiring them to be responsible fathers

(Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). Such a perspective resulted in a heavy policy emphasis in the late 1990s on marriage promotion, including the Healthy Marriage Initiative of President Bush and the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. Unfortunately for such policies, research fails to support such a perspective unless it is oversimplified or misinterpreted (Pleck, 2007; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). For example, single-mother households have no father present but also have a much higher likelihood of being in poverty than two-parent households, and it is poverty, not father absence per se, that is the primary mechanism by which children are adversely impacted (McLoyd, 1998; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). And, when comparing two-parent heterosexual families with two-parent lesbian mother families so that the number of parents is held constant, research resoundingly fails to support that children without fathers suffer a universal deficit (Pleck, 2007). As noted by Silverstein and Auerbach:

> In contrast to the neoconservative perspective, our data on gay fathering couples have convinced us that neither a mother nor a father is essential. Similarly, our research with divorced, never-married, and remarried fathers has taught us that a wide variety of family structures can support positive child outcomes. We have concluded that children need at least one responsible, caretaking adult who has a positive emotional connection to them and with whom they have a consistent relationship. Because of the emotional and practical stress involved in childrearing, a family structure that includes more than one such adult is more likely to contribute to positive child outcomes. Neither the sex of the adult(s) nor the biological relationship to the child has emerged as a significant variable in predicting positive development. One, none, or both of those adults could be a father [or mother] (1999, p. 3).

As such, although research strongly supports the (sometimes unique) benefit that fathers can have when involved in positive ways with their children, the idea that fathers are *essential* to children's development is best left as a historical footnote that is critical to understand but should not be utilized to guide research or policy on fathers and families.

Predictors of Fathering

Once the potential positive impact of fathers had been relatively well-established, scholars moved to investigate what factors encouraged or inhibited fathers' engagement with their children. Research in this area frequently focused on maternal factors (e.g., mothers' employment, gatekeeping), child factors (e.g., child age, gender, temperament, behavior), father factors (e.g., father age, education, employment, identity, self-efficacy, incarceration), and relational factors (e.g., mother–father relationship status and quality, co-parenting quality). As with research on the outcomes of fathering, research on predictors of fathering has used a variety of theoretical frameworks. Systemic approaches again were prominently featured, but developmental approaches shifted to focus on the internal and external factors influencing the development of fathers rather than of their children, and a particular focus could be seen on societal and cultural influences on fathering via feminist, gender, and queer theories.

Systemic Frameworks

Systemic approaches have been the most commonly used to investigate predictors of fathering, again including both family systems theory and bioecological theory, and focusing heavily on what factors promote or inhibit father involvement with children, with some focusing on the promotion of particular fathering behaviors. A great deal of family systems research has focused on the influence of the mother-father relationship, particularly with regard to co-parenting, on father engagement (Baker et al., 2018; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2019; Lee et al., 2020b; Kopystynska et al., 2020), as well as the interdependence of mothers' and fathers' parenting behaviors (Garrett-Peters et al., 2011; Ngu & Florsheim, 2011). Although such processes are unquestionably important to understand, additional research looking at outcomes other than father involvement and beyond the mother-father subsystem is needed.

Fathering research using a bioecological perspective has focused on a wider variety of fathering outcomes, including the involvement of gay fathers in schools (Goldberg et al., 2020), father sensitivity with infants (Goldberg et al., 2002), father–child interaction quality (Holmes & Huston, 2010), abuse (Lee et al., 2008), custodial fathering (Hamer & Marchioro, 2002), and father involvement in early childhood programs (Palm & Fagan, 2008). Such research notes the highly contextual nature of fathering and highlights the variety of factors that influence the roles, behaviors, and competence of fathers. Cabrera and colleagues' ecological model of fathering (2014) described above also speaks to the numerous factors influencing fathering and specifically proposes father demographics, employment, social network, and history; family/household characteristics, behaviors, and relationships; and social, political, and economic climate, policies, and circumstances as factors that frequently influence fathers' parenting. However, similar to studies of fathering outcomes, Cabrera et al. (2014) also note a lack of cross-cultural studies of predictors of fathering employing an ecological lens.

Developmental Approaches

In addition to a life course perspective, research on predictors of fathering also was used to develop multiple midrange theories of identity development from social psychological, Eriksonian/generativity, resource, and responsible fathering perspectives; midrange theories use broader theoretical frameworks to develop explanatory models of specific topics or phenomena. Research using life course theory tended to investigate the impact that cumulative risk over the life course has on fathers (Bowen, 2010; Hogendoorn et al., 2020) and the impact of policies such as parental leave (Moss & Deven, 2015) and custody policies (Roy, 2008), as well as the ways that social change and time influence cohorts of fathers (Roy, 2014). Fathering scholars also have developed numerous midrange identity development theories that examine how fathering is shaped by fathers' desires for generativity

(Mitchell & Lashewicz, 2019) and resources (Palkovitz & Hull, 2018) and by the ideals of "responsible fathering" held by the community and families (Doherty et al., 1998).

A large body of work also has examined fathering from an identity theory perspective, a social psychological midrange theory derived from symbolic interactionism that suggests that identities (ideals about the self in various social roles) are derived from social expectations of those roles and result in the enactment of identity-relevant behaviors (Stryker, 1968). Feedback received from others about such identity-relevant behaviors then reshapes behavior and identity until congruence is achieved between desired identity standards, behaviors, and behavioral feedback (Burke, 1991, 1997; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) first proposed that identity theory be applied to postdivorce fathering, suggesting that fathers' identity salience (likelihood of enactment), centrality (identity importance), and commitment (relationships supporting an identity) predict the postdivorce involvement of fathers with their children. Since that time, an extensive body of work has investigated links between identity and father involvement (Adamsons, 2013a, b; Adamsons & Pasley, 2013; DeGarmo, 2010; Dyer, 2005; Fagan, 2020; Fox & Bruce, 2001; Goldberg, 2015; Maurer et al., 2003; McBride et al., 2005; Pasley et al., 2014; Rane & McBride, 2000), with the vast majority supporting the link between identity and behavior for fathers.

However, research using an identity theory perspective has multiple weaknesses. Importantly, a general lack of clarity and consistency in the conceptualization and measurement of identity concepts makes it difficult to compare findings across studies (Pasley et al., 2014). Also, although studies generally have found consistent associations between identity and behavior, the effect sizes are typically quite small and pale in comparison to more practical concerns such as residence and employment status and hours, leading some to question whether the theory is "too theoretical" and not practical enough (Pasley et al., 2014). Finally, research using an identity theory perspective has been relatively homogeneous and focused heavily on White samples and with either divorced or incarcerated fathers, contexts where disruptions to identity are most likely to occur. Greater diversity of the types of fathers (race/ethnicity, SES, gender/sexual identity, age, and ability status) and greater precision and consistency across studies in conceptualization would strongly benefit research in this area.

Social/Cultural Approaches

Feminist and Gender Theories

Research investigating the predictors and nature of fathering has frequently taken a feminist or gender theory lens. The distinction between feminist theories and gender theories is an important one in the fathering realm, as there were disputes within feminism about whether motherhood was oppressive or empowering for women and, in parallel, whether fathers were supportive or oppressive to women. As such, feminist theorists of the 1970s and 1980s were divided on the issue of whether fathering, or any men's role, was truly a "feminist" issue. As Doucet and Lee (2014, p. 357) noted:

> From the 1970s to the early 1990s, feminist theories had an ambivalent relationship with motherhood around questions of whether mothering empowered or disempowered women (for an overview, see Kinser, 2010; O'Reilly, 2008; Snitow, 1992). Part of this ambivalence was connected to feminism's complex relationship with men as fathers and parallel questions as to whether men in their roles as husbands and fathers oppressed women (see, e.g., Delphy & Leonard, 1992). By the late 1980s, however, feminist theories of care, social reproduction, and work and family issues were beginning to reconfigure theoretical relationships between feminist theories and mothering, focusing on reframing the strengths and benefits of relationships and relationalities while also being attentive to the costs of caring and the socioeconomic and political effects of different and unequal gender roles (e.g., Folbre, 1994; Ruddick, 1983). This attentiveness to both the costs and the benefits of parental caregiving spurred an interest in studying women, work, and family (e.g., Lamphere, 1987; Lewis, Porter, & Shrimpton, 1988; Zavella, 1987), which, in turn, slowly moved toward the study of men, work, and family. Specifically, there was a small chorus of feminist voices who argued

that distinct gender roles for fathers and mothers would lead to adverse effects for both women and men.

Such research on men as fathers sometimes was compatible with feminist goals of equality and enhanced well-being for women and children, such as when research has focused on fathers as caregivers and the benefits of father involvement for children (Coltrane, 1996; Lamb, 1981, 2000; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). At other times, fathering research puts men in competition with women (e.g., maternal gatekeeping, postdivorce custody, and policy discussions about shared parenting versus maternal custody presumptions). As such, a feminist lens is not always appropriate for work on fathers, and broader gender theories should be employed at such times. Gender theories retain the focus on gender as a critical organizing force for the experiences of individuals and families, and as noted by Collins (2004), "talking about gender does not mean focusing solely on women's issues. Men's experiences are also deeply gendered" (p. 6).

Over time, both feminist and gender perspectives began considering the importance of intersectionality and the ways in which an exclusive focus on gender historically has diminished the voices and experiences of men and women of color and from various socioeconomic statuses. This has been true in the fathering realm as well, with recent research examining the important intersections of gender with race and class (Hodges & Budig, 2010; Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Williams, 2010) and particularly the ways that fathers who are unable to successfully fulfill traditional breadwinner roles seek alternative identities and roles in the family.

Also, with increased societal recognition of gender as a nonbinary construct, there have been internal debates within these perspectives and pushes made by queer theory about the best balance between a focus on the influential nature of gender norms in all societies and also acknowledging and valuing the fluid and socially constructed nature of gender. Intermingled within this is the recent emergence of greater advocacy for both transgender individuals (which reinforces the gender binary) and for those who iden-

tify as nonbinary (which rejects the gender binary), such as gender fluid, agender, or genderqueer. It is an ongoing question, therefore, of how to acknowledge both that there is no "essential gender" and yet that gender is essential to the construction of our daily lives via its influence on policies and social expectations. Doucet and Lee (2014) built upon this complexity, noting the real disadvantages imposed by gendered norms on both men and women, regardless of whether perceived gender differences are "real":

> As Joan Williams (2010, p. 128) explained, 'People have thousands of 'real differences' that lack social consequences. The question is not whether physical, social, and psychological differences between men and women exist. It is *why* these particular differences become salient in a particular context and then are used to create and justify women's continuing economic disadvantage.' We would add here that we also need to consider how particular perceived differences, including embodied differences, about men are used to create and justify men's continuing disadvantages in parental responsibilities (p. 365).

Theories of masculinity have been surprisingly limited in their applications to fathering research, perhaps due to conflicts between hegemonic ideals of disengaged and unemotional masculinity and expectations for nurturant and caring fatherhood. However, theories that highlight changing ideals and challenges to hegemonic masculinity may provide a lens whereby both traditional notions of gendered parenting and "new" discourses of involved fatherhood can intersect (e.g., Pleck, 2010b; Randles, 2018).

Conceptualizations of Fathering

Finally, the ways in which we have conceptualized fathering itself have evolved over the decades. Grounded theoretical work has played a prominent role here, but so, too, have theories attending to sociocultural influences and fathers' developmental trajectories. Generally speaking, research on conceptualizations of fathering has fallen along two paths: how researchers, policymakers, and practitioners conceptualize fathers, and how fathers conceptualize themselves.

Although a less extensive body of work than in the two prior sections, research in this arena nonetheless has been influential in highlighting the diversity of fathers and the pitfalls of viewing men as simply "fathers" without an intersectional lens. Somewhat ironically, an intersectional theory has not been applied to the understanding of fatherhood and fathering, something we discuss further in our recommendations for future directions.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory (GT), or developing theory "from the ground up" by analyzing typically qualitative data for themes and connections, has been used in numerous studies of fathers. Such studies have explored how to understand fathers and how fathers understand themselves in a variety of contexts, including their roles in low-income families (Shears et al., 2006) and during meals (Jansen et al., 2020), when they have children with developmental disabilities (Ridding & Williams, 2019; Thackeray & Eatough, 2018), and in other countries/cultures (Behnke et al., 2008). Most grounded theory work, perhaps unsurprisingly with its focus on participants' voices, has focused on how fathers see themselves and make sense of their experiences as fathers, and GT has been particularly valuable in amplifying the voices of marginalized fathers who often are invisible in large-scale quantitative studies. However, little work has built on the foundations of grounded theory studies, and as is the case with many studies claiming to use a grounded theory approach (Hardesty & Haselschwerdt, in press), most studies stopped short, simply identifying themes rather than truly developing theories or comprehensive conceptualizations of fathering. As such, the field would benefit from more actual theory development coming from participants, as the way researchers conceptualize, and therefore how they research and measure, fathers and fathering has not always matched the ways that fathers define and see themselves.

For example, over the last 30 years, fathers consistently have cited the importance of "being there" for children (Randles, 2020; Roy, 1999), which is not captured by typical measures of involvement or relationship quality. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers frequently emphasize tangible, trackable forms of fathering such as frequency of engagement in particular activities and time or dollars spent, things which are rarely cited by fathers themselves and which are unattainable by many, such as nonresident fathers, incarcerated fathers, or low-income fathers; we build further upon the problematic nature of this in our Future Directions. Despite this mismatch in conceptualizations of fathering and continued calls from researchers themselves (including two of the authors on this chapter; Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999) to move beyond "ticks and clicks," contact, and child support as primary assessments and conceptualizations of fathering, the field of fathering has been slow to achieve these goals. It is our hope that continued work using a grounded theory approach which truly results in theorizing can help push the field of fathering in this much-needed direction.

Systemic Theories

In contrast to grounded theory work, research taking a systemic approach to conceptualize fathering has tended to focus more on external perspectives about fathers in various contexts, rather than on the views of fathers themselves, and has mostly consisted of an ecological approach. Ecological frameworks have been applied to ways of conceptualizing fathering while incarcerated (Clarke et al., 2005), the interactions between African–American fathers and institutions (McAdoo, 1993), fathering in other countries and cultures (Taylor & Behnke, 2005), and varying family structures and contexts (Hanson, 1985). Given the previously noted lack of focus on external systems and contexts in other ecological research on fathers, it is interesting that such attention has been given to the ways that external contexts influence our definitions

and ideas of fathering. Harking back to the family systems focus, one study utilized a systems theory approach to examining the perceptions of adolescent mothers of father involvement and their own gatekeeping (Herzog et al., 2007). However, like earlier-mentioned research on fathering predictors and outcomes, no studies using family systems theory have examined how conceptualizations of fathering are influenced by macro systems outside the family or family subsystems other than the mother-father subsystem.

Other Approaches

Other theoretical lenses have been applied to conceptualizations of fathering, but in limited quantity for any given theory. A feminist lens was applied to examining views of fatherhood in law and policy in the UK (Busby & Weldon-Johns, 2019). A life course perspective was used to explore how Hispanic adolescent fathers view fatherhood (Recto & Lesser, 2020). Identity theory was used to frame a discussion of the possible selves of incarcerated fathers (O'Keefe, 2019), and a caring masculinities framework was the foundation for a study of stay-at-home fathers and masculine identities (Lee & Lee, 2018). As any of these perspectives would be fruitful for guiding our conceptualizations of fatherhood, much more work remains to be done in these areas. We likely do not seek to have a singular "theory of fatherhood and fathering," but what is greatly needed is a better, more comprehensive conceptualization of fatherhood that addresses both areas of commonality and contexts that lead to distinctions.

Specific Conceptualizations of Fathering

Two additional broad conceptualizations of fathering have emerged over the years. Generative fathering was elaborated as a conceptual ethic of generative work (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997), with clear links to Snarey's (1993) four-decade intergenerational study and Eriksonian theories

of lifespan development. From an Eriksonian perspective, childrearing is perhaps the most common way of being generative and contributing to future generations in some meaningful way. These works represent rich conceptual frameworks for theoretical elaboration, although thus far they have received limited direct empirical attention.

A second conceptualization was proposed by Lamb et al. (1987) and further refined by Pleck (2010a). The initial work proposed a tripartite model of father involvement that initially focused on fathers' engagement (direct involvement with the child), accessibility (time available to but not necessarily directly involved with the child), and responsibility (indirect care for the child, like making doctor's appointments). This model has been and continues to be used extensively in fathering research as a way of operationalizing father involvement (e.g., Habib & Lancaster, 2005; Pilarz et al., 2020; Wray, 2020). Pleck (2010a) then refined the original model, changing the components to positive engagement, warmth and responsiveness, and control (to align fathering research more closely with traditional "parenting" research), and breaking responsibility into two components, indirect care and process responsibility. Some research has utilized this newer conceptualization (Weinshenker, 2016), but the earlier model remains more common. Given the problems created by divergent conceptualizations of fathering when wishing to compare or integrate findings, we recommend that more scholars explicitly move to the newer conceptualization proposed by Pleck (2010a).

Future Directions

In addressing the future of theorizing fathering, it is helpful to build upon the current state of the field so that the future is both reflective of and distinct from the foundation established thus far. As such, we have organized this section to reflect the following three recommendations: (a) theoretical frameworks which continue to be relevant when theorizing fathering but that should be used in new and novel ways, (b) perspectives that need

to evolve to better fit contemporary families, and (c) theories that have thus far been un- or under-utilized when theorizing fathering but that hold promise and should be explored further.

Theories to Continue Utilizing

Several well-established theories, including family systems theory, feminist and gender theories, and bioecological systems theory, have previously been used as a foundation to explore various aspects of fathers, fatherhood, and fathering. We have presented the contributions these theories have thus far made to the field of fathering and use this section to offer specific suggestions on how each of these theoretical perspectives can be extended further. In addition, recent research using the father-child activation relationship from attachment theory offers a particularly novel approach to theorizing fathering, and we therefore present recommendations on new directions to explore within this framework.

Family Systems Theory

As discussed previously, Family Systems Theory (FST; Cox & Paley, 2003) has been used by scholars to investigate various fathering constructs, including the different roles enacted and rules followed by fathers (and mothers) within families, how nonresident fathers engage with their children, and how systems within families influence fathers' relational quality with mothers, including their co-parenting relationship. We see this work as important for laying the foundation for exploring the complex ways in which the various subsystems within families influence fathers and the relationships fathers maintain with other family members.

In thinking about the future of theorizing fathering, we encourage the use of an FST perspective within co-parenting research, specifically with fathers in married families, so that greater integration of the ways in which the mother–father system interacts in families can be established. The extensive empirical literature on maternal gatekeeping and its relationship to paternal engagement may gain both explanatory

and predictive utility if it is clearly articulated in central FST constructs such as family roles and rules. We also encourage scholars to extend FST research to explore a wider range of family subsystems, including how FST can serve as a theoretical grounding for work investigating fathering in multi-household families, same-sex fathers, transgender fathers, stepfamilies, kin families, and multigenerational relationships within families. Additionally, we suggest that those interested in creating future pathways of theorizing fathering explore how FST can be used to examine nuances in families that have thus far received little attention from fathering research, such as those with open adoption arrangements, the myriad of LGBTQAI+ family constellations, and the aforementioned custodial father/noncustodial mother binuclear families. Each of these families contains systems and subsystems that extend beyond those which have been explored previously and have the potential to offer valuable insights into who fathers are, how fathers interact with their children and partners, and how they impact their children. Finally, as noted earlier, extending beyond the family system to examine the role of suprasystems (e.g., policies, neighborhoods, schools, churches, government agencies, and fathering programs) can further expand our understanding and theorizing of fathering.

Bioecological Systems Theory

Similar to FST, we acknowledge the important foundation established through previous work using bioecological systems theory and, moving forward, encourage the use of novel approaches grounded in this theory. As Cabrera et al. (2014) suggest, bioecological systems theory provides an opportunity to examine the effects of macrosystem-level factors such as the economic, cultural, and political contexts on fathers and fathering, particularly in non-Western cultures. Theorizing how cultural beliefs regarding child rearing, egalitarian parenting, parental leave policies, and nontraditional family formations impact fathers and their children will provide additional understanding of fathering in varying cultural contexts. Additionally, future research could examine how fathers, fatherhood, and fathering

are represented in various media outlets (macro-systems) such as television, movies, and print materials, and how these are indicative of cultural expectations of fatherhood. For example, a study currently underway by the second author uses award-winning children's literature to theorize how fathers are portrayed as performing fatherhood.

Additionally, we encourage those interested in exploring ways in which the more contemporary iteration of bioecological systems theory, the Process-Person-Context-Time model (PPCT; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) can be applied to the theorizing of fathers, fatherhood, and fathering. We find little to no fathering research which is explicitly grounded in the PPCT model or that utilizes all aspects of the model to guide the development of theoretical understandings of fathering. As discussed previously in this chapter, Pleck (2007) does examine the process component of the PPCT model, postulating that fathers serve as a unique microsystem partner for their children and that the concept of proximal processes can potentially be used to explore the "unique" parenting styles and behaviors enacted by fathers. However, no additional explorations of the remaining components of the PPCT model are offered, presenting an ideal opportunity for others interested in the future of theorizing fathering to utilize other aspects of this contemporary iteration of the bioecological systems theory. Moreover, the conceptual contributions and empirical findings presented in *Situated Fathering* (Marsiglio et al., 2005) serve as another potential avenue for integration within the PPCT perspective. We suggest further elaboration that addresses how the personal characteristics of fathers, as well as those of other family members (person) impact developmental outcomes, how each of the four interrelated systems (microsystem, meso-system, exosystem, and macrosystem) work in conjunction to moderate familial relationships (context), and how each of the three components of time (microtime, mesotime, and macrotime) distinctly and jointly influence both how father-ing is conceptualized as well as expectations and beliefs regarding fathering behaviors. In these ways, the PPCT model can be used in a truly inte-grated way to expand our theorizing about fathers, fatherhood, and fathering.

Another future direction that can be taken from a bioecological systems theory lens is how global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, influence, encourage, and disrupt fathers and fathering at various points across fatherhood. Thus far, these macrosystem-level and chronosystem-level factors have been an under-explored aspect of bioecological systems theory and offer a promising new direction in the future of theorizing fathering. For example, attempts at reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus included stay-at-home orders, which resulted in work-from-home arrangements for those adults able to do so and remote learning for children of all ages. Using bioecological systems theory is a timely opportunity for exploring how these new arrangements have blended home and work spheres for numerous families across the globe, how potential subsequent changes to parental leave policies have influenced family dynamics, and how the increased focus on quality health-care as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the overall physical and mental health of fathers (Feinberg et al., 2021). Furthermore, positioning global events within the PPCT model, with close attention to how events are relative to the features of microtime (where one is in the life course) and macrotime (the historical time point), offers another promising direction for examining how this theory can be used to further explore fatherhood and fathering.

Feminist and Gender Theories

In suggesting ways the field can theorize father-ing moving forward, we are especially inspired by the work of Andrea Doucet (Doucet, 2006, 2011; Doucet & Lee, 2014), which focuses on the ways theorizing fathering can be positioned within feminist and gender theories. Although recent decades have seen increased attention to the varying roles fathers embody in families, this work has not been grounded in feminist and gen-der theories, creating a tremendous opportunity for future fathering research to expand into this theoretical arena.

Specifically, in building on the suggestion of Doucet and Lee (2014), we encourage the use of feminist and gender theories with those groups of nontraditional fathers who have thus far been underrepresented in the field of fathering. For example, using feminist and gender theories (as well as queer theory or other critical theories; more on these below) to extend how we theorize gay, bisexual, and trans fathers, as well as "mathers" (parents who do not identify as being a father or a mother and instead use a hybrid term; Padavic & Butterfield, 2011) would not only be beneficial to the LGBTQAI+ community but to the larger fathering field as well. Such theorizing presents opportunities to explore how these fathers conceptualize their experiences and how they navigate "nontraditional fatherhood".

Additionally, we see work specific to single fathers, including adoptive and biological fathers, as well as those who are single fathers by choice or out of necessity (e.g., spousal separation, widowers, etc.), as another future direction for theorizing fathering within feminist and gender theories. Such theorizing would expand understanding and conceptualizations of how an individual becomes a single father, how they define themselves and their roles as a father, and how they navigate parenthood as a single father.

Finally, further research regarding the theorizing of fathering from a feminist and gender theoretical perspective can explore how fathers (both traditional and nontraditional) navigate various parenting arenas, such as their children's medical community, school settings, and their children's extracurricular spaces and communities. Theorizing within these frameworks may also be particularly promising when exploring traditionally gendered spaces. For example, do the experiences of single fathers engaging in male-traditional activities, such as sports or Boy Scouts, with their children differ from those engaging in more female-traditional spaces, such as ballet or Girl Scouts? Furthermore, do these experiences differ for different types of nontraditional fathers based on their own fathering identities? We believe such avenues present those who theorize fathering with a particularly salient and timely

opportunity to employ gender and feminist theories.

In our proposal of the future directions for theorizing fathering, we feel it is vital, once again, to bring to the forefront that the very idea of gender has continued to become more fluid in American society (Reczek, 2020). These developments must not only be acknowledged when discussing the future of theorizing fathering, but they also have the potential to significantly impact the ways fathers and fatherhood have been defined in previous decades. For example, how do fathering researchers conceptualize fathering under the traditional assumptions of gender, specifically of the male gender, when these assumptions are no longer clearly defined? How does theorizing about becoming a father change within the context of transgender, gender nonbinary, and gender fluid fathers? What other assumptions guide the theorizing of fathers and fathering, and is there room to challenge these assumptions under the direction of feminist and gender theories? We believe these considerations will continue to push the boundaries of how, not just feminist and gender theories, but all theories, are used to position fathers and fathering.

Father–Child Activation Relationship Theory

Earlier in this chapter, we discuss the ways in which attachment theory has been used to address fathering and father–child relationships. Here, we focus our attention specifically on an extension of attachment theory, father-child activation relationship theory (Paquette, 2004; Paquette et al., 2020), as a promising direction for the future of theorizing fathering.

Researchers from a variety of disciplines have begun to explore ways in which father-child activation relationship theory can be used for examining a wide range of child outcomes, such as children's self-regulation (Bocknek et al., 2017; Stevenson & Crnic, 2013) and childhood anxiety disorders (Lazarus et al., 2016). We encourage scholars to continue this line of research and to investigate the additional ways that fathers influence their children's development through this type of activation parenting. Recent work investi-

gating the activation of parenting patterns of low-income, unmarried parents by Lee et al. (2020a) present an opportunity for expanding this work to a broader array of families. For example, exploring activation parenting with fathers from economically advantaged families, with highly educated fathers, with gay fathers, and with fathers from varying racial and cultural backgrounds will provide additional information about the relevance of this theory and its influence on father–child relationships across a variety of family constellations.

Additionally, we urge those interested in the future of theorizing fathers, fatherhood, and fathering to expand on this growing empirical base by using the father–child activation relationship theory to explore how this type of parenting influences not only children but also fathers (and their partners). For example, how do mothers interact with and view fathers who are more or less activating? Is there a relationship between activation fathering and fathers' perceptions of the father–child relationship? Do fathers who engage in these types of activation behaviors with their children do so as a repetition of (or in contrast to) their experiences with their own fathers (i.e., is there a multigenerational influence for these behavioral patterns)? Are these activation-based behaviors intentional, or are they just part of "what fathers do"? Furthermore, are decisions about how to interact with their children influenced by the racial or ethnic backgrounds of fathers and their children? By the sex of their child? Moreover, we encourage those interested in exploring these lines of inquiry to move beyond traditional quantitative research methods to employ qualitative approaches which are better suited to answering these types of questions, such as in-depth interviews, case studies, and observations of father–child interactions coupled with fathers' reflections on the experiences.

Evolving Beyond the Nurturant Father

When theorizing the future of fathering, we encourage scholars to move away from theoretical foundations which present nurturant/"new fatherhood" as the ideal fathering model. First, Paquette's framework (2004) on the father-child activation relationship presents itself as one avenue to explore in this vein. Paquette's framework (2004) suggests that moderate levels of directive or intrusive behaviors coupled with positive regard, sensitivity, and cognitive stimulation can be just as effective in promoting children's development as nurturant parenting behaviors. Second, several researchers have noted that a model which encourages fathers to regularly engage in nurturing activities with their children may not be possible for some fathers, such as nonresident fathers with restricted access to their children, inner-city families with unavailable or unsafe outdoor play environments, or incarcerated fathers (Marsiglio et al., 2005; Sayers & Fox, 2005). Furthermore, this type of "ideal" nurturant fatherhood may not be desirable for some fathers (Fagan & Kaufman, 2015) or may be viewed as impossible to achieve (Palkovitz, 2014), or may not be viewed as the ideal fathering type cross-culturally (Seward & Rush, 2015). Finally, conceptualizations focused on the nurturant fathering model and ideas of "new fatherhood" as fathers who engage in domestic and childcare responsibilities and who establish highly involved and nurturing relationships with their children (Devreux, 2007; Hall, 1994; Lamb, 1986; LaRossa, 1988) have now existed for decades and therefore are not all that "new" after all.

We acknowledge that a sensitive, nurturing, and responsive style of parenting is beneficial for children; therefore, we are not suggesting that we abandon nurturant fatherhood altogether. In fact, future research can support this conceptualization of fatherhood by investigating how best to support fathers as they navigate potential conflict that may exist between engaging in this type of parenting style and maintaining career satisfaction (Harrington et al., 2017), for example. Rather, we recommend a broadening of our conceptualizations to include additional fathering forms and behaviors as equally desirable, beneficial, and worthwhile. It is important for the future of theorizing fathering that we continue to recognize the varying ways in which fathers positively

interact with their children and that fathers' interactions may be distinct from mothers' interactions. Recognizing that fathers may have their own style of engagement and interaction with their children acknowledges both that our understanding of who fathers are has evolved over time and that some types of fathering behaviors may be inaccessible to some fathers. Instead of continuing to position the nurturant/new fatherhood as the ideal and *only* desirable type of father, we encourage those interested in pursuing the future of theorizing fathering to explore theories that have thus far been underutilized or are completely lacking in the field of fathering. We now turn our attention to such theories and offer suggestions on how they can be used to move the field forward.

Theories to Explore

Social Capital Theory

One relational approach to fathering that was suggested by Pleck (2007) addresses fathers' contributions to children's social capital—the intangible resources that fathers bring to children via their participation in various social networks. Social capital can stem from numerous sources, from fathers' income, education, and occupational status, to fathers' social and kin networks, which might provide employment, financial, or other opportunities for children. However, very limited research has investigated or supports the influence of fathers' social capital on children's well-being (e.g., Parcel & Bixby, 2016; Williams et al., 2012), and as such, we suggest social capital theory as another way to theoretically situate fathers, fatherhood, and fathering in the future. We believe that social capital theory is particularly salient in contemporary society because it can be used to explore how fathers' ability to contribute to their children's social capital potentially serves as a mechanism for the wide disparities that exist in families—both nationally and cross-culturally. For example, what opportunities are available to certain children, and not others, based on the social capital contributions of their fathers? Furthermore, in what ways do these

opportunities vary, both within and across different groups of fathers such as ethnic and racial minority fathers; urban, suburban, and rural fathers; fathers with low educational levels; economically advantaged fathers; or fathers with disabilities?

Although social capital theory offers a strong theoretical orientation for exploring potential inequalities among fathers, fatherhood, and fathering, we also believe that a group of critical theories present a prime opportunity for examining both the disparities and similarities that exist among fathers. These theories—critical race theory, intersectionality, and queer theory—are specifically designed to address patterns of societal inequality. As such, we offer suggestions on how each of these critical theories can, and should, be used in future work which theorizes fathering within a larger societal context.

Critical Theories

Critical Race Theory Thus far, little to no fathering research has been grounded in critical race theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005). CRT posits that race is socially constructed and that race is used as a means for determining one's value in society. As such, CRT scholars focus primarily on disparities and issues related to gender, class, and race, emphasizing the lives, histories, and experiences of people of color (Ellis & Hartlep, 2017). Furthermore, CRT addresses the intersectionality of these demographic characteristics, often exploring the ways in which these intersections contribute to the oppression experienced by people of color.

In thinking about the future of theorizing fathering, we offer CRT as one theoretical framework that can be used to explore varying aspects of fatherhood and fathers' experiences, particularly with fathers of color. CRT provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the unique experiences of fathers of color and to examine how systemic racism, patterns of disadvantage, and perpetual inequalities have influenced fathering among families of color. Additionally, CRT

allows for a theoretical exploration of similarities and differences across various intersections of fatherhood as a means for better understanding the lived experiences of fathers from varying racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. This work is especially salient as a recent resurgence of racial tensions in America, combined with a global pandemic, has crystallized the vast divisions in economic and educational opportunities in American society and the intersecting struggles faced by many people of color. Given recent events and the ways in which they will continue to alter life for families across the globe, we believe that CRT presents a particularly promising future direction for theorizing fathering.

Intersectionality Similar to CRT, intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991, 1993) is a critical theory that examines how various factors intertwine to construct individuals' identities and subsequently influence how they experience and navigate day-to-day life. Threads of intersectionality can also be found in feminist and gender theories (Collins, 2009; Few-Demo, 2014); however, the key to positioning intersectional theory is conceptualizing the various attributes of a person (i.e., race, sex, gender, disability status, socioeconomic status, etc.) as not merely nested or additive, but instead, when combined, as serving to establish unique social identities which create varying experiences for individuals.

It has been well established through fathering scholarship, as well as through simply understanding the lived experiences of individuals, that fathers also have various social identities that influence their own fathering experiences; however, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, we see no evidence that intersectional theory has been used as a foundation for examining fathers, fatherhood, and fathering. As such, we propose the use of intersectional theory as another future direction for theorizing fathering. Similar to how CRT can be used to address various aspects of fatherhood, particularly for fathers of color, intersectionality can serve as a theoretical foundation for examining a broad range of intersecting identities. Few-Demo (2014) presents various points in support of the rationale for using an intersec-

tional approach among family science scholars, many of which have implications for those specifically interested in fathers, fatherhood, and fathering. For example, she posits that intersectionality can offer "rich, complex information about how people "do" or perform close relationships and roles within multiple systems, identity development, family processes, and generativity" (Few-Demo, 2014, p. 180). Accordingly, using an intersectional lens to position fathering research presents an opportunity to explore fathering relationships and roles across these varying systems, identities, and familial processes. Furthermore, such an approach allows for exploration of the intersections that result when a range of community processes, services, and institutions interact with various groups of fathers and families. Finally, in suggesting ways that intersectional theory can be used in theorizing fathering, we again echo Few-Demo (2014), by proposing it be used as a means for understanding how fathers interact with various social structures (e.g., culture, religion, laws) at different points across the life course, across generations, and across time.

Queer Theory A debate that persists within fathering scholarship is whether fathers should strive to live up to maternal norms, or whether a better goal would be to "subvert heteronormativity" and create new norms that are either unique to fathers or more gender neutral (Doucet & Lee, 2014). Queer theory (QT; de Lauretis, 1991; Foucault & Hurley, 1990; Rubin, 2011) addresses this concern with its focus on challenging and "queering" the dichotomous nature of a variety of realms, including sexuality, gender, and race. However, as is the case with CRT and intersectionality, relatively little research has looked at fathers from a QT perspective, with the exception of two studies on gay fathers (Berkowitz & Maura, 2011; Leland, 2017). We, therefore, suggest that additional research on fathering in a variety of contexts using a QT perspective would be beneficial.

We believe QT can be used in future fathering work by examining how fathers who identify as transgender, gender fluid, gender-queer, or

gender nonbinary conceptualize their fathering identity and if/how this intersects with their gender identity, as well as how they conceptualize their relationships with their partners and other family members, with other fathers, and with society at large. Additionally, QT's appreciation for the anti-dichotomy of gender makes it an ideal theoretical foundation to use when exploring how fathers "perform" the various roles, responsibilities, and expectations of fatherhood and how these performances play out for those who do not subscribe to the gendered nature of parenting. Finally, grounding theoretical work in QT will help to provide additional depth and breadth to the current field of fathering and provide opportunities for scholars and practitioners from various disciplines (e.g., health sciences, gender studies, media studies) to collaborate in new and exciting ways. For additional information, see chapter "Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Fatherhood" of this volume, which focused on fathering and fatherhood within the LGBT community.

Disability Theories

We also find little to no research focused on the theorizing of fathers, fatherhood, and fathering that is grounded in disability theories and focused on fathers with disabilities rather than on fathers who have children with disabilities. In the past 50 years, two prominent models of disability discourse have been presented: the medical model and the social model (Haegele & Hodge, 2016; LoBianco & Sheppard-Jones, 2008). The medical model positions disability as a result of impairment of body structures and functions and as a problem that needs to be cured through medical intervention and support (Haegele & Hodge, 2016; LoBianco & Sheppard-Jones, 2008). Within the medical model, one's disability serves as the defining characteristic that determines how others interact with them. In contrast to the medical model of disability, the more contemporary social model positions disability as the result of society's limitations placed on individuals with impairments (Goodley, 2001; Palmer & Harley, 2012). Within the social model, the terms impairment and disability are distinct, with impairment

defined as an abnormality of the body/mind and disability defined as the activity restriction experienced by individuals with disabilities as a result of societal organization that does not take into account those with varying abilities (Bingham et al., 2013; Goodley, 2001). As such, the social model of disability suggests that it is society, rather than an individual's impairment, that creates limitations. Therefore, in contrast to the medical model, the social model does not view disability as an individual problem that needs to be cured but instead focuses its response on the need to remove environmental and systemic barriers that serve to limit the ways individuals with disabilities participate in society (LoBianco & Sheppard-Jones, 2008; Palmer & Harley, 2012).

Out of critiques of both the medical and the social model, a third model has been developed, which focuses on disability from an embodiment perspective (Haegele & Hodge, 2016; Marks, 1999). Marks' (1999) definition of the embodiment model suggests that "disability does not reside either in the body or society, but rather in an embodied relationship" (p. 11). In regard to exploring fathers with disabilities, we find this particular discourse relevant as it focuses on the personal, lived experience of the individual with the disability (Marks, 1999). We see this conceptualization applied to fathers with disabilities as another potential future direction to explore when theorizing fathering. Such theorizing extends beyond examining the experiences of fathers who have children with disabilities, and instead, focuses on fathers who have disabilities themselves, viewing disability as one of many identities fathers embody. Theorizing the fathering experience from a disability lens not only acknowledges and celebrates this unique subset of fathers but also has the potential to provide additional information regarding how having a disability may impact one's decisions related to entering into fatherhood, fathering practices, and any additional challenges they may experience in their fathering role as a result of having a disability. In particular, theorizing fathers from within the framework of disability theories counters the earlier-mentioned view that the well-being of fathers as individuals is secondary to their

influence on the well-being of children. Employing disability theories in the future theorizing of fathers, fatherhood, and fathering provides the opportunity to center fathers' identities, including their dis/ability and health status, as primary areas of importance.

Furthermore, positioning fathering and fatherhood within a disability framework offers many potential benefits not only to fathers but also to the larger scholarly community. Primarily, using disability theory to explore the experiences of fathers with disabilities brings to the forefront this understudied population and ensures that their experiences are also used to inform the general field of fathering. Additionally, theorizing about fathering from a disability lens may also offer new insights on how best to support fathers with disabilities in their fathering and familial roles, including how best to recruit fathers with disabilities into research, how to develop programs and policies that are responsive to the needs of this specific group of fathers, and how fathering scholars can collaborate with the disability community and with disability scholars to bring attention to the lived experiences of fathers with disabilities.

As we think about the future of theorizing fathers, fatherhood, and fathering, we have identified multiple opportunities to expand existing theories as well as explore those theories which have thus far been un- or under-utilized by fathering scholars. We see tremendous potential to position fathering in a way that represents contemporary families from a global perspective and that reflects the various roles enacted by modern-day fathers. We are optimistic that scholars will take up the work of the future of theorizing fathers, fatherhood, and fathering and believe their contributions will continue to move the field forward in ways that help us to better conceptualize, appreciate, and understand fathers.

Conclusion

The boom in fathering research and scholarship that has occurred since the 1970s has generated data describing diverse patterns of fathers'

engagement with children, developmental and relational outcomes for children, and transactional developmental and relationship consequences for fathers. Though a majority of empirical studies have utilized one of a few common conceptualizations (e.g., father involvement as consisting of engagement, accessibility, and responsibility) or focused on particular constructs (e.g., fathering as situated in a context), there is currently neither a grand theory of fathering nor is there one on the horizon. In fact, we do not believe that a grand theory of fathering is necessary to create a useful fathering scholarship.

Yet, we highly value the integral role that theory plays in the significant conduct of all scientific work. When data and findings are examined apart from articulated fathering theories, they do not provide a meaningful understanding of lived experiences of family members or processes of development or targeted support strategies to facilitate opportunities. Much fathering scholarship has been conducted without explicit theoretical foundations as a starting point to shape measures, focus analyses, or interpret findings, making comparisons and accumulations of knowledge across studies difficult. Though multiple conceptualizations of fathering have emerged in the past half-century to provide a watershed of data, this review reflects an ongoing need for research that originates from and prioritizes explicit theoretical foundations to develop key measures of fathering and test theoretically based explicit hypotheses. It is only through such theoretically grounded work that we will truly move the field of fathering forward.

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Fatherhood Measurement and Assessment

W. Justin Dyer

One of the most fundamental aspects of any research endeavor is defining the constructs researchers will examine. For instance, researchers might be interested in how child mental and emotional well-being change over time and what influences those. They might be interested in how the quality of a marriage is impacted by various life stressors. Each of these areas of study first requires specific definitions of the constructs (e.g., mental well-being, emotional well-being, marital quality, and life stressors). Once those constructs are defined, the next most fundamental question is how those constructs will be measured; that is, what tools will be used to determine whether someone is "high" or "low" on a particular construct. Taking marital quality as an example, several issues arise such as: "How does one determine that one marriage has greater quality than another marriage? By what means might we say one couple is 'better off' than another couple?"

These same questions hold in researching fatherhood. First, we need to define what the construct "fatherhood" means (along with its various dimensions) and then identify ways in which we can rank fathers on those fatherhood dimensions. How do we determine whether one father is more involved with his child than another father? Or,

how could we tell whether one man's identity as a father is more important to him than another man's identity as a father? Essentially, the premise of measuring fatherhood constructs is to either rank fathers from low to high on those constructs or to categorize them according to the definitions of the fatherhood construct.

Measurement of fatherhood will invariably be tied to the researcher's values and, more broadly, to a society's values—values underpinned by society's constantly changing understanding of the social world. When the roles of fathers (as conceptualized by society) are threatened or are perceived as not being enacted (or enacted well enough), research often follows in an attempt to determine how such a "role failure" may affect the father, the family, and society. For example, worry about deployed and deceased fathers during World War II raised concerns about their sons (Pleck, 2004). The father was seen as an essential male role model for the son. From a psychoanalytic perspective, some worried that if the father was not present, the mother would be overly influential and the son would not develop the traits seen as appropriately masculine at the time. The theory was that seeing the father enact his masculinity would help socialize the son toward appropriate masculinity. Given this conceptualization, research on fatherhood at the time was focused primarily on the *presence* of the father in the home. Within this conceptualization, "fatherhood" could be simply measured as a binary

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variable indicating whether the father was present or absent.

Later, influenced by the sexual revolution, the roles of fathers began to change; the father was seen as a co-parent who should be involved in all aspects of the child's life (Pleck, 2004). At this time, scholarly interest in the amount and content of time spent with children increased. Much of the research on father involvement has its conceptual roots in Lamb and Pleck's 1985 formulation of three types of father involvement: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility (Lamb et al., 1985). As attitudes about fathering continued to change, more emphasis was placed on the quality and affective valence of the involvement. Twenty-five years after this initial formulation, Pleck (2010) updated these categories to specify that engagement was *positive* engagement and added the affective domain of *warmth*.

In just the last 12 years since Pleck's reformulation, family life has continued to change—and in fundamental ways. Although more subtle changes have occurred, the most obvious and dramatic is that a child could have two legal fathers who were married to each other. Without recognizing these changes, those measuring and assessing fatherhood will risk applying measures of fatherhood that are less and less relevant to their subjects, creating blind spots as they work to understand how men enact their parenting role. Thus, remaining current in societal trends and sensitive to cultural differences is a central task of those measuring and assessing fatherhood.

Recognizing the change over time in conceptualization and measurement of fatherhood is not to say "nothing is real." Despite the fact that so much of fatherhood research (and social science in general) is subjective, it can still be useful. Indeed, I take a more pragmatic approach. Researchers are often searching for solutions to the problems of their day, and the scientific process of creating and measuring constructs provides a rigorous way to study the problem, gaining insights into possible solutions. That the values and understanding of societies change simply means the work of conceptualizing and measuring is rarely completed—there is always

more to do. As with other areas of inquiry, we will continue to evaluate our conceptualizations of fatherhood, and hence our measurement, to best capture the constructs important to us in answering the questions of the day. It is certainly valid to critique the values of a particular society, though that is more the domain of ethics, morality, and religion. Measurement is about capturing the constructs in a way faithful to their conceptualization.

Should Fathering and Mothering Be Measured the Same Way?

The question of whether males as parents (i.e., fathers) are unique from females as parents (i.e., mothers) has been debated for the past few decades. From Silverstein and Auerbach's (1999) *Deconstructing the Essential Father* to more recent arguments that there is "not sufficient evidence to conclude that the constructs of fathering and mothering are unique" (Fagan et al., 2014, p. 390), whether fathering and mothering are conceptually the same remains an open and polemical question (on the other side, Palkovitz et al. (2014) argues for essential differences between fatherhood and motherhood). This question conceptually and pragmatically reduces to: "Should a gendered concept of parenting be dropped in favor of gender-neutral language?" This chapter will not deal with the conceptual argument. Yet, in a chapter on measurement, one cannot set aside whether a measure was implicitly or explicitly designed for mothers or fathers. This is because a parenting measure may function in systematically different ways for mothers or fathers. Items may not be as valid or reliable for one gender as they are for another gender. At its core, this is a question of *measurement invariance* or *measurement equivalence,* which is a fundamental issue for a family researcher (Dyer, 2015).

Tests of measurement equivalence examine whether a construct differs across groups or time. Most constructs family researchers deal with are "unobserved" in the sense that one cannot observe the totality or all the underlying nuances of things

such as *parental identity, parental involvement, and parental stress*. Unlike temperature or weight, there is no nonsubjective way to measure these concepts, particularly given that their very definitions are subjective and subject to change. Parenting constructs are generated by researchers in an attempt to efficiently summarize and study processes that occur within the family. Yet, these are not universal concepts that remain the same across context or time. For instance, a thermometer can accurately determine a person's temperature independent of that person's upbringing. However, it would not be expected that a measure of how satisfied a mother and a father are with their co-parenting relationship would function the same across time and place. Concepts such as "satisfaction" and "coparenting" evolve over time and differ across cultures. Some indicators of satisfaction and co-parenting make perfect sense in one context, but little to no sense in another context. A rather obvious example of this would be to compare co-parenting within hunter-gatherer societies to co-parenting in more Western cultures (e.g., Hewlett & Macfarlan, 2010). However, differences on a much smaller scale can also mean that parenting measures do not apply across groups. It may be that different parent genders within the same society render concepts such as "parenting" sufficiently different such that, in terms of measurement, differences across gender must be accounted for.

Tests of measurement equivalence examine whether a measure of a construct differs across groups or time. In order to conclude a measure is equivalent, factor analysis is used; if loadings and intercepts are equivalent, it can be said that the measure functions the same for both groups (i.e., is measuring the same underlying construct). Some studies have examined whether measures of parenting are equivalent for fathers and mothers. For example, Adamsons and Buehler's (2007) equivalence tests suggested "that mothers and fathers exhibit negative behaviors in similar ways, but support their children differently" (p. 297). Dyer (2015) found that a measure of parental engagement was not equivalent for mothers and fathers. Piskernik et al.'s tests of equivalence for the parenting stress index found

several items functioned differently for mothers and fathers (Piskernik et al., 2019). However, one study found parental autonomy support equivalent across mothers and fathers (Hughes et al., 2018). Another recent study found parental beliefs regarding facilitating children's independence and beliefs regarding structure were equivalent across mothers and fathers, but beliefs regarding parental connection were not (Crapo et al., 2021).

Aside from the measurement level, another question is whether the effects of mothering and fathering are the same. For instance, one study found that a father's human capital characteristics were important to the well-being of both boys and girls and mothers' availability and closeness uniquely affected boys (Eggebeen, 2013). For several other indicators of well-being, the influence of fathers and mothers was identical, suggesting no gendered effects. Another study examining the relationship between father and mother involvement and child achievement found that of the 15 possible relationships examined, only seven were the same for both fathers and mothers (McBride et al., 2009). Thus, approximately half of the relationships examined had a gendered component while, for the other half, there was no evidence of gender uniqueness.

Research has therefore found measurement and predictive differences can (and often do) emerge when comparing mothers and fathers. One can argue that differences found on the measurement or predictive levels are not the product of fundamental differences between mothers and fathers but are instead differences emerging from societal influences. Although this is an important question, from a statistical standpoint, the question has little relevance. Independent of how the differences came to be, when measurement or predictive differences exist, if they are not statistically accounted for, the model will be misspecified, information about differences will be overlooked, and bias will be introduced. Given that some research has identified measurement nonequivalence and predictive differences, it is important for researchers examining motherhood and fatherhood to test for such dif-

ferences, taking differences into account when necessary.

Fatherhood Across Reporter and Time

A central question in measuring fatherhood is: who is a reliable reporter? Are fathers able to be self-reflective enough to report accurately? Are mothers and children sufficiently unbiased to be accurate reporters? One cross-sectional study found mother and father reports of father involvement to be highly similar (Wical & Doherty, 2005). Hernandez and Coley (2007) similarly found mother and father reports to have equal predictive validity. Dyer et al. (2013) examined this in a longitudinal study with reports on father involvement from mothers, fathers, and children when the child was 10, 12, and 14 years. Participants rated the father's behaviors on several items from the *Inventory of Father Involvement* (Hawkins et al., 2002). Initially, measurement equivalence was considered. It was found that mother and father reports were equivalent, but child reports were not equivalent to either parent report. This suggests that children respond to questions regarding the father's involvement in fundamentally different ways than do parents.

The next research question for Dyer et al. (2013) was which reporter's responses demonstrated the most predictive validity to other Likert scales (e.g., child internalizing and externalizing problems) as well as coded observations of the father and child (e.g., observed prosocial and antisocial behaviors) and physiologic indicators (i.e., child vagal tone reactivity to an interaction with the father). On these measures, child reports demonstrated much more predictive validity, particularly with the observed father and child behaviors.

An additional question is whether father involvement can be measured in the same way across times. For instance, measuring a father's involvement with his infant would be quite different from measuring his involvement with his teenager. Researchers often find themselves examining various measures of father involvement to determine whether the measure will apply to the age range of the fathers' children in their study or whether the measure will "hold up" over time in longitudinal studies. Some studies simply have father involvement reports that differ depending on the age of the child.

Dyer et al. (2013) also examined whether measurement equivalence was found across the three time points (10, 12, and 14 years). Somewhat surprisingly, in no instance did measurement equivalence hold. That is, the construct of father involvement appears to change across those years, such that the meaning is different at these various ages. This strongly suggests that in measuring father involvement, researchers should be highly cognizant of the child's age and the influence the developmental period may have on measurement.

Methods of Measuring Fatherhood

When designed well, fatherhood measures provide sufficient variance in the constructs (i.e., many fathers who were rated high, mid, and low), and these constructs can then be used as predictors, outcomes, mediators, and moderators within statistical analyses. Or, for qualitative work, the method should allow the researcher to develop various constructs and themes from their sample, providing a detailed and nuanced description of fatherhood.

Various methods to measure fatherhood are reviewed below: time-diary, observation of structured tasks, as well as in-depth interviews and ethnographic studies. Crucial to the development and use of any measure of fatherhood is (1) wariness of adopting a maternal template for father involvement and (2) sensitivity to the contexts unique to the fathers being studied (Dyer, 2014). As Robbins et al. (2019) observed: "early research on paternal involvement involved conceptualizations and measures of good parenting that were derived from research and theory on mothers as opposed to research and theories used to specifically describe, explain and predict [father involvement]" (p. 548). Indeed, much of

the early research on "parenting" was conducted with mothers, and fathers were mostly left out of the research. Although mother involvement may be a place to start when developing measures of father involvement, if fathers are not studied as a group unique in their own right, measures will likely miss aspects relevant to the fatherhood experience (as evidenced by the research cited above on measurement equivalence). In the same vein, the benchmark for fathering is often mothering. Although it is important to compare mothers and fathers, when fathers do not parent in the same way and in the same amount as mothers, they are often judged as deficient (for examples, see Dyer, 2014). Again, while comparisons to mothers may be useful for some research questions, they can inhibit the ability to see the contributions fathers may uniquely make.

The unique context of fathers must also be considered. Again, early in fatherhood research, measures of fatherhood were often created with the assumption of married, resident fathers. However, it may be these measures miss salient aspects for fathers of children with disabilities or nonresident fathers (see Fagan et al., 2019 for a discussion of nonresident fathers). Even unique contexts of nonresident fathers need to be considered. For instance, a father may be nonresident due to incarceration, a context that includes numerous constraints on one's ability to enact fatherhood (Roy, 2005). Independent of what measurement strategy is used, if they are used for fathers to whom they do not apply, results will be biased and incorrect conclusions will be drawn.

Likert Scales

The most common way to measure aspects of fatherhood is a survey with Likert scales. Participants are asked to rate various aspects of their fatherhood on scales with responses such as how much they agree with statements (e.g., ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) or how often they do something (e.g., ranging from *never* to *several times a day*) among numerous other possible response categories. The benefit of these scales is that they are relatively easy to

administer and easy to respond to. Using internet surveys, data can be collected rapidly and often, if set up correctly, with minimal data cleaning and reduced possibility of human error since no "data entry" must be done. Indeed, in the very recent past, it would often take a small army of research assistants to enter Likert scale responses from paper surveys into statistical packages. Hours upon hours would be spent with research assistants doing nothing but looking at paper surveys and punching the numbers into the computer. Multiple checks along the way were used to ensure the quality of data entry. Today, a researcher can set up an online survey and (depending on the sampling strategy) can have data within weeks, days, or even hours, ready to be analyzed without the typical cadre of research assistants entering data. Further, using internet surveys often allows researchers to access populations around their country and even the world without having to physically mail recruitment or survey materials. The number of Likert-based scales used to measure fatherhood constructs is too numerous to list, though some examples are given below.

Time-diary

Time diaries are useful in examining the day-to-day texture of a father's connection with their child. Rather than asking respondents to recall over weeks or months how much time they spent in various activities with the child (often the approach of Likert scales), using time diaries, participants only need to consider that day or the previous day. As Bianchi et al. (2006) note in their study of time mothers and fathers spend with family: "The appeal of the time diary approach is that respondents are not asked to make complex, vague, and changing calculations, but to simply recall their activities sequentially for a specific period" (p. 20). With the possible exception of some ethnographic work, time dairies likely provide the best estimates of overall time fathers spend with their children. Time diaries can estimate time across workdays and non-workdays as well as across weekdays

and weekends. These differences across a week are important to know as they provide a more holistic view of how fathers spend their time with children (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2006; Yeung et al., 2001). Time diaries are, however, time intensive and require extended commitment from participants compared to one-time surveys.

Observation of Structured Tasks

Another method of measuring fatherhood constructs is through observing the father performing structured tasks, often with the child and/or the child's other caregiver(s). These tasks are typically video recorded for later analysis by trained coders. For example, the Strange Situation Procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978) has been used to measure the child's attachment to the father (e.g., Brown et al., 2010). Other tasks may be designed to measure paternal sensitivity by providing the father with a difficult situation in which to work with their child and observing their strategies to attend to their child's needs (e.g., Brown et al., 2012). A "two bags" task was used in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort, a nationally representative study of children born in 2001. In this task, the parent was given 10 min to engage with their child with items in one bag and 10 min to engage with their child with items in another bag (Andreassen & Fletcher, 2007). These tasks were video recorded and coded for the following: *Parental Sensitivity, Parental Intrusiveness, Parental Stimulation and Cognitive Development, Parental Positive Regard,* and *Parental Detachment.*

The obvious advantage of these tasks is the ability of individuals who are trained in the coding system to independently assess paternal behaviors. This moves away from the more subjective self-report measures to observing fathering behaviors in the same situation, controlling for other contextual factors. However, because fathers are often observed in the same context, this method may be less suited to research questions that concern the unique context of each father. The next section describes a methodol-

ogy designed to capture these unique contexts. The other drawback is that this method is rather time intensive. Fathers must either go to a laboratory or the researchers must visit the home. Using webcams can allow for observations to occur in the home without the need for the researchers to be in the same location as the father. However, laboratory visits would still be required for studies using procedures such as the Strange Situation which require a specialized environment. Once the video recordings are obtained, it often takes substantial time to code the videos, which increases time as the sample size increases. This is in contrast to surveys, which typically take no extra time to clean or code whether there are few or many participants.

Finally, these methods are often costly. In comparison to an online survey, participants often must be renumerated more for the time they spend. Further, to code the videos, the researcher must either have a group of research assistants who become trained in the coding methodology or the researcher sends the video to be coded by trained coders. This is often a rather time-intensive and costly process. Still, very often, the time and money costs are more than worth the effort to overcome the limitations of survey data and to measure constructs that are unmeasurable in any meaningful way by a survey.

In-Depth Interviews and Ethnographic Studies

When using the above methods, researchers are typically drawing on previous research and/or theory to develop hypotheses that are then tested statistically (i.e., a deductive method). However, many research questions suggest a very different approach. These questions often involve attempting to understand the experiences of individuals about whom little is known. For example, until relatively recently, little was known about the experience of incarcerated fathers and their families. This lack of knowledge made it difficult for researchers to know where to begin in studying these fathers and

whether any current measures even met a test of face validity (let alone statistical validity). Thus, several studies have used qualitative methods (a more inductive method) to study these fathers (Arditti et al., 2005; Roy, 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005) and provide understanding of their experiences that would be inaccessible from a typical survey. Qualitative interviews are not simply preliminary to quantitative studies. Indeed, they provide rich understandings that are not possible to obtain through statistical analyses.

Some research questions call for a one-time, in-depth interview. However, other questions require additional effort. As Edin and Nelson (2013) argue in their study on low-income, unmarried fathers: "To truly comprehend unmarried fatherhood, it is not sufficient to focus on the men alone. Understanding their environments—their neighborhood contexts and their histories of urban areas they are embedded in—is also essential" (p. 6). In other words, an in-depth study of fatherhood means an in-depth study of their environment. Although the quantitative analysis will sometimes obtain information about the father's living environment and use those in statistical models (e.g., percentage of single-parent homes and percentage of households in poverty in the area), in-depth, ethnographic methods provide additional details that give insight into the lives of fathers. As such, Edin and Nelson (2013) determined to live in their participants' neighborhoods to better understand the environment in which participants' fatherhood was enacted. These more ethnographic studies of fathers are relatively rare (Hewlett & Macfarlan, 2010), though some examples include Hewlett's (1991) study of hunter-gatherer fathers in central Africa and Beckerman and Valentine's (Beckerman & Valentine, 2002) study of the Bari in South America.

Although in-depth interviews and ethnographic research require substantial time and resources, their contributions form the most intimate knowledge of fathers. They also often provide the knowledge base for quantitative studies.

Measuring Domains of Fatherhood

Several ways to categorize father involvement have been proposed over time. The initial conceptualization by Lamb and Pleck (Lamb et al., 1985) and its revision (Pleck, 2010) have been at the forefront of research on fatherhood (i.e., domains of positive engagement; warmth and responsiveness; and control, particularly monitoring and decision-making). However, some have criticized it (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Palkovitz, 1997) and have pursued other avenues of conceptualizing involvement. For instance, Hawkins and colleagues (Hawkins et al., 2002) developed the *Inventory of Father Involvement* (IFI) by first generating a list of 43 items that tapped into behavioral, cognitive, affective, and moral/ethical dimensions of father involvement. They then took an empirical approach to determine domains by conducting exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to examine the factor structure of the items. Domains of father involvement found included: *Discipline and Responsibility, School Encouragement, Mother Support, Providing, Time and Talking Together, Praise and Affection, Developing Talents, Reading/Homework Support,* and *Attentiveness.* Similarly, Finley and Schwartz (2004) developed the *Father Involvement Scale* and, again, using factor analysis, identified an *Expressive* domain (e.g., the father having fun with the child, providing companionship, and offering companionship), an *Instrumental* domain (e.g., discipline and being protective), and a *Mentoring/Advising* domain (e.g., helping the child develop competence and teaching the child).

Given the broad nature of Pleck's (2010) revised categories of father involvement, most other conceptualizations can be subsumed within these categories. While perhaps sacrificing some complexity, the relative parsimony of the Pleck approach is appealing which has likely encouraged its use. However, this simplicity has been criticized as overly focused on behaviors, which may cause researchers to overlook other important domains (see Palkovitz, 1997).

Of Pleck's (2010) revised domains, positive engagement has, by far, received the most

attention in the research literature. This is likely because it arguably has the longest history of being recognized as an important aspect of fatherhood. Pleck (2010) notes that early in fatherhood research (through the 1970s and early 1980s), father engagement was often measured simply by the total time the father spent with the child, without much attention to what the father was doing. Later, large-scale surveys would measure engagement focusing on the frequency of activities such as reading to the child, going on walks with the child, and playing with the child (Marsiglio, 1991). In 1997, a coordinated effort was begun to represent fathers in national studies called the Developing a Daddy Survey (DADS; Cabrera et al., 2004). From this effort, father involvement items (including positive engagement) were included in three large studies: the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FF), the Early Head Start National Evaluation Father Studies (EHS), and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). These studies provide researchers with several questions regarding activities the father did with his child. For example, EHS and ECLS-B included items such as singing songs to the child, taking the child to visit friends, and having meals with the child (Cabrera et al., 2004). The FF study asked similar questions and included such items as the father playing outside with the child and watching TV with the child (Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2013).

Given its frequent pairing with engagement, Pleck (2010) added *warmth and responsiveness* as a domain of father involvement. The DADS studies also included items regarding warmth and affection (e.g., FF included items such as how often the father told the child he appreciated what they did; Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2013). What is known in the research literature as *Paternal Sensitivity* has also been frequently studied and fits well within the *warmth and responsiveness* domain. Sensitivity has been defined as a parent's ability to accurately determine signals from the child and respond to them appropriately (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Sensitivity can include contingent vocalizations, encouragement of the child's efforts, and soothing the child

in times of distress. Lucassen et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on 16 studies that examined a father's sensitivity as it related to attachment. These researchers found a significant, positive relationship between the two.

Warmth and responsiveness can be measured in numerous ways. Lucassen's study (Lucassen et al., 2011) focused only on those studies which used observational methods of sensitivity. However, participant reports are also frequently used. Indeed, the IFI used child and father reports to examine domains that fit well within the warmth and responsiveness domain (e.g., *Praise and Affection*). Finley and Schwartz (2004) also developed the *Nurturant Fathering Scale* which contains questions such as: "When you needed your father's support, was he there for you?" and "Did you feel that you could confide in (talk about important personal things with) your father?"

Pleck's (2010) *control* domain is often measured by limit setting. The large-scale project the Panel Study of Income Dynamic–Child Development Supplement, contains items within this domain. Parents reported how often they engage in parental limit-setting activities such as setting limits on TV programs their child watches and setting limits on how much candy or sweets their child can have. As one study using these data found, when fathers set limits early in their children's lives, they were more likely to be engaged in the child's schooling later on (McBride et al., 2009).

Co-parenting

Family Systems Theory has long conceptualized the father and mother as a subsystem within the family (Minuchin, 1974). As Weissman and Cohen (1985) described using the term "alliance":

> once a child is anticipated, a new experience develops between the parents and takes on a life of its own. In all human societies, parenting alliances develop, although the roles of each partner may vary…This alliance proceeds out of the anticipation of mutual bonds to the child. Each partner

anticipates shared experience which will facilitate the performance of the tasks of parenthood" (p. 25).

"Co-parenting" is often used as an umbrella term to capture various facets of this subsystem and is generally defined as "the ways that parents work together in their roles as parents" (Feinberg, 2003, p. 1499). Although Van Egeren and Hawkin's assessment that "no consensus has been reached on what coparenting actually *is*" (2004, p. 165) likely still holds, several domains of co-parenting have been conceptualized, measured, and found related to important aspects of family life. However, there is often no "bright line" distinguishing these domains and conceptual overlap can occur. This emphasizes the need for each researcher to be clear about the conceptualization they are using in their studies and ensure measurement matches the conceptualization. Rather than attempt to create bright conceptual lines between measures of co-parenting, in this section I organize measures of co-parenting roughly within several broad domains, acknowledging there is likely more than one "right way" of doing so.

An initial question in measuring co-parenting is: *Who can be a co-parent?* One of the more broad answers to the question is: "When at least two individuals are expected by mutual agreement or societal norms to have conjoint responsibility for a particular child's well-being" (Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004, p. 166). For example, if the societal norm is that the biological father and mother should be responsible for the child (given certain social conditions such as the child had not been adopted by other parents), then, by this definition, they are co-parents.

After defining who a co-parent is, the question is then: How well do those two individuals function together in their roles as parents? This, then, leads to identifying various domains of co-parenting and determining how to measure those domains.

One commonly assessed domain of co-parenting is "parenting alliance," (though sometimes the term "alliance" is used to refer to the overall construct of co-parenting; Weissman & Cohen, 1985). This domain addresses the quality with which parents connect with each other regarding their child(ren). Abidin and Brunner (1995) developed a 20-item "Parenting Alliance Inventory" to measure the construct and included items such as: "My child's other parent and I communicate well about our child" and "My child's other parent makes my job of being a parent easier." McBride and Rane (1998) later adapted the scale finding three statistically and conceptually distinct subscales: (1) Emotional Appraisal of Spouse's Parenting; (2) Shared Philosophy and Perceptions of Parenting; and (3) Spousal Confidence in Own Parenting.

Another domain of co-parenting is *maternal gatekeeping*. Allen and Hawkins (1999) defined the concept as: "a collection of beliefs and behaviors that ultimately inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for home and children" (p. 200). The concept has been broadened to include *gate opening*, which are those maternal beliefs and behaviors that promote a father's connection with his children (see Lee et al., 2019). One commonly used measure of *gatekeeping* and *gate opening* is the *Parental Regulation Inventory* (Van Egeren, 2000b) which asks parents to rate the degree to which they or the other parent facilitates or discourages the other parent's involvement with their children (e.g., through Positive Reinforcement, Indirect Requests, Criticism, Alone Time with Child, Empathy, and Autonomy). This measure has recently undergone more stringent analysis by Altenburger et al. (2020), who found the measure mostly adequate, though it would benefit from additional items (the authors do not suggest what such items should be).

Division of labor is another commonly assessed measure of co-parenting. For instance, the *Caregiving Labor Inventory* (Van Egeren, 2000a) asks participants their perceptions of the division of labor (i.e., the percentage of various activities each parent performs) along with their perception of how fair the division is. In a study by Hartley et al. (2014), parents completed daily diaries indicating how much time each day they spend giving care to children. They also reported,

"their level of satisfaction with the time their spouse spent in the previous 24 hours in caregiving activities related to the child or adolescent" (p. 631). With these pieces of information, it could be determined what portion of time each parent spent with the child.

Studies are also more commonly using observation of structured tasks to measure co-parenting. The *Coparenting and Family Rating System* (McHale et al., 2000) outlines tasks for co-parents such as teaching their 6-month-old child to turn a page, how to scribble with a crayon, or how to play with certain toys. Various domains of co-parenting are then coded, including *Cooperation*, *Verbal Sparring*, and *Coparental Warmth*. Some studies have used or adapted Bayer's (1992) coding scale of structured tasks (e.g., Lee et al., 2019; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008) to measure constructs such as *maternal negative control*, *maternal facilitation*, and *father relative involvement.*

Fatherhood Identity

Drawing on Stryker and Burke's identity theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000), several fatherhood scholars have attempted to measure aspects of a father's identity (for more on theoretical models, see Adamsons, 2010; Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). Maurer et al. (2001) developed the *Caregiving and Breadwinning Identity and Reflected-Appraisal Inventory,* which examined whether a father's roles are in conflict (e.g., "Before I think about being a caregiver to my child, I need to think about meeting his/her financial needs") as well as appraisals of a father's roles (e.g., "My spouse thinks I should be committed to actively meeting my child's physical needs."). McBride and Rane (1997) developed the *Role Investment Penny-Sort Task* in which fathers were presented with five roles into which they were instructed to sort 15 pennies based on how invested they were in each role. Palkovitz's *Role of the Father Questionnaire* (Palkovitz, 1984) is a scale used to determine the degree to which a parent believes the father's role is important in child development.

Nonresident Fathers

Measures of father involvement have often implicitly assumed that either the father is residing with their child(ren) or that involvement items function as well for nonresident fathers as they do for resident fathers. The IFI (Hawkins et al., 2002), for instance, examined whether there were mean level differences in fatherhood items for resident and nonresident fathers but not whether the items functioned differently for resident and nonresident fathers (i.e., whether there was measurement equivalence). To address these weaknesses, the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN) conducted a study to develop reliable and valid measures of various nonresident fatherhood domains (Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, n.d.). An initial step in developing these measures was focus groups with 71 nonresident fathers (see Fagan et al., 2018). During these focus groups, various domains of involvement were discussed. From the discussion, items were generated, and scales created that were then tested for their reliability and validity on a sample of over 400 nonresident fathers. The focus groups provided FPRN scales with a solid base in the lived experience of nonresident fathers.

One of the scales generated was a basic "contact" measure. Often few items are used when father–child contact of nonresident fathers is assessed. As recently outlined (Fagan et al., 2019):

> The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study measured nonresident father contact using a single item (number of days the father saw the child in the past 30 days; Choi et al., 2014; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2011) and the National Survey of Family Growth only included the frequency of visits to the child (Livingston & Parker, 2011). The Canadian General Social Survey asked about the number of nights fathers spent with the child in the past 30 days (LeBourdais et al., 2001), and Hook and Courtney (2013) measured the frequency of overall contact (with no specificity about the types of contact) in the past 12 months. Others examined telephone and letter contact (Stewart, 1999) and email contact (Viry, 2014). Some researchers combined different types of contact (e.g., face-to-face and telephone) forming a global contact index (e.g., Hofferth & Pinzon, 2011). (p. 95)

Given the various ways nonresident father involvement is conceptualized and measured, important questions include: Which form of contact matters most? Is the contact a unidimensional or multidimensional construct? To begin addressing these questions, Fagan et al. (2019) used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, finding two separate factors: caregiving contact (e.g., face-to-face contact, having a meal, visiting family) and communication-contact (e.g., phone/social media contact, praise, expressing love) with the communication contact showing strong predictive validity for the father's satisfaction with his role as a father, his feelings of self-efficacy, and father-child closeness.

In addition to contact, other measures developed specifically for nonresident fathers include engagement (Dyer et al., 2018b), decision-making responsibility (Fagan et al., 2018), co-parenting (Dyer et al., 2018a), and father-child closeness (Dyer et al., 2017).

Future Directions and Conclusion

In measuring and assessing fatherhood, there is still much to be done. Although identity theory is a compelling way to conceptualize fatherhood (Adamsons, 2010; Dyer, 2005), measures have been few and lacking in rigorous testing. In order for identity theory to be of use, more work needs to be done to measure the theory's central constructs.

Another area emerging in the family sciences is how individual differences in physiologic reactions influence family life. Polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011) conceptualizes behavior as partially mediated by the autonomic nervous system (ANS). Depending on whether a situation is perceived as safe or dangerous, this system prepares the body for either engaging in social interactions meant to connect individuals or it prepares the body for dangerous situations in which the body produces fear, anxiety, and anger. Some research has found that the effect of a father's parenting on their child is moderated by the child's ANS activity (Dyer et al., 2016). Although some work has begun to integrate Polyvagal Theory into family

systems theory (Bradford et al., 2020), what has yet to be explored is how a father's ANS activity may relate to his parenting. Although some work has examined how various hormones may relate to father involvement (Feldman, 2012), this work is still in its infancy and is mostly disconnected from the work on fatherhood that is based by Lamb and Pleck (Lamb et al., 1985) lines of work.

While there are many other such areas of fatherhood that need better measurement, direction for the future should include rigorous tests of some of our basic fatherhood measures. As noted above, some measures have been developed but, for the most part, rigorous testing has not been done. An example of such rigorous testing is the work by Altenburger et al. (2020). However, even Altenburger and colleagues stopped short of the needed mark. That is, they identified the need for new items, yet did not propose new items and test a new scale. This rigorous testing also must be done across time and context.

Measuring fatherhood constructs presents researchers with many challenges. However, the payoff of measuring something well is enormous. When done well, scales are able to measure fatherhood constructs with a high degree of precision, giving confidence in the results of studies in which they are used. When considering their research questions, some researchers simply want to "get on with it," thinking little about measurement and choosing scales that seem appropriate but not doing rigorous testing with the measures. However, slowing down to do measurement work provides the researcher with the best possible answer for the study.

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Fathers and Family Systems

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Family Systems Principles

Family systems theoretical perspectives (Cox & Paley, 1997; Minuchin, 1985) emphasize that families operate as systems of individuals and relationships, with each individual or relationship constituting its own subsystem. These levels of systems within families are organized hierarchically and governed by boundaries that provide the rules for interactions between family members. Boundaries are largely set by parents, who form the "executive subsystem" of the family and share primary responsibility for managing family members and their relationships (Minuchin, 1974).

A key principle of family systems theories is that individuals and relationships within families are interdependent, meaning that these subsystems affect one another. Family members' mutual influences on one another are often called bidirectional effects, reciprocal or transactional patterns (Cox & Paley, 1997; Sameroff, 1975; Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008). Families have emergent properties, such that the family whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, one cannot understand the whole family merely by combining knowledge about individual family members or subsystem relationships (McHale et al., 2000). Family systems are also characterized as both stable and dynamic (Cox & Paley, 1997; Palkovitz et al., 2014). On the one hand, families exhibit homeostasis via processes of internal regulation that maintain boundaries and interaction patterns within the family even in the face of broader environmental challenges or changes. On the other hand, families demonstrate adaptive self-organization, or the capacity to reorganize in response to changes both within and outside of the family, such as the birth of a new family member or immigration to a new country. These processes of stability and change are considered adaptive but may or may not be ultimately healthy for family functioning.

What Does It Mean to Take a Family Systems Perspective on Fathering?

Taking a family systems perspective on fathering means to study fathers in the context of key relationships and interactions with others in their families. It means refraining from studying fathers or father–child relationships in isolation from other family members or relationships, even though mothering is typically studied in isolation from fathering (Cabrera et al., 2018). Because of the primacy of the "executive subsystem" in family systems theories (Minuchin, 1974), taking a

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family systems perspective invites a focus on interparental relationships, including romantic relationships shared by parents, co-parenting relationships, and important interparental processes such as marital conflict and maternal gatekeeping. To the extent that dyadic (e.g., father–child, mother–father) and triadic (e.g., co-parenting) family subsystems are considered simultaneously, a family systems model of fathering is more fully achieved.

Even scholarship that does not include measures of multiple family subsystems, however, can still take a more systemic approach. For example, studies of fathering can center the relationship between the father and child, rather than the father's involvement or parenting behavior toward the child. The child is not a mere recipient of the father's behavior; the child affects the father just as the father affects the child, consistent with family systems theories' emphasis on bidirectional and transactional patterns (Cox & Paley, 1997; Sameroff, 1975; Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008). Moreover, given families' simultaneous tendencies toward homeostasis and adaptive self-organization, research on fathering guided by a family systems perspective follows fathers and families over time to track stability and change and may focus on key family transition points, such as the transition to parenthood, when reorganization of family roles and relationships is necessary.

Studying fathering in this manner also necessitates consideration of the function of gender in family dynamics. Palkovitz et al. (2014) pointed out that family members have different roles in families, and that these roles and how family members enact them are shaped by gendered expectations. Family rules, or the unspoken norms about how families operate, are also shaped by gendered expectations and associated power dynamics. Acknowledgment of gender dynamics in parenting invites a focus on differences as well as similarities between fathers' and mothers' roles in families, manifestations of gendered power dynamics such as maternal gatekeeping, and comparison of fathers' versus mothers' vulnerability to interparental relationships. Consideration of gender also implies that

gender of children and parents may contribute to family roles and relationships in complex, interactive ways.

Several key theoretical models of fathering are consistent with and/or have explicitly incorporated a family systems perspective. One of these is Cabrera et al.' (2014) expanded model of father–child relationships, which incorporates interrelations between fathers and family relationships, including co-parenting and mother–child relationships, as well as the roles of other family members' characteristics and behaviors. This model also considers reciprocal and transactional influences between fathers and children and the role of child characteristics in father–child relationships. Palkovitz and Hull's (2018) resource theory of fathering adopts a family systems perspective by centering the father–child relationship (dyad) and focusing more on how fathers relate to children than on how fathers behave toward children. Resource theory also reflects systemic principles by its consideration of the important role of interpersonal resources, such as the co-parenting relationship, to fathering and the processes through which resources flow back and forth (reciprocal relations). Both Cabrera et al.'s model (2014) and Palkovitz and Hull's (2018) resource theory also consider how fathers, their relationships, and the contexts in which they are embedded evolve and adapt over time.

Interparental Relationships and Fathering

Given that family subsystems are mutually interdependent (Minuchin, 1985), how fathers relate to other important figures in the family (e.g., mothers) shapes fathers' parenting beliefs and behaviors. The interparental relationship is an important aspect of the family system that can have an impact on various aspects of fathering. Most past research has focused on the marital/romantic relationship, especially the role of marital conflict in fathering. Recently greater attention has been devoted to co-parenting, which is a more proximal context because of its focus on childrearing, and thus has a more direct influence

on parenting behaviors and child development (Feinberg, 2003). In discussing the roles of interparental relationships in fathering, the coparenting relationship should not be ignored and, in fact, may merit even greater attention from researchers (Cabrera et al., 2014).

Moreover, fathers and mothers may not be affected equally by interparental relationships. Krishnakumar and Buehler's (2000) meta-analysis found that parents with higher levels of interparental conflict showed more negative behaviors across multiple dimensions of parenting (e.g., harsh discipline, low parental acceptance). The associations between interparental conflict and parenting held for both mothers and fathers, although the effect was stronger for fathers (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). In other words, fathering appears more susceptible to negative relationships and interactions in the family context, an idea referred to as the "father vulnerability hypothesis" (Cummings et al., 2010). However, there is also evidence suggesting that the father's vulnerability in the interparental context is nuanced (Cummings et al., 2010). To better understand family processes and promote family wellbeing, it is important to know how parenting is shaped by interparental relationships and whether fathering and mothering are affected by interparental relationships in different ways.

Fathering and Marital Relationships

Fathers' experiences in the marital subsystem affect their parenting. Fathers' positive experiences in the marital subsystem promote fathers' involvement in childrearing, while negative experiences discourage fathers from engaging with their children. Fathers with higher marital satisfaction devote more time to parenting, and this link holds for resident fathers with young children in both western and non-western countries (Bouchard & Lee, 2000; Kwok et al., 2013). This association was further supported by a longitudinal study of new parents, which found that marital satisfaction positively predicted fathers' involvement in childrearing (Lee & Doherty,

2007). Likewise, fathers' reports of marital conflict were negatively associated with fathers' involvement in activities with infants (i.e., verbal stimulation, caregiving, and physical play), and these associations were consistent across different races/ethnicities, including African American, Latino, and White fathers (Cabrera et al., 2011). Notably, patterns of father involvement in infancy tend to persist as children develop (Fagan & Cabrera, 2012).

The marital relationship also shapes the quality of fathers' parenting behaviors. A more positive marital relationship appears to foster warm and responsive fathering behaviors. Stroud et al. (2011) found that better marital functioning was associated with fathers' greater responsiveness to children in dyadic interactions as well as more warmth in triadic interactions in early childhood. In addition to fathers' own perception of the marital relationship, a more positive marital relationship reported by mothers was also associated with fathers' parenting style (i.e., greater responsiveness) reported by children (Ponnet et al., 2013). Other studies indicate that marital relationship quality is positively related to father–child relationship quality (Galovan et al., 2014; Kouros et al., 2014). Moreover, the marital relationship can also affect fathers' parenting cognitions. Better couple relationship functioning is associated with fathers' higher parenting self-efficacy (Sevigny & Loutzenhiser, 2010). Kersh et al. (2006) found that in families of children with developmental disabilities, higher levels of marital quality predicted lower levels of fathers' and mothers' parenting stress over and above socioeconomic status, social support, and child characteristics. Overall, marital relationship quality is positively related to fathering quality and fathers' parental adjustment.

Additionally, negative aspects of the marital relationship (e.g., marital stress, conflict) and their adverse impact on fathering have drawn special interest from researchers. Elam et al. (2017) found that higher marital stress in middle childhood predicted lower monitoring and parenting consistency from fathers in early adolescence. In regard to marital conflict, Stevenson et al. (2019) found that prenatal interparental

conflict predicted a decrease in paternal parenting self-efficacy postpartum. These results were consistent with the study of McCoy et al. (2013), which showed that destructive marital conflict (e.g., hostility, physical aggression) was associated with fathers' inconsistent discipline, whereas constructive marital conflict (e.g., problem solving) was associated with higher paternal warmth. Using both observations and reports, Low and Stocker (2005) found a connection between marital hostility and father–child hostility in families of 10-year-old children. Similarly, a study of adoptive families found that a more hostile marital relationship was associated with greater hostile parenting of adoptive fathers, which was further linked to aggressive behaviors of children in toddlerhood (Stover et al., 2012).

The associations between the marital relationship and fathering are influenced by other contextual factors and family characteristics. For example, a study of low-income Mexican American families found a negative link between interparental conflict and fathering quality in single-earner families, but not dual-earner families (Formoso et al., 2007). In addition, the association between interparental relationship quality and fathering is not equally strong for resident and nonresident fathers. Fagan and Palkovitz (2011) found a stronger positive association between relationship quality at 1 year postpartum and father involvement in childrearing at 3 years postpartum among nonresident unmarried parents than among coresidential parents. The spillover effect from the marital subsystem to fathering may also be moderated by child gender. Bernier et al. (2014) found that fathers' marital satisfaction when children were 15 months old was positively related to the quality of observed father–son interactions when children were 18 months old but was not related to father–daughter interaction quality.

Fathering and Co-parenting Relationships

The co-parenting relationship is a proximal context in which parents work together to parent children. The co-parenting relationship, especially its key components—support and undermining—affects multiple dimensions of fathering (Altenburger & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2020; Merrifield & Gamble, 2013; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016). Supportive co-parenting includes one parent's respect, recognition, endorsement, and help for the other's parenting, whereas undermining co-parenting refers to attack, blame, and disparagement towards the other's role/work as a parent.

One focus of co-parenting research is on investigating how co-parenting relationships influence fathers' involvement in childrearing. Accumulated evidence has supported the positive link between supportive co-parenting relationships and fathers' greater involvement, including a series of studies stemming from large-scale longitudinal data sets (e.g., Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Birth Cohort). Hohmann-Marriott (2011) found an association between cooperative co-parenting and greater father involvement among both married and unmarried coresident couples. A similar pattern was observed for unmarried nonresident fathers with young children, such that positive co-parenting was a strong predictor of greater father involvement (Carlson et al., 2008). These findings were also supported by a longitudinal study, which found that, among unmarried nonresident fathers, co-parenting support at 1 year postpartum was longitudinally and positively related to fathers' engagement at 3 years postpartum (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). As for co-parenting conflict, a study of low-income Mexican American families found that higher levels of co-parenting conflict were related to less paternal engagement (Cabrera et al., 2009). In addition, compared to families with a disengaged or conflicted co-parenting style, families with a cooperative co-parenting style showed higher quantity and quality of fathers' involvement (Waller, 2012). Furthermore, co-parenting conflict did not impair paternal involvement as long as parents could cooperate and support each other, whereas a conflicted co-parenting style without cooperation impeded

paternal involvement more than a disengaged one (Waller, 2012).

Links between co-parenting relationship quality and fathers' involvement are moderated by many factors, like fathers' age, residential status, family employment patterns, and race/ethnicity. Fagan and Lee (2011) found that co-parenting support was positively related to adolescent fathers' involvement regardless of the relationship status between parents (i.e., romantically involved or not), and the association between co-parenting and fathers' involvement was stronger among adolescent fathers than adult fathers. With regard to fathers' residence, the positive association between co-parenting quality and fathers' involvement in childrearing may be stronger for nonresident fathers than for resident fathers, given that the coparenting relationship plays a critical role in shaping non-resident fathers' access to children (Carlson et al., 2008). Fagan and Palkovitz (2011) found a more robust link between co-parenting relationship quality and fathers' involvement among nonresidential non-romantic parents than among coresident or non-coresident romantically involved parents. As for family employment status, a study of families with preschoolers found that dual-earner couples demonstrated less undermining co-parenting behaviors in triadic interactions when fathers reported greater involvement in caregiving and play, whereas similar associations were not found in singer-earner families (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010). Only in single-earner families, greater paternal involvement in caregiving (but not involvement in play) was associated with more perceived undermining and less perceived support in co-parenting. Race and ethnicity also play a role in shaping the associations between co-parenting relationships and fathers' involvement. A study of an at-risk population showed that supportive co-parenting was related to greater fathers' engagement in infancy, and this association was stronger in White families than in minority families (Pudasainee-Kapri & Razza, 2015).

The co-parenting relationship not only exerts an impact on fathers' involvement in childrearing but also affects the nature of fathers' involvement. Drawing data from the National Survey of Families and Households, Sobolewski and King (2005) found that, for nonresident fathers, cooperative co-parenting (but not co-parenting conflict) predicted higher levels of father–child contact frequency, which in turn promoted responsiveness in fathering and strengthened father–child relationship quality. A study of low-income nonresidential fathers showed that a stronger co-parenting alliance with children's mothers was associated with higher father–child closeness, less father–child conflict, and higher paternal parenting self-efficacy (Fagan et al., 2016). Brown et al. (2010) found that supportive co-parenting was associated with greater father–son attachment security, but the same link was not found for father–daughter attachment security.

Fathers' experiences in the co-parenting subsystem can shape their self-perceptions and psychological adjustment to parenting. The support that fathers receive from partners can reduce their perceived difficulties of being a parent (Thomas et al., 2011). Similarly, Pinto et al. (2016) found that higher co-parenting support predicted higher levels of fathers' parenting self-efficacy at the transition to parenthood, whereas Merrifield and Gamble (2013) demonstrated that undermining co-parenting was associated with lower levels of fathers' parenting self-efficacy. Solmeyer and Feinberg (2011) found that parents with less co-parenting support and more undermining experienced higher levels of parenting stress. In addition, high co-parenting support buffered the adverse effect of high levels of negative infant temperament on fathers' depressive symptoms, while low undermining co-parenting promoted fathers' parenting efficacy in the context of low levels of negative infant temperament (Solmeyer & Feinberg, 2011). Consistent with these results, Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2016) also identified a negative association between fathers' perceived supportive co-parenting and parenting stress. Additionally, fathers' perception of supportive co-parenting was linked to higher levels of parenting satisfaction in the context of high paternal parenting self-efficacy (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016).

The literature reviewed thus far bolsters the concurrent and longitudinal associations between co-parenting relationships and fathering. However, there are also studies supporting the opposite direction of effects, indicating that father involvement in childrearing predicts subsequent co-parenting relationship quality (e.g., Fagan & Cabrera, 2012; Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2012). These conflicting results are not necessarily surprising. From a family systems perspective, associations between co-parenting and father–child relationships are bidirectional and transactional. Evidence for one certain perspective or direction cannot preclude other possibilities. Moreover, research findings can vary depending on populations, family structures, child developmental stages, and so on, given that co-parenting and fathering may shape each other in different manners in families with different characteristics. For example, co-parenting seems to more strongly predict paternal involvement for at-risk families than for low-risk families (e.g., adolescent fathers vs. adult fathers; resident fathers vs. nonresident fathers; Carlson et al., 2008; Fagan & Lee, 2011; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011).

Marital Relationships, Co-parenting Relationships, and Maternal Gatekeeping

As suggested by family systems theories, the marital relationship and the co-parenting relationship are two interdependent dimensions of the interparental relationship. The marital relationship and the co-parenting relationship jointly influence fathering. The co-parenting relationship, with its close connection to the parenting context, mediates the associations between the marital relationship and fathering (Feinberg, 2003). Margolin et al. (2001) found that, for both fathers and mothers, partners' co-parenting relationship quality mediated the link between partners' marital conflict and their own parenting (i.e., parenting stress and parenting practices) in families with preschoolers and preadolescents. Similarly, Pedro et al. (2012) found that for families with 9- to 13-year-old children, mothers'

marital satisfaction had a positive influence on a series of fathering practices (i.e., emotional support, rejection, and control attempts) through maternal co-parenting behaviors. Holland and McElwain (2013) found that fathers' perceptions of co-parenting relationship quality mediated the associations between marital quality and father–child relationship quality in toddlerhood. Thus, co-parenting is central to understanding fathering in the family system.

Besides studying the general co-parenting relationship, one component of co-parenting relationships—maternal gatekeeping—has attracted many researchers' attention due to its strong connection with fathers' involvement in childrearing and fathering behaviors. Maternal gatekeeping refers to mothers' beliefs and behaviors of encouraging (gate opening) and discouraging (gate closing) fathers' engagement in childrearing (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). Mothers may close the gate to fathers by criticizing fathers' parenting approach, setting high standards for fathers, or assuming mothers should be in charge of making decisions on child-related issues (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Mothers can also open the gate by inviting fathers to get involved in childcare and related decision-making, facilitating father–child activities, or endorsing fathers' parenting efforts (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2015). Maternal gatekeeping has a direct influence on fathers' involvement in childrearing (Cannon et al., 2008; Fagan & Cherson, 2017; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008), which, in turn, affects the father–child relationship and fathers' parenting quality (Altenburger et al., 2018; Stevenson et al., 2014).

Furthermore, maternal gatekeeping may mediate or moderate the association between interparental relationships and fathering. A longitudinal study of families with adolescents indicated that more marital problem behavior was linked to less father–adolescent interaction via increased maternal gatekeeping attitudes, and the findings held for both European American and Mexican American families, as well as for both biological fathers and stepfathers (Stevenson et al., 2014). Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2008) demonstrated that maternal gate opening (i.e.,

encouragement) mediated the link between co-parenting quality and fathers' involvement during infancy, such that higher co-parenting quality was related to greater father involvement in childcare through elevated maternal gate-opening behaviors. In addition, maternal gate opening moderated the link between co-parenting quality and fathers' parenting competence. Only in the presence of higher maternal encouragement was co-parenting quality positively associated with higher observed paternal parenting competence in childcare.

Are Fathers More Vulnerable?

Fathers are not only influenced by interparental relationships but may be more susceptible to the family context than mothers. This notion is described by the father vulnerability hypothesis, which posits that interparental relations may have a stronger impact on fathering than mothering (Cummings et al., 2010). However, Cummings et al. (2010) argued that the father's vulnerability in the context of the marital or interparental relationship is nuanced. Although accumulating studies indicate that fathers and fathering are more influenced by marital relationships than are mothers, there is also evidence indicating no difference or different patterns for mothers and fathers. Some aspects of fathering may be more vulnerable to the marital context than others. Also, the association between interparental relationship quality and fathering is likely to be modified by many factors, including child's gender, child's age, marital status, and father's education level (Cummings et al., 2010; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000).

Since Cummings et al.'s (2010) review, more studies have emerged to test potential differences between fathers' and mothers' vulnerability to interparental subsystems. Some studies have provided evidence in support of the father vulnerability hypothesis. For example, Stroud et al. (2011) found that in families with children aged 3–6 years old, low quality of marital functioning more strongly predicted low responsiveness in parent–child dyadic interactions for fathers than

for mothers. A study of families with adolescent and adult children who had autism spectrum disorders found that fathering is more strongly influenced by marital satisfaction and child characteristics than mothering (Hartley et al., 2011). In regards to marital conflict, although the constructive marital conflict was associated with higher levels of maternal and paternal warmth in parenting, destructive marital conflict was only associated with paternal inconsistent discipline (McCoy et al., 2013). Moreover, the stronger impact of the marital system on fathering may last for years. Young adolescents reported less fathers' monitoring if parents reported more marital stress in children's middle childhood, while the same association was not found between marital stress and mothers' parenting behaviors (Elam et al., 2017).

In addition to fathering behaviors, the co-parenting relationship also appears to be more susceptible to fathers' experiences in the marital subsystem. A longitudinal study of first-time parents suggested that fathers' (but not mothers') perceptions of prenatal and postpartum marital quality could longitudinally predict co-parenting quality at 24 months postpartum (Christopher et al., 2015). Moreover, some family characteristics could strengthen the link between fathering and interparental relationships. By analyzing 15-day daily diaries from 203 families, Kouros et al. (2014) found that both fathers' and mothers' daily ratings of marital quality were positively related to their parent-child relationship on the same day, after controlling for global marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and parenting. However, mothers showed less spillover effect when fathers experienced high levels of paternal depressive symptoms. Furthermore, the time-lagged analysis found that lower maternal marital quality predicted an increase in mother–child relationship quality on the next day, in line with the compensatory effect. In contrast, the paternal marital relationship spilled over to the subsequent father–child relationship on the next day if high levels of maternal depressive symptoms were reported.

However, some studies also indicate a lack of evidence for differences between fathers and

mothers, suggesting both fathers and mothers appear susceptible to the marital experience. The results of Solmeyer and Feinberg (2011) suggested that the interaction of co-parenting quality and child temperament exerts similar influence on fathers' and mothers' parenting efficacy, parenting stress, and depressive symptoms in early parenthood. Moreover, high prenatal interparental conflict was predictive of both fathers' and mothers' decreased parenting self-efficacy after their child's birth (Stevenson et al., 2019). Some studies even demonstrated results indicating greater maternal than paternal vulnerability. Korja et al. (2016) found that only mothers' marital satisfaction from pregnancy to 18 months could longitudinally and concurrently predict cooperative and coordinated family relationships in triadic interactions at 18 months. In a study of low-income Black single-mother families with cohabiting male partners and adolescent children, maternal marital relationship quality was associated with mothers' parenting behaviors, but the same association was not found for male partners (Parent et al., 2014). Yu et al. (2010) found that the parent–adult child relationship of married mothers was more vulnerable to marital conflict than that of fathers or of divorced mothers.

These studies have revealed the complexity of family dynamics and the interdependence of family subsystems and have also left much space for future research. The overall extent of support for the father vulnerability hypothesis would be clearer if researchers explicitly tested differences in associations between interparental relationships and fathering versus mothering, rather than assuming that a significant association for fathers and a nonsignificant association for mothers is strong evidence of greater father vulnerability. It also may not simply be the case that fathering is more vulnerable to the family context than mothering. There are many potential factors that moderate the effects of interparental relationships on fathering. Besides investigating differences between mothers and fathers, future research could also investigate within-group variability among fathers in their vulnerability to the family context and identify factors that could buffer the adverse impact of negative interparental relationships on fathering.

Moreover, 'vulnerability' is not necessarily universally negative. Consistent with the differential susceptibility hypothesis, some studies found that fathers with certain personality traits were more susceptible to the effects of the family system, for better and for worse (Jessee et al., 2010; Slagt et al., 2015). For example, a study of parents of adolescents showed that, compared to parents low on openness (i.e., low flexibility and receptivity to new information and experiences), parents high on openness provided children with more support if they received high support from children, and they offered children less support if they received low support from children (Slagt et al., 2015). Similarly, Jessee et al. (2010) also found that, for fathers of infants high on the personality construct of constraint (i.e., highly conventional, inflexible), their parenting stress was more susceptible to the effects of marital relationship quality for better and for worse. Future research could further explore what aspects of fathering and what kinds of fathers are more susceptible to the impact of the family system and use this information to develop more individualized intervention strategies based on parents' characteristics and susceptibility. It will also be important to examine whether differences in fathers' and mothers' vulnerability exist across different populations and people with different gender ideologies.

In addition to focusing on the general associations between interparental relationship quality and fathering, future research could also investigate the more immediate effects of interparental interactions (e.g., delightful event in marital relationship, marital conflict, co-parenting support, and undermining) on fathering and father–child interactions (see, for example, Kouros et al., 2014), and examine whether fathering is also more vulnerable than mothering at the micro-level. A diary study by McDaniel et al. (2018) showed that daily couple relationship quality contributed to fluctuations in both fathers' and mothers' daily feelings about co-parenting. A better understanding of how these processes unfold on a day-to-day or even minute-by-minute

basis would not only contribute important knowledge toward a greater understanding of family systems but could also inform prevention and intervention programs for couples and families.

Parent–Child Relationships and Fathering

Interdependence of Parent–Child Relationships

As discussed previously, Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model of father involvement details a variety of factors that can affect fathers' parenting. Thus far, we have focused on the marital and co-parenting relationships and their effects on fathers' parenting. However, the parenting on the part of the mother or father can affect the other parent in ways that do not necessarily depend on the relationship between the mother and father. One parent may model the behaviors of the other parent in their own parenting (Barnett et al., 2008). Alternatively, the thoughts and feelings of one parent may influence the other parent through emotional contagion (Murdock et al., 2014). Positivity or negativity in one parent–child dyad may influence the other parent–child dyad, processes that could be particularly important in early infancy as parenting patterns are being established (Bell et al., 2007).

Among the first studies that examined the potential interdependence of mothers' and fathers' parenting comes from Barnett et al. (2008), who found that negative parenting, characterized by negative regard and intrusiveness, in one parent–child dyad was positively associated with negative parenting in the other dyad when children were 6 months of age. The authors noted that this finding is unfortunate in that negative parenting is likely to be consistent between parents, minimizing the chance for positive parenting from one parent to buffer the negative parenting of the other parent. Subsequent studies have found that interdependence between parent–child dyads goes beyond negative parenting. Zhang and Chen (2010) found that for parents of children 2–3 years of age, greater mother–child

closeness was negatively associated with father–child conflict 9 months later, whereas higher father–child conflict was positively associated with mother–child conflict 9 months later. Murdock et al. (2014) found that among parents of 3- to 5-year-old children, mothers' and fathers' negative affect were positively associated, as well as their positive affect. They also found crossover effects between mothers' and fathers' harsh parenting behavior, as well as their supportive parenting behavior.

Interdependence between parent–child relationships may extend to physiological regulation, as Blandon (2015) found that fathers' respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), a measure of physiological regulation, with higher values indicating better regulation, was positively associated with their own and mothers' supportive parenting of children's negative emotions when children were 2- to 5-years-old. Interestingly, Blandon (2015) also reported that there was a positive association between mothers' RSA and fathers' negative parenting. This may indicate that mothers with high RSA are well equipped to handle children's negative emotions and take on most of the responsibilities in doing so, leaving fathers ill-equipped when dealing with these situations. Newland et al. (2015) found that there is a significant crossover effect in which higher maternal hostility when children were age 4 predicted less dyadic pleasure in the father–child relationship when children were age 5. No such crossover effect was observed between paternal hostility and the mother–child relationship, which could lend further credence to the father vulnerability hypothesis regarding parent–child dyad interdependence. Finally, there is evidence that interdependence between parent–child dyads continues as children grow older, as shown in a longitudinal study by Scott et al. (2018). This study followed families from the time when children were 54 months old to fifth grade. They found that, at all time points, fathers' and mothers' sensitive parenting, characterized by respect for autonomy, positive emotional responsiveness, and encouragement, predicted changes in the other parent's sensitive parenting.

Taken together, the reviewed literature indicates that the father–child and mother–child relationships are often interdependent, and this holds for both positive and negative parenting behaviors. Furthermore, in some cases, fathers appear more influenced by the mother–child dyad than mothers are by the father–child dyad, supporting the father vulnerability hypothesis. Thus, the literature indicates that fathers' parenting in the context of the family system is interdependent with the mother–child dyadic relationship, in addition to its relations with interparental relationships. Future research should further investigate the potential crossover of different facets of parenting and potentially find ways of preventing the crossover of negative parenting behaviors between parents using interventions.

Reciprocal Relations Between Fathers and Children

Although fathers' parenting is greatly affected by mothers, it is also important to consider the effects of children on fathers' parenting. Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model of fathering illustrates a bidirectional relationship between fathers' parenting and children's characteristics, with children's characteristics influencing parenting behaviors as fathers' parenting behaviors affect children's development. This is consistent with transactional models (Sameroff, 1975), which state that child development is the result of constant back-and-forth interactions between a child and the environment they are raised in, of which parents are a prominent element. Indeed, many studies have observed varying effects of children's characteristics on fathers' parenting.

One child characteristic that may affect fathers' parenting is gender, although these findings are not always consistent between studies. Manlove and Vernon-Feagans (2002), as well as Leavell et al. (2012), reported that fathers are more involved and engaged with sons than with daughters. However, Cole et al. (2020) reported the opposite pattern—that fathers exhibited higher engagement as well as higher indirect care and less frustration with infant daughters than

infant sons. Child gender is not limited to affecting the quantity of fathers' involvement, however, as Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2006) found that while mothers and fathers were equally sensitive to their 1-year-old sons, fathers were less sensitive than mothers to daughters. Differential effects of child gender have even been found on fathers' internalizing problems, as Andreas et al. (2018) found that daughters' internalizing symptoms at 7 years of age predicted depressive symptoms for fathers 1 year later, whereas the same association was not observed for sons' internalizing symptoms.

Child gender may not only directly affect fathering, however, as research has also found differential effects of fathers' parenting on child development for girls and boys. Regarding the effects of fathers' parenting quality, Hertz et al. (2019) found that while higher father' parenting quality was associated with better executive functioning for both sons and daughters, the association was much stronger for sons at 18 months. With respect to other outcomes, fathers' parenting has been found to benefit daughters to a greater degree than sons, as seems to be the case with social competence. Corwyn and Bradley (2016) found that fathers' autonomy support was positively associated with daughters' self-control, resistance to peer pressure, and responsible behavior at age 16, while no significant associations were found between fathers' autonomy support and sons' measures of social competence.

Other characteristics besides child gender that can affect the parent–child relationship include children's temperament and behaviors, although findings for the roles of these characteristics in the father–child relationship and fathers' parenting behavior are similarly mixed. Temperament is a general term for how an individual typically reacts to different situations and regulates these reactions, and includes factors such as positive and negative affect, activity level, approach vs. withdrawal, and adaptability (Putnam et al., 2002). Early studies such as Volling and Belsky (1991) found that difficult infant temperaments characterized by fussiness, dullness, unpredictability, and inadaptability were negatively associ-

ated with fathers' responsiveness and affection. A subsequent study by McBride et al. (2002) yielded similar results, in that fathers of emotionally intense children experienced more parenting stress, and fathers were also less involved with less sociable children. However, these findings were only found amongst father–daughter dyads; there were no such associations for father–son dyads.

Not all studies have been consistent in indicating that children with more difficult temperaments elicit less involvement and less positive parenting behavior from fathers, however. Goldberg et al. (2002) found that fathers engaged more with infants that were higher in negative emotionality, although this study also found that fathers were less affectionate with children who were higher in negative emotionality. Padilla and Ryan (2019) reported similar findings, with fathers engaging more with their infants when infants were high in negative emotionality. However, they also found that there was a positive association between fathers' negative interactions, such as negative regard and intrusiveness, and children's negative emotionality. An explanation for these inconsistent and often contradictory findings may come from a recent study by Altenburger and Schoppe-Sullivan (2020), who reported no significant associations between fathers' parenting quality and infants' negative emotionality or regulatory capacity. They suggest that these nonsignificant findings may be due to their sample being low-risk and nonclinical, whereas a study that included families with fewer resources or children with higher negative emotionality may have yielded different results.

The reviewed literature indicates that children's characteristics affect fathers' parenting and the father–child relationship just as fathers' parenting affects children's development. However, the results of studies that have examined this topic are often inconsistent, with different studies finding seemingly contradictory results. There is a clear need for future research on the reciprocal effects of fathers and children on one another, which may be able to clarify some of these contradictory findings. Additionally, the effects of children's characteris-

tics on fathers' parenting must be heavily considered when designing interventions focused on enhancing fathers' engagement and parenting quality.

Implications

Family systems theories and the research based on them have the potential to be of use in informing public policy and interventions involving fathers. When making decisions that can have far-reaching ramifications for both fathers and their children, it is not only important to consider how fathers are affected as individuals but also how the family system as a whole and subsystem relationships are impacted. Failure to consider these ramifications could lead to decreased efficacy of policy changes or interventions or even worsening of family systems functioning and fathers' parenting prospects. Although there have been some attempts to expand support for parents, there is much more that could be done, especially for fathers (Teti et al., 2017). Two areas that may benefit from family systems theories and the research these perspectives have inspired are programs that aim to support new fathers and public policy regarding parental leave.

Parenting Programs for New Fathers

The transition to parenthood is a crucial time for parents, as it is during this time that patterns of parenting are being established for mothers and fathers (Bell et al., 2007). To this end, intervention programs meant to assist fathers in the transition to parenthood or increase fathers' parental engagement may be extremely helpful. Thus far, there have been a variety of attempts to design interventions that can accomplish these goals. One type of program that was designed to increase parental engagement is Head Start— early childhood programs meant to foster parental engagement to improve child outcomes among at-risk families. Most fathers that are part of Head Start programs, even nonresident fathers,

are involved with their 2-year-old children and engage in a wide variety of caregiving behaviors (Cabrera et al., 2004). However, fathers who were married or had an otherwise positive relationship with their child's mother reported higher engagement with their children than those who did not have a strong relationship with their child's mother, which supports the notion that the mother–father relationship can have important effects on the behavior of the father within the father-child dyad.

Interventions that target new parents and aim to improve family relationships, such as couple and co-parenting relationships, have also been implemented. Family Foundations is one such intervention, which consists of a series of classes before and after the birth of a family's first child (Feinberg et al., 2010). Follow-up studies conducted up to 3 years after the implementation of the program found significant improvements in parenting stress, parenting self-efficacy, co-parenting, harsh parenting, and children's emotional adjustment. Figuring it Out for the Child is an intervention curriculum that aims to inform unmarried parents about the benefits of positive co-parenting for children's development, as well as to develop the mother-father relationship and skills such as communication and problem-solving (McHale et al., 2015). Assessments indicated that most families who took part in this intervention saw improvements in constructs of interest, including mother–father communication and co-parenting (McHale et al., 2015). Finally, Supporting Father Involvement is an intervention meant to increase father involvement and improve the co-parenting relationship between fathers and their partners (Pruett et al., 2019). Implementation of the intervention reduced couple conflict, reduced harsh parenting, and led to generally better child outcomes (Pruett et al., 2019).

Thus far, intervention programs have proven effective in improving family relations, especially the couple and co-parenting relationships between fathers and mothers. Future interventions may want to move beyond the mother–father dynamic and focus on the improvement of multiple family subsystems. Strengthening the two parent-child dyads as well as the couple and

co-parenting relationships may improve fathers' parenting by giving the father a strong model in the mother–child relationship in addition to fostering cooperation with the mother. Thus, it may be of use to practitioners who work with children or families to consider ways to intervene in multiple family subsystems simultaneously to achieve stronger and potentially longer-lasting positive changes.

Parental Leave Policies

As stated above, the transition to parenthood is an important time for parents to establish their routines as a family (Bell et al., 2007). It is therefore worth considering the establishment of parental leave policies for fathers, as doing so may help promote higher paternal involvement with children. Seward et al. (2006) found that fathers who utilized parental leave were more likely to share childcare tasks with mothers than those who did not utilize leave, although there were no differences in time spent on childcare. Similar results were found by Tanaka and Waldfogel (2007), who found that fathers who made use of parental leave or worked shorter hours were more involved in childcare. There is also evidence that paternal leave allows fathers to develop their co-parenting relationship with their partner and eases some of the burden of childcare on mothers. For example, Petts and Knoester (2020) reported that the length of time fathers took off from work after the birth of their child was positively associated with couple and co-parenting relationship quality 1 year after birth. This improvement extended for up to 5 years after the birth of the child.

Given the evidence that parental leave can improve fathers' relationships with their co-parenting partners as well as boost their involvement with their children, parental leave for fathers has the potential to improve various relationships within families. Therefore, the implementation of policies regarding paternal leave should be considered to facilitate positive outcomes for families. However, policies must be carefully considered, as the effects of policy changes can be inconsistent. For example, the

implementation of two mandatory "daddy months" of parental leave in Germany did not lead to an increase in fathers' time devoted to childcare (Kluve & Tamm, 2013). The lack of change may indicate that other factors, such as societal expectations of fathers' parenting, may matter more than the amount of time fathers have available outside of paid work. However, the amount of parental leave days taken as part of a government-mandated policy in Sweden was shown to have a positive association with fathers' participation in childcare (Haas & Hwang, 2008). Again, cultural attitudes around gender roles may influence the effects of parental leave policy, as Sweden's parental leave policy was designed specifically to promote gender equality (Haas & Hwang, 2008). It is important to consider not only fathers but also mothers when implementing parental leave, as a study of couples in Italy found that mothers often take a primary role in the decision-making process regarding fathers' use of parental leave (Cannito, 2020).

As research and practice with fathers continues to expand, the benefits offered by adopting a family systems perspective are significant. Considering fathers not in isolation but in the context of reciprocal, transactional relationships and interactions with others in their family systems will foster a deeper understanding of fathers, children, and families and position practitioners to intervene more effectively.

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Positive Masculinity and Fatherhood

Brian P. Cole and Tristan P. Patterson

I have been a stay-at-home dad for the last six years. When my oldest child is at school, my two-year-old and I run errands, go to the park, and do all the normal things that people do when they aren't at work. I am not an "idiot dad" as so many commercials and TV shows seem to think that dads are these days. I have spent more time with my children than my partner, yet I get countless comments about babysitting my own children, critiques from strangers that want to make sure that I know what I'm doing when caring for my children (e.g., buckling them in the car seat, changing them, or feeding them at a restaurant), and backhanded compliments for being a stay-at-home dad. As much as this all makes me want to scream, I am proud to be a dad and want other dads to know that you are doing great work.

This story, which is an amalgamation of stories from several social media posts by fathers, mirrors the experiences of many fathers. Although cultural expectations for fatherhood are evolving as men take on a greater portion of childcare responsibilities, media portrayals of fathers still focus on mad dads, bad dads, absent dads, and bumbling dads (Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018; Scharrer et al., 2020). Messages that fathers are less competent than mothers are also reinforced by parenting books. Fleming and Tobin (2005)

found that fathers are rarely represented in popular parenting books, and when they are, it is often with a belief that they are secondary caregivers. Furthermore, when fathers were discussed, it was in a negative context 30% of the time (Fleming & Tobin, 2005). Donald Clifton, the father of strength-based psychology, once asked, "What would happen if we actually studied what is right with people?" (CliftonStrengths, 2018). In this chapter, we aim to ask what is right with fathers by exploring positive masculinity and positive psychology.

Positive Masculinity

Although prominent theories in the psychology of men and masculinities have garnered a gender-sensitive approach to studying boys and men, these models have primarily emphasized a problem-focused or deficit perspective on men's socialization processes. For instance, many theories articulate the many ways in which men feel psychological strain to reach the ideals of "manhood" (Pleck, 1995), the distress brought on by not adhering to masculine norms (Burkley et al., 2016; Eisler, 1995), and the conflict that men experience when adopting masculine norms (O'Neil, 2008; O'Neil, 2015). As Levant and Pollack (1995) described in the *New Psychology of Men*, traditional male norms such as toughness, competition, status, and emotional stoicism

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engender "certain male problems (such as aggression and violence, homophobia, misogyny, detached fathering, and neglect of health) as unfortunate but predictable results of the male socialization process" (p.1). This normative male-strain paradigm (see Levant, 2011), while seminal, can limit awareness of more inclusive and diverse forms of masculinities that promote men's personal and interpersonal health (Seidler et al., 2017).

In response, several theorists have argued for a more positive-psychological or strength-focused approach to masculinities (Cole et al., 2020; Hammer & Good, 2010; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; McDermott et al., 2019). Specifically, positive masculinity can be described as:

Prosocial attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of boys and men that produce positive consequences for self and others. These characteristics are not innate. Rather, they are learned and internalized through a socialization process in which boys and men develop masculine ways of thinking and behaving that promote healthy development while also fostering a sense of duty to others. In short, this process involves teaching males how to become decent men. (Kiselica et al., 2016, p. 126).

This perspective recognizes the consequences of the male gender role and men's potentially healthy gender-socialization experiences. Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010) proposed a Positive Psychology/Positive Masculinity Model (PPPM), which emphasizes male strengths as the starting point for fostering healthy masculinity. This model outlines a representative rather than exhaustive list of 11 male strengths, including (a) *male relational styles* (boys and men's tendency to create intimacy and friendship through shared activities); (b) *male ways of caring* (the expectation that men care for others through acts of service); (c) *generative fatherhood* (responding consistently to a child's needs to help the next generation); (d) *male self-reliance* (socialization to use one's own resources to confront life challenges); (e) *worker-provider tradition* (positive sense of self that comes from providing for loved ones); (f) *male courage, daring, and risk-taking* (socialization for men to take worthwhile risks to protect others or completing dangerous jobs); (g) *the group orientation of boys and men* (orientation toward achieving a common purpose among other men (e.g., athletic teams, boy scouts); (h) *the humanitarian service of fraternal organizations* (involvement in organizations that engage boys and men in benevolent service); (i) *men's use of humor* (boys and men use humor to obtain intimacy with friends); (j) *male heroism* (exemplifying positive qualities of traditional masculinity through noble action); and (k) *men's respect for women* (actively challenging norms and other men that promote sexism and violence against women; Gidycz et al., 2011).

To explore the validity of the PPPM model, McDermott et al. (2019) used focus groups and interviews to test whether many positive masculine role norms were viewed as positive and expected of men in the broader culture. Their analysis provided some support for the PPPM model, especially related to norms around physical toughness, providing for loved ones, and acting heroically (McDermott et al., 2019). Interestingly, many of the male-role norms rated as positive and expected of men represented more moderate expressions of traditional masculinity. This finding is consistent with previous research, suggesting that how norms are enacted (e.g., rigid vs. flexible) could significantly affect masculinity expressions more than their content (Kiselica et al., 2016). Thus, broadening conceptualizations of masculinities beyond restrictive forms can underscore more functional and healthy masculinities (Seidler et al., 2017).

Research Support

Despite the complexities around definitions and measurement of positive masculinity, research supports that some aspects of conformity to masculine roles could improve men's health. Hammer and Good (2010) identified that conforming to masculine norms such as risk-taking, primacy of work, and pursuit of status was associated with higher courage, autonomy, and resilience.

Further, in the absence of male gender role conflict, conforming to masculine norms predicted higher hope and psychological well-being (Cole et al., 2019a). Wong and colleagues' work on subjective masculine norms also showed that conforming to prescriptive norms (i.e., what men should do) and proscriptive norms (i.e., what men should not do) were associated with higher happiness and less loneliness (Wong et al., 2020).

Positive masculinity also exists within different cultural contexts. Estrada and Arciniega (2015) identified that Latinx men conformed to *caballerismo*, an alternative to the more traditional *machismo* that favors valuing family and benevolence over power and control, which predicted higher well-being. Among a sample of men from Singapore, conformity to subjective masculine norms also predicted higher life satisfaction, mediated by gender identity satisfaction (Wong et al., 2016). Further positive male role models that support financial independence, nonviolence, and community contribution play a vital role in African American men's expression of healthy vs. unhealthy masculinities (Roberts-Douglass & Curtis-Boles, 2013).

Male sensitive-health interventions demonstrate the benefits of a positive-masculinity focus. Hammer and Vogel (2010) tested the effects of male-sensitive brochures to increase men's positive help-seeking attitudes and decrease their self-stigma for depression. The brochures used language around counseling that was compatible with traditional masculinity (e.g., "strategies for attacking depression" and describing a counselor as a "mental health consultant") and provided testimonials from other men who sought out counseling to help normalize the process. The male-sensitive brochures improved men's attitudes and reduced their self-stigma toward mental health (Hammer & Vogel, 2010). Additionally, Cole, Petronzi, and Colleagues (2019b) found, through presenting men with different therapeutic-orientation vignettes, that men preferred the positive psychology and positive masculinity therapy orientation over cognitive-behavioral therapy. In sum, approaching men from a positive psychological perspective can play a pivotal role in protecting their personal and interpersonal health.

Rationale for a Positive-Masculinity Perspective

In masculinity research, dominant theories suggest that normative development can leave men to "feel strained, disconnected from care-givers, and emotionally scarred for life" (Levant and Pollack, 1995). However, this assumption is largely contradicted. Most boys and men have secure attachments (Kiselica & O'Brien, 2001), express emotions within the normal range (Wester et al., 2002), and have long traditions of acting in a prosocial manner (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010). If unhealthy masculinity is the root of the problem, healthy masculinities could be a protective factor (Kiselica et al., 2016). Thus, neglecting how most men express healthier forms of masculinity limits our understanding of how to counteract its harmful expressions.

Another reason to focus on men's positive expression of masculinities is to observe how the masculine gender-role changes over time and across contexts. Conceptualizations around masculine norms are often centered around dominant European cultures (Mahalik et al., 2003) and may not capture norms in other cultural groups (Wong et al., 2013). McDermott and Schwartz (2013) identified that older male graduate students tended to be pro-feminist; racial and sexual minoritized individuals tended to be ambivalent about traditional masculinity, and heterosexual men tended to have lower ambivalence about conforming to traditional masculine norms. Further, Wong et al. (2020) uncovered that U.S men's conformity to subjective masculine norms was a mixture of traditional (e.g., emotional toughness, avoidance of femininity, and heterosexism) and more progressive masculine roles (e.g., nonaggression, being a gentleman, and moral character). Different generations and cultures of men may express healthier forms of masculinity.

Positive Masculinity and Fatherhood

Fatherhood is a central domain in which men can express positive masculinity. Men engage in generative fathering, referring to responsive, consistent fathering that helps the next generation lead a better life (Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998). In this sense, fathers play an essential role in their children's emotional and social development (Kiselica, 2008). Land et al. (2011), for instance, identified negative correlations between father–son bonding and gender role conflict and attachment avoidance in adult men. Approaching fathers from a positive masculinity framework may also help build rapport and investment in intervention strategies. Early program developments in addressing the needs of young parents found that many fathers wanted help dealing with the stressors associated with parenthood, yet most programs primarily focused on mothers' needs (Kiselica et al., 2016). This practice presented a challenge of how to engage men who were facing stressors in fatherhood.

Kiselica et al. (2016) uncovered that in response to fathers'lower engagement levels in parenting programs, intervention experts began using principles consistent with the positive masculinity framework. For instance, program developers started accentuating career counseling and job placement opportunities to support the worker–provider role in young fathers' lives. To accommodate male ways of relating, outreach strategies changed from traditional face-to-face conversations to meet men where they were accustomed to forming friendships (e.g., basketball courts, pool halls). Programmers also started incorporating recreational activities and male-oriented support groups to highlight the group orientation of boys and men. These program changes evinced many positive benefits, including greater paternal involvement with infants among adolescent fathers (Barth et al., 1988), increased father–child interaction, decreased conflict with fathers' partners, and increased employment (Romo et al., 2004).

The previously mentioned efforts to engage fathers represent the changing role of men in the family. Fathering has shifted from clear "breadwinner" roles to care-integrated models (Scambor et al., 2014). For instance, exposure to egalitarian male role models growing up predicts less sexism and more participation in domestic chores among Chilean and Croatian men (Wong et al., 2017). Elliott (2016) proposed a practice-based model of caring masculinities, describing masculine identities that reject domination and embrace values such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality. Fathering that incorporates values of care can help mitigate the harmful aspects of masculinities (e.g., emotional restriction by helping fathers experience the benefits of showing care toward themselves and others (feeling competent, loved, and responsible) (Elliott, 2016). In recognizing that fathers inherently want to connect with their partners and children, supporting their strengths and relationships may reshape masculinities to support gender equality and equity (Hanlon., 2012).

Critiques of Positive Masculinity

It is important to note that emerging critiques of positive masculinity warrant further discussion. Addis (2018) suggested that exploring positive masculinity unnecessarily attributes positive gender traits to positive "human traits." Thus, Addis posits that teaching men to be "good humans" would be preferable to teaching them to be "good men." Additionally, many strengths identified in the PPPM model are experienced individuals regardless of gender. McDermott et al. (2019) found that 36 of the 79 potentially positive masculinity attributes were expected more of women than men, and 11 were gender-neutral. Further, nearly all suggested positive male norms around relationality (e.g., dependable, fair, encouraging) were viewed as more feminine than masculine. Addis et al. (2010) also expressed concerns that positive masculinity promotes essentialism and reinforces "notions that there is something good about a man that makes them men, that those good things have something to do with what it means to be a man" (p. 110). Consequently, critics of the theory voice caution that "positive

masculine traits" can be conflated with positive human traits and that assigning gender to these abilities is exclusionary.

Nevertheless, men's engagement with traditionally masculine behaviors may allow for flexibility in the male gender role. De Visser and McDonnell (2013) identified that men's attempt to accrue "masculine capital"—that is, "man points" obtained through engaging in traditional masculine behavior—leads to increased health habits and permits men to enact more traditionally feminine behaviors (e.g., football players crying after a loss, Wong et al., 2011; help-seeking, de Visser & McDonnell, 2013). However, the ability to use or trade masculine capital is limited because different masculine or nonmasculine behaviors have different values. Individuals may have varying access to accruing masculine capital based on their proximity to privilege and accepted masculinities (de Visser & McDonnell, 2013). For instance, some fathers may experience difficulties in accruing masculine capital based on how society treats their other salient cultural identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation). Thus, research in positive masculinity must be aware of the intersection between masculinity and privilege when accessing positive or negative outcomes.

Positive Psychology

Given the concerns noted above, some may find it preferable to take a positive psychological approach to work with fathers. Positive psychology is the "scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning" (Lopez et al., 2019, p. 3). Whereas psychology primarily focuses on the remediation of symptom distress, positive psychologists advocate for making people's lives more fulfilling and for identifying and nurturing talent (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In short, positive psychology is a balanced perspective that seeks to understand the assets and deficits within the person and within their environment (Wright & Lopez, 2002). Consider the example of working with a father who is

struggling to connect with his child. Within a traditional approach, interventions would likely focus exclusively on problems in the relationship between the father and the child, identifying psychosocial factors within the father that may contribute to his problems with parenting (e.g., conflict between work and family responsibilities, restricted emotionality, or adherence to traditional gender roles for caregiving). In addition to understanding the problem, a positive psychology approach would broaden the conceptualization to include the father's strengths (e.g., being a good provider, engaging in play, use of humor, etc.) as well as potential environmental supports and barriers. For example, does the father have a support network on which he can rely to process his experiences of parenting? Do work demands lead him to miss time with his children? This attention to the environment could reframe internalized deficits in parenting as understandable reactions to environmental stressors (Ivey & Ivey, 1998). As a result, the father might be less defensive and more open to making changes. Relatedly, by broadening the conceptualization to include what is right with a person, clinicians can empower their clients by helping them to appreciate that they are more than the sum of their symptoms. Furthermore, this balanced conceptualization allows for the identification of strengths and resources that may support the father's goals for his relationship with his child.

Whereas positive masculinity theory focuses on gender-specific examples of strengths, positive psychology focuses more broadly on human emotions, traits, and strengths in the promotion of well-being. Positive traits include constructs such as hope, flourishing, and character strengths, as well as prosocial behaviors including empathy, forgiveness, and gratitude (Lopez et al., 2019). For example, positive cognitive states such as hope predict academic success, interpersonal functioning, and physical health outcomes (e.g., pain tolerance, adherence to medical advice, adjustment to chronic medical conditions; Gallagher & Lopez, 2018; Rasmussen et al., 2018). Flourishing (i.e., high well-being and low symptom distress) is associated with healthy psychosocial functioning, work attendance, and

physical health (Keyes, 2007). Mindfulness is associated with reduced stress and rumination, improved working memory, cognitive flexibility, and relationship satisfaction (Davis & Hayes, 2012). Similar individual benefits are seen with engagement in prosocial behaviors (e.g., improved physical and psychological health, well-being, relationship quality, and attachment) (Lopez et al., 2019).

Positive psychology also explores emotional experiences including love, joy, amusement, compassion, and awe (Tugade et al., 2021). Fredrickson's broaden and build theory of positive emotion (2001) provides a framework in which negative life events and emotions help clients to focus on specific problems, whereas positive life events and emotions lead individuals to see more possibilities and perspectives while promoting problem-solving, creativity, and building resilience. Another avenue for exploring emotion is emotion approach coping (EAC). EAC encourages individuals to understand their emotions rather than avoid them. This includes allowing oneself to experience feelings rather than engaging in emotional restriction and developing the efficacy to have emotional responses to stress without feeling overwhelmed and unable to confront stressors (Moreno et al., 2021). In the case of a father experiencing intense parenting stress, this could involve understanding why the emotions are occurring, identifying the underlying concern, and confronting stressors directly rather than becoming angry or disengaging from important relationships. This may be particularly challenging given male gender role socialization's emphasis on emotional restriction and norms for acceptable male expression. Although research has not explored EAC in the context of parenting, past studies suggest that women engage in more EAC than men (Moreno et al., 2021).

Positive Psychology and Families

The family systems perspective of positive psychology emphasizes the importance of all members of the family experiencing positive emotions, engaging in meaningful activities, and internal-

izing their strengths for families to flourish (Conoley et al., 2015; Seligman, 2002). Several theoretical approaches integrate positive psychology into family therapy. Conoley and Conoley's (2009) model of Positive Family Therapy integrates strength-based interventions and positive emotion to work toward approach goals. Similarly, Family-Centered Positive Psychology (Sheridan et al., 2004) is a solution-focused approach to family empowerment that emphasizes the use of family strengths, development of family, competencies, and social supports to meet family goals. These models are uniquely focused on improving family functioning rather than focusing primarily on remediation of deficits to help the family live healthier, happier, and more resilient lives. Although these models demonstrate promising benefits for parents and children, there is far less research focusing exclusively on positive psychology and fatherhood.

Positive Psychology and Fatherhood

Working with a sample of 413 Latino and White residential fathers of infants, Cole and colleagues (2021) explored relations between hope for parenting, paternal involvement, and paternal mental health. Fathers who were high in hope (i.e., having specific parenting goals, identifying ways to reach those goals, and finding ways to stay motivated when things become challenging) reported higher levels of warmth and attunement (i.e., playful interactions with baby), positive engagement (i.e., hands-on care of baby), and control and process responsibility (i.e., scheduling and making decisions for baby) as well as less frustration in their parenting role. Furthermore, hopeful fathers reported less depression, anxiety, and stress (Cole et al., 2021). Relatedly, emerging evidence suggests that hope-based fathering approaches are also beneficial to nonresidential fathers as measured by compliance with child support payments (Chan & Adler-Baeder, 2019).

Well-being also appears to be an important protective factor for new fathers. In an

examination of the role of emotional, social, and psychological well-being on father involvement with infants, Cole (2020) found that well-being was a stronger predictor of involvement than symptom distress. More specifically, fathers who reported high levels of well-being had similar levels of warmth, attunement, and positive engagement with their babies regardless of their experiences of psychological symptom distress. Furthermore, new fathers reporting symptoms of depression and anxiety engaged in more indirect care for their babies than dads with high well-being that did not report mental health concerns. Taken together, these studies provide emerging evidence that positive cognitive states, such as hope and well-being, are associated with father involvement.

Despite the benefits outlined above, research on the positive psychological functioning of men is scant in comparison to deficit-based research on masculinity. Not integrating positive functioning within masculinity research can limit scholars' knowledge of men's positive traits, emotions, and prosocial behaviors (Cole et al., 2020). Cole and colleague's (2020) content analysis of 18 years of research in APA's *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* (PMM) journal discovered that only 15% of PMM articles had a positive focus or a focus on variables that had a positive relationship with healthy outcomes (e.g., paternal involvement predicting higher well-being in fathers). Further, only three articles focused on men's empathy, and only one focused on men's gratitude. Not attending to these positive constructs frames unhealthy masculinity as foundational and unavoidable in men's lives, minimizes our understanding of men's potential, and reinforces a deficit approach to understanding fatherhood.

Recommendations for Strength-Based Work with Fathers

- Individual and clinical settings.
  - Take the time to assess what fathers are doing well. This may be done informally, but for a more formalized assessment, consider using the comprehensive model of positive psychological assessment (Owens et al., 2015). Identifying, affirming, and building masculine strengths in client narratives may be a way to lower resistance and increase engagement in therapy (Englar-Carlson, 2006).
  - Identify and embrace healthy masculinity in the lives of your male clients (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010). As practitioners, we only look for things we believe to exist. If we believe that masculinity is inherently toxic or that all dads are secondary caregivers, that is what we will find in our practice.
  - Facilitate positive emotional experiences for fathers. Increases in positive emotion facilitate psychological growth and changes in the lives of clients by building self-efficacy, allowing them to positively reframe past experiences and helping clients to see a variety of possible outcomes and solutions (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008).
- Program development.
  - Positive relationships with others are among the strongest predictors of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1996). In addition to developing groups that focus on teaching fathers caregiving skills and child development, facilitate the development of social support by facilitating the development of relationships among men in these programs. Peer-led groups such as City Dads and Boot Camp for New Dads allow fathers to connect with other fathers, which provides outlets for normalization of stress and challenges, opportunities for modeling of behaviors, and much-needed social support.
  - Parenting programs may benefit from integrating hope theory by helping fathers to set effective parenting goals, identify ways to reach these goals, and build strategies for staying motivated to work on these goals during times of stress, fatigue, and challenge.

– Provide opportunities for fathers and children to bond through action. In addition to providing scaffolding for interactions through activities, this will provide opportunities for fathers and their children to share positive emotional experiences.

Limitations

There are several notable limitations in the positive psychology and positive masculinity research related to fatherhood. As noted by Cole and colleagues (2020), masculinities research has been largely deficit-focused. This is mirrored in fatherhood research, which has spent far more time exploring what is wrong with fathers than what is right with them. As a result, there is scant research on the positive functioning of fathers. The research that does exist has primarily focused on the experiences of residential fathers. Furthermore, the racial diversity of these samples does not mirror that of the latest US census. Finally, most of this research has focused on the experiences of residential fathers. Little is known about the positive functioning of nonresidential fathers, such as fathers on military deployment, incarcerated fathers, or noncustodial fathers. Due to these limitations, the findings of the studies outlined in this chapter may not be generalizable to the experiences of all fathers.

Future Directions

We opened this chapter by referencing Donald Clifton's question of what would happen if we studied what is right with people. We would like to end by asking what would happen if we studied what is right with fathers? Given how little research has been conducted in this area, there are numerous opportunities to explore positive approaches to supporting fathers in therapy, parenting programs, and other types of community supports. For example, future research could address the following questions:

- What is the role of positive emotional experiences in reducing paternal mental health problems during the transition to fatherhood?
- What aspects of cultural identity help build resilience in fathers?
- Are positive psychological or masculinity approaches more effective when utilized in parenting interventions?

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Transition to Fatherhood

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The shift to parenthood is a life course transition that is accompanied by changing roles and responsibilities. Becoming a parent to a new baby can be filled with joy and anticipation; however, it is also accompanied by stress and major adjustments. To date, much of the parenting literature has focused on the transition to parenting for mothers or examined how fathers support mothers during the perinatal period (Honikman & Singley, 2020). While the paternal focus in the parenting transition is increasing, there remains an imbalance in practice, policy, and research that recognizes the individual and relational factors involved in men's transition to parenting (Fisher et al., 2021). Attention to mothers' transition to parenting is vital because of, in part, the prevalence rate of postpartum depression, which ranges from 12 to 17% (Shorey et al., 2018). Likewise, recent research has found that 10.4% of men also experience postpartum depression (Cameron et al., 2016), drawing attention to the needed study of fathers during the perinatal period as well as throughout fatherhood. Postpartum depression exemplifies one of many shared experiences amongst parents which impact the mental health of parents, as well as the capacity of those individuals to be effective caregivers. Given that families are a system, each member affects other family members. Thus, it is vital to examine the individual adjustment of all parents, as well as relational components such as co-parenting support, relationship satisfaction, family support, social support, and the parent–child relationship.

This chapter is father-focused, centering on the individual and relational factors that impact fathers' transition to parenthood and fatherhood. We first provide a brief overview of the study of fatherhood and situate the conceptualization and measurement of father involvement in the perinatal period. Second, we review current issues, challenges, and supports during this transitional perinatal period. We conclude the chapter with implications for practitioners, programs, and future research.

The Conceptualization of Fatherhood

Life transitions involve cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). The perinatal transition to parenting consists of imagining being a parent and preparing to be the

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imagined parent. LaRossa and Sinha (2006) describe the transition to parenthood for fathers as an experience of socially constructing what it means to become a father. Fathers prepare themselves for this life course transition by using language and nonverbal symbols present in both their social context and parent education opportunities available to new parents. The conceptualization of becoming a "good father" has been a focus of the transition to fathering literature with this time period being referred to as a "developmental engine" for men in becoming a father (Carlson et al., 2016; Palkovitz & Palm, 2009; Randles, 2018). For example, fathers expressed the goal of being a good father differentially based on their social location with lower-income fathers discussing how they were developing to be a good father (e.g., good father status is in development), and higher-income fathers discussed how they would be a good father (e.g., good father status achieved; Carlson et al., 2016). Having the resources and role models needed to understand what constitutes a good father and effectively making that transition contributes to how fathers perceive themselves as fathers, as well as how they act toward this goal. As social and contextual factors continue to change along with the social construction of the conceptualization of fatherhood, so will the expectations and goals of fathers transform during the transition to fatherhood.

Dad 1.0

Throughout much of the twentieth century, cultural norms for fatherhood involved supporting the child's mother, earning money for the family, and being the disciplinarian (Isacco et al., 2010). This model of fatherhood is evident in media portrayals of fathers being the breadwinner, provider, and disciplinarian. These norms are also reflected in the literature on parenting, which primarily focuses on mothers, conceptualizing father involvement using proxies such as financial contributions and overall time spent in the home. Depictions of "Dad 1.0" are often devoid of emphasis on emotional connection, affection,

and hands-on childcare, specifically in infancy. This model of fatherhood is heavily influenced by rigid adherence to masculine norms, including emotional restriction, avoidance of femininity, a conflict between work and family roles, and restricted affectionate behavior (David & Brannon, 1976; O'Neil, 1981).

Dad 2.0

Whereas the "Dad 1.0" conceptualization of father involvement explored financial contributions and overall time spent in the home, "Dad 2.0" models of father involvement have focused more on what the time fathers spent with their children looks like. Time spent is not defined merely as related to disciplinary in nature. For example, questions about fatherhood using the "Dad 2.0" model ask: are fathers engaging in play with their children, reading to their children, engaging in caregiving (e.g., diapering, swaddling, and bathing), and building emotional connections with their children? These changes in paternal caregiving roles are the result of broader societal changes, including women's increased participation in market work and evolving gender norms for fatherhood (Yogman & Garfield, 2016).

Modern conceptualizations of fatherhood are influenced by Dollahite and Hawkins (1998) model of generative fatherhood. Within this model, fathers are engaged co-parents who are committed to guiding the next generation towards the state of "thriving" (Keyes, 2005). Emphasis in modern conceptualizations is placed on direct involvement as well as emotional involvement in which fathers support their child's development. Whereas "Dad 1.0" encourages rigid adherence to traditional masculine ideology, "Dad 2.0" encourages fathers to be emotionally open to their partner and baby, to be nurturing, and to share caregiving responsibilities for their children. For fathers in the transition to fatherhood period, forming their own conceptualization of fatherhood is influenced by these cultural and social norms of what it means to be a good father (Randles, 2018). In addition, multiple factors

influence how fathers identify and behave as fathers during this transitional period (Palkovitz et al., 2014).

The Perinatal Period: What Kind of Father Will I Be?

As fatherhood roles have continued to evolve, so has scholarship around father involvement. While considerable early research in this area addressed nonresident fathers and ways in which fathers' attributes and behaviors predicted problems with their children and families (Bronte-Tinkew & Horowitz, 2010), addressing the specifics of co-residing, positive, and generative fathers of infants has received relatively less attention in the scholarly literature. Fathers are often studied as dependent variables, indicating that fathers are worthy of a specific focus in which paternally related outcomes are assessed and addressed, rather than simply a predictor of the partner and/ or infants' outcomes. Two common approaches to understanding the fatherhood role include the modeling hypothesis and the compensatory hypothesis (Masciadrelli et al., 2006). The compensatory hypothesis posits that as fathers head into the perinatal period, their sense of fatherhood role and identity is primarily shaped by a commitment to making up for any negative experiences that they had with their own fathers. On the other hand, the modeling hypothesis suggests that a new father is more apt to enact fatherhood norms and behaviors that more closely mirror what the father experienced with his own father or father figure. Guzzo (2011), studying a large sample of fathers from the longitudinal Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Survey, found stronger support for the modeling hypothesis, showing that having an involved, coresidential father relates to new dads having more favorable attitudes toward fatherhood than those without such fathers. In this way, to more fully understand how a father experiences the role and identity shifts characteristic of new parenthood, it is essential to address his own history and meaning of fatherhood in his own context including his family of origin.

The Postpartum Period: I'm a Father, Now What?

Individual, relational, and social processes are each fundamental factors that contribute to a man's understanding of his role as a father and, consequently, his actions as a father. Interaction between the individual and his context (e.g., co-parent, social expectations) contributes to a father's construction of his identity and behavior in complex ways through the transition to fatherhood. For example, a sense of competence as a father is associated with beliefs and perceptions of his co-parent, as well as engagement with his infant (Favez et al., 2016). In early infancy, fathers' sense of competence has been associated with more engagement with the infant and high co-parenting conflict, whereas the maternal sense of competence was associated with lower co-parenting conflict. At 18 months, fathers' sense of competence was associated with more engagement with the child even when there was lower co-parenting support at that stage (Favez et al., 2016). These findings underline the conflict that can exist between personal beliefs and social expectations of mothers and fathers and the interaction between co-parents in early infancy as contributors to child engagement and family interactions. Moreover, Favez et al. (2016) found that paternal depression was negatively associated with child engagement at 3-months-old, emphasizing the importance of individual factors early in the transition to fatherhood.

The 2000s brought a societal emphasis on shifts toward involved fathering with men shifting from simply *being there* toward a nurturing and caregiving role. As these expectations and social responsibilities of fathering have shifted, fathers have increased their household and childcare duties (Marsiglio et al., 2000). With changes in the socially expected responsibilities of fathering, the meaning of fathering for men changes (Day & Lamb, 2004). In a meta-synthesis of 13 qualitative studies of fathers of infants, men indicated that their understanding of the fathering role was less defined as compared to mothering and influenced by context and sociocultural expectations (Shorey & Ang, 2019). Moreover,

many factors were identified as influential in how men were involved as fathers, including co-parenting support, employment, fathers' infant care skills, and their models of fathering. Additionally, societal shifts influence the perception of masculine identity and fathering identity as men take on parenting roles that are socially constructed as more feminine gendered roles of parenting (Park et al., 2015).

Assessing Father Involvement with Infants

Infancy is a critical developmental period with numerous changes in growth and development, and parenthood is a life course transition that involves growth and development. A child's stage of development will impact fathers' engagement as children have different developmental and caregiving needs as they develop (Lang et al., 2014). Becoming a father is associated with life-style changes in fathers, including an increase in happiness, life satisfaction, and positive health behaviors (Eggbeen et al., 2009; Garfield et al., 2010; Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006). At the same time, fathers can experience increases in negative outcomes such as frustration, stress, and mental health symptoms (Baldwin et al., 2018; Psouni & Eichbichler, 2020). Father involvement during the infancy period has been associated with positive outcomes for children, setting up the child for future success (Sarkadi et al., 2008; Thomassin & Suveg, 2014). Moreover, families experience many changes within family processes as a new family member enters the system and family roles adjust (Kuile et al., 2021; Pinto et al., 2016). With the rising interest in the effects of father involvement during the critical stage of infancy, attention has been placed on measuring and assessing father involvement during this specific developmental period.

With shifts in social expectations for fathers, measurement and assessment of father involvement also shifted. In 1985, Lamb et al. identified three dimensions of father involvement: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Pleck (2010) classified three dimensions of father

involvement (engagement, warmth and responsiveness, and control) and added two auxiliary domains (indirect care and process responsibility). With these re-conceptualizations of father involvement, researchers utilized multiple forms of measurement of father involvement, including time diaries and self-report measures. Challenges with most father involvement measures were that they were mother-reported or targeted toward fathers of children of all ages (Adamsons & Buehler, 2007; Marsiglio et al., 2000). Moreover, debate on whether mothers' and fathers' behaviors are qualitatively different has driven the need for measures that are psychometrically developed from father-focused research and theory and normed on samples of fathers (Fagan et al., 2014). For instance, measures of autonomy support for infants showed conceptual equivalence between mothers and fathers; nevertheless, children responded uniquely to mothers with higher levels of autonomy support than to fathers (Hughes et al., 2018). These findings suggest differences that need to be accounted for between mother and father involvement behaviors. An overall measure of father involvement that is also not unique to the developmental stage of infancy may miss nuances of infant engagement behaviors, such as an increase in feeding activities.

Measures of father involvement often focus on only a few dimensions of father involvement, specifically time spent in play (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999). For example, several studies that measure father involvement with infants using the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study use a rating scale of the number of days per week spent in engagement activities (e.g., plays inside with toys, tells stories) and warmth activities (e.g., hugs or shows physical affection) (Cabrera et al., 2008; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007). Research using another large database, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort, also utilizes a rating of the number of times fathers participate in engagement and warmth activities, such as singing songs (Cabrera et al., 2009). To address the need for a measure of fathering of infants that is father-focused, Singley et al. (2018) developed the Paternal Involvement with Infants Scale (PIWIS), a multidimensional self-report

measurement of father involvement that uses five subscales of involvement: positive engagement, indirect care, frustration, warmth and attunement, and control and process responsibility. Each subscale assessed fathers' distinctive types of involvement to account for individual differences and is designed to be developmentally appropriate for infant caregiving and activities (e.g., soothing your baby when s/he is crying, arranging for childcare).

Examination of the PIWIS subscales with fathers of infants revealed factors that are associated with an increase or decrease in specific dimensions of involvement (Cole et al., 2020). Fathers' time spent in employment was a significant factor that differentially impacted the type of involvement in which a father participated, with more work hours associated with less involvement in warmth and attunement and more involvement with indirect care behaviors. Moreover, fathers' financial contributions to the family were associated with a decrease in indirect care, positive engagement, and control and process responsibility. When mothers' financial contributions to the family increased, fathers increased their involvement in these same three subscales of involvement. These findings are significant in understanding how involvement behaviors are associated with unique family processes endorsing the need for examining father involvement using a multidimensional measurement. Another study of fathers of infants that included low-income residential and nonresidential fathers examined the determinants of parenting with three dimensions of father involvement, verbal engagement, physical play, and caregiving, finding that child age, co-parenting relationship, and fathers' symptoms of depression, were differentially associated with dimensions of father involvement (McCaig et al. 2021). A study of a small sample of fathers indicated that those with clinical depression engaged less with their infants in active engagement activities, play excitation, and gentle touch compared to fathers without depression (Sethna et al., 2018). These results indicate the importance of assessing multiple dimensions of father involvement in infancy to inform early interventions for fathers of infants, specifically for those who are experiencing depression. Both McCaig et al. (2021) and Cole et al. (2020) found that fathers' depressive symptoms were positively associated with an increase in positive engagement, whereas Shafer et al. (2019) found a negative relationship. These contradictory findings may point to the need to examine child age as both McCaig et al. (2021) and Cole et al. (2020) examined depression in fathers of infants, and Shafer et al. (2019) had a large sample of fathers with children ages 2–17 years old. Fathers and families experience many processual changes during the transition to fathering, reinforcing the need to examine this transition as a specific developmental and life course event.

Challenges and Supports in the Transition to Fatherhood

Mental Health and Wellness

One area of concern in the transition to fatherhood is the experience of mental health challenges. In recent decades, more attention has been placed on understanding, screening, and designing interventions for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders among women. Although the focus has primarily remained on addressing mothers' mental health concerns, approximately 10.4% of fathers worldwide experience depression during the perinatal period (Cameron et al., 2016) and 2.4–18.0% of fathers experience anxiety (Leach et al., 2016). These rates are more than double the global point prevalence rates of depression (3.8%; Ferrari et al., 2013) and anxiety (4.7%; Baxter et al., 2013) among the general population of men.

Among the many identified risk factors related to paternal experiences of depression and anxiety, maternal depression is one of the strongest predictors (Don & Mickelson, 2012; Paulson et al., 2016; Wee et al., 2011), with estimates of 24–50% prevalence among fathers with female partners who also experience significant levels of depression (Goodman, 2004). Perinatal depression is also predictive of poorer relationship

adjustment (Whisman et al., 2011) and satisfaction (Don & Mickelson, 2014; Trillingsgaard et al., 2014). These impacts on relationships likely, in turn, affect parenting behavior (Christopher et al., 2015) and child outcomes (Knopp et al., 2017; Kouros et al., 2014; Salo et al., 2021). Added to the literature that demonstrates numerous correlations between paternal mental health and both father and child outcomes, the value of addressing fathers' mental health in the perinatal period becomes even clearer.

Despite the high perinatal prevalence rates of depression and anxiety among fathers, few fathers seek support during this time (Isacco et al., 2016). A prominent barrier for many fathers in accessing both informal and formal support resources is a lack of awareness about paternal perinatal depression, as well as the paucity of paternal screening initiatives (Darwin et al., 2017; Dye, 2020; Eddy et al., 2019; Edhborg et al., 2016; Rominov et al., 2018). Adherence to traditional masculine norms can also increase the stigma related to seeking help for depression (Darwin et al., 2017; Eddy et al., 2019; Edhborg et al., 2016; Rominov et al., 2018) because help-seeking contradicts the fierce independence often associated with traditional conceptualizations of masculinity (see Brannon, 1976). Not only do traditional gender roles reduce help-seeking in men with depression, so too does gender role conflict in which men are divided about what roles they should assume (Cole & Ingram, 2020). While not yet tested, it is likely that gender role conflict as a predictor of stigma and non-help seeking would also be pronounced in fathers. Additionally, fathers in qualitative studies report experiencing further stigma, both internal and external, specifically during the perinatal period due to the father's perceived role as protector and provider (Dye, 2020; Eddy et al., 2019; Rominov et al., 2018). Fathers report feeling that they cannot seek help for their concerns because they need to be "the" strong source of support for their partner and child (Dye, 2020; Eddy et al., 2019; Rominov et al., 2018).

Fathering Modeling and Support

During the transition to parenthood, expectations and life roles shift. As men experience this transition to fatherhood, so does their role identity change. Fathers who are more actively involved with their children are associated with both the centrality and salience of father identity (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Fox et al., 2015; Pasley et al., 2014). Yet, the fathering literature has been inconsistent in linking father identity and fathering behaviors (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Pasley et al., 2014). Research has pointed to several explanations for these inconsistencies, including social gender norms, biological changes, relational experiences, work–life balance, and role models (McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014). Social expectations for mothers are focused on embracing the nurturing and caregiving role of motherhood and for fathers are focused on providing for and protecting their child (Petts et al., 2018; Walker & McGraw, 2000). Specifically, during the transition to parenting, women have been found to have a higher value for their role as a parent than fathers, and fathers affirm a higher value for their professional role (Kaźmierczak & Karasiewicz, 2019). Fathers' identity is influenced by these gendered social expectations and the modeling of their own fathers (Doherty et al., 1998). Some fathers look to adhere to the same fathering identities and behaviors as their fathers, while others choose to parent differently than their own fathers (Roy, 2006). With shifts in social expectations, fathers may see previous generations as setting lower expectations based on the modeled father identity (Roy, 2006). Fathers may use their social context as a lens into how others view the fathering role as an influence on how they internalize their fathering role identity (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). For example, fathers have been found to have an increase in positive life satisfaction during the transition to fatherhood when they do not agree with gendered parenting norms (Preisner et al., 2020). Thus, attention to the multiple contextual influences on father identity is essential to understanding father identity and subsequent

fathering behaviors during this transition to parenting.

Although societal expectations for fathering continue to evolve, media representations of fathers are lagging. In a content analysis of 34 highly rated sitcoms that aired between 1980 and 2017, Scharrer and colleagues found that representations of TV dads increasingly depict TV dads as less involved parents (e.g., engaging in less advice giving, rule setting, and discipline) than past generations of TV dads. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in portrayals of TV dads as foolish and incompetent in the last 20 years (e.g., being humorously inept parents). Given the role of television in shaping audience conceptions of gender roles and norms, this portrayal of fatherhood is concerning (Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018; Scharrer et al., 2020).

Despite the progress made in normalizing paternal involvement in parenting activities, fathers continue to experience substantial social pressures tied to their new parenting role. These social pressures far outweigh the presence of necessary social support (Gill et al., 2021). In fact, as men grow older, their nonfamilial social support networks often shrink, leading some researchers to proclaim a pandemic of male loneliness. It is well established that the friendships that men do have often lack the intimacy and support found in women's friendships (Bank & Hansford, 2000). Men may want these things, but they often must violate masculine norms for vulnerability to find emotional connection and support (Ohm & Wechselblatt, 2021). Shared activities help with this but often become challenging when transitioning to fatherhood. For many men, their partner is their primary source of social support. This is particularly problematic during the perinatal period, when fathers may be less likely to share their challenges and concerns with their partners due to the perceived need to avoid burdening them or to protect them. The City Dads Group is an active group that promotes father support and active fathering (City Dads Group, 2022). The City Dads Group has charters throughout the USA and provides an opportunity for fathers to get together to socialize with each other, promoting social support for fathers.

Work and Family

Work policies, such as paid paternal leave, provide significant support during the transition to fatherhood. Greater access to paternity leave is associated with more paternal involvement, less stress about conflicts between work and family roles, and less gender inequality in caregiving (Petts et al., 2020). Although work policies are evolving to support paid parental leave (e.g., leave available to both mothers and fathers), recent estimates suggest that only 40% of employers in the USA make parental leave available to their employees (Fuerstenberg, 2019). More frequently, US work policies provide paid leave only for mothers, leaving US parenting support practices to lag behind other industrialized countries despite such policies having a clear impact on infant health (Khan, 2020; Patton et al., 2017; Tanaka, 2005). In cases when leave is available, some men do not utilize these benefits due to concerns about compensation, social pressures to be the provider, and the belief that it is inappropriate for men to take leave (Petts et al., 2020). When fathers request leave, they receive lower performance evaluations and face a loss of earnings (Rege & Solli, 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2013), reinforcing the idea that men should not take leave to care for their children. These gender gaps are also present in other forms of family leave. For example, employers continue to reinforce the notion that the mother's market work should be interrupted when children are ill or school is closed. This was most evident during lockdowns and school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a significant decrease in women engaged in market work as well as decreased productivity among mothers working from home (Collins et al., 2020).

Recent attention has been brought to the need for parental leave for all parents in the transition to parenthood to promote engaged fathering and gender equality. In the past decade, the topic of fathers taking parental leave has prompted debates in many social spheres on the role of men after the birth of a child. For example, in 2019, a National League Baseball player took paternity leave after the birth of his child and missed a

championship series. In 2021, the Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg used paternity leave after the birth of his twins. Both of these events sparked debate and conversation about men using paternity leave. The social construction of the fathering role after birth was reinforced within society in each of these cases. Criticism centered around the social norm that men should work to support their child and mothers should be tasked with caring for the infant, such as breastfeeding.

Cultural and social ideologies are influential to father's identity and fathering behaviors (Shorey & Ang, 2019). In Finland, a country known for advancing policies to promote gender equality, discourse analysis revealed that time and policies are important to the cultural discourse in advancing fatherhood from traditional hegemonic fatherhood to multiple masculinities and engaged fatherhood (Kangas et al., 2019). The amount of paternity leave time that fathers take with their infants has been found to be associated with increases in fathers' engagement in the care of their child well into early childhood (Petts & Knoester, 2018). To support fathers in the transition to parenthood, discourse about social policies and social norms are needed so that fathers may reconstruct parenthood expectations, maximizing child and family outcomes.

Implications and Future Directions

As the information in this chapter reflects, paternal involvement and perinatal mental health in the transition to fatherhood are gaining more attention as fathers have become drawn into ever-increasing levels of childcare, including with their infants. A variety of larger societal shifts have driven this increase in fathers' involvement with their young children, and while research and policy related to new fathers' mental health and the importance to the health of their families are on the rise, there is a dearth of scholarly and applied professional work available to guide clinicians, policymakers, researchers, and administrators as they work to expand the tent of perinatal mental health and wellness to take a whole-

family, father-inclusive approach. Below, we make some brief recommendations intended to provide useful direction to move the field of early fatherhood forward.

Perinatal Mental Health

One essential initial step includes creating greater awareness around the prevalence of paternal perinatal mental health issues and the implications for the family system. While the prevalence of depression of men in the general public is approximately 5%, that figure doubles around birth. Moreover, the 10% of men who will develop depression in the perinatal period face a variety of substantial barriers in having their mental health needs recognized and effectively treated. Similarly, up to 18% of new and expectant fathers will develop an anxiety disorder during the period spanning from conception to approximately 1 year postpartum. Until we learn how to better educate about, and normalize the treatment of, parental mental health, there will remain a substantial negative impact on parents of all genders and fathers suffering with mental health conditions. Two decades of research have clearly shown the reciprocal relationships between paternal mental health issues, maternal mental health, the quality of the parental relationship, and the fathers' involvement with their children. Therefore, paternal mental health and the fatherhood transition difficulties not only highlight the need for comprehensive efforts to address these problems but also the promise of broad impacts on family health. For further detail related to paternal mental health, as well as clinical implications and future directions, please refer to Chapter "Paternal Mental Health in the Perinatal Period").

Father-Focused Parenting Programming

There is ample evidence that fathers value getting support from other fathers, when possible (Rominov et al., 2018). However, opportunities

to find groups that focus directly on new and expectant fathers are, unfortunately, rare. Establishing peer-led groups such as City Dads Groups and Boot Camp for New Dads that allow fathers to connect with each other to receive and provide support and opportunities for positive modeling is a sorely needed yet generally overlooked resource (Boot Camp for New Dads, 2022; Dads Group, 2022). Child welfare services, parent training classes, home visiting programs, and perinatal health services, including pediatric and OB/GYN services, all reflect ideal touch points at which fathers might take-up being part in a program aimed to encourage fathers to be more involved with their partners and babies.

The research on paternal engagement programs for fathers of infants is scant and fractured, but there are some key factors to consider when working to implement a successful program in keeping with the research literature. For those agencies who do enact father engagement programs, one of the most frequent mistakes is the so-called find-and-replace issue in which they take a program that was developed to engage mothers, sub out "father" for "mother" in the materials, and try to run the same approach (Bellamy, 2014). Incorporating information, resources, and tools that are directly relevant to the specific fathers' needs will be much more likely to result in a successful program, so conducting even highly informal and small focus groups to ask fathers in that community or agency what they need is likely to result in more buy-in and efficacy than trying "engagement as usual" programming. In an overview of best practices in perinatal paternal engagement programming, Bellamy (2014) described three essential paternal training elements that are foundational for new fathers: (1) relationship hygiene to keep the parental relationship as strong as possible, (2) child development and involvement information, and (3) coping/self-care strategies. Bellamy also described "peripheral" elements of such programs, which strongly impacted fathers' perceptions about whether to participate. These "peripheral" elements include: (1) fathering images on the agency's social media and website, (2) father-inclusive language (as opposed to

"mothers, babies, and family members"), and (3) diverse characteristics of the program facilitators including gender, ethnicity, and fatherhood status. Consistent with the need to include diverse fatherhood representation, fathers prefer to receive input from other fathers with lived experience (Rominov et al., 2018), highlighting the need to recruit fathers and father figures with lived experience for paternal engagement programming. Evaluation of a recent, book-based parenting intervention showed that the greatest predictor of mothers' and fathers' participation in the program was the extent to which their partners participated (McKee et al., 2021). Thus, efforts to include families as cohesive, total units (rather than targeting only mothers or fathers) are likely to promote greater engagement and long-term success.

Furthermore, the fields of psychotherapy and program development would benefit from utilizing mixed qualitative and quantitative methodologies that address not only what works, but also why. In this way, enlisting existing research and theory to take a more nuanced, intersectional approach to understanding the processes at play in the development and remediation of paternal perinatal parenting and mental health issues will greatly advance the work of those tasked with supporting fathers during their transition to parenthood.

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Fathering and Attachment

Matthew J. Dykas and Andrew P. Smiler

Introduction

Fathering typically plays a significant role in children's attachment development. When fathers are consistently available, responsive, and sensitive to their sons and daughters, their children's innate attachment-relevant needs for physical and psychological protection are fulfilled. These positive father-related experiences should also serve as important occasions for children to forge and maintain a more fundamental, internalized sense of security that will help them achieve social, emotional, and psychological well-being (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Bretherton, 2010; Howes & Spieker, 2008). In this chapter, our principal aim is to provide a general overview of the ways in which fathers contribute to children's early attachment development from infancy to early adolescence. We begin this chapter with a brief theoretical review of the basics of child–father attachment formation and quality, how different father-related factors are associated with the quality of child–father attachment relationships, and how certain aspects of the child–father attachment relationships may be linked to key

developmental outcomes. Following this review of theory, we provide a selective review of contemporaneous and longitudinal empirical studies that have examined child–father attachment processes, while also giving attention to aspects of masculinity and other factors that may influence men's behavior as fathers. We end this chapter with concluding remarks that may serve useful in future theory building, research, and applied work.

Fathering in an Attachment Context: A Theoretical Overview

Child–Father Attachment: The Basics

The formation of early attachment bonds is based upon a child's inherent, biologically based drive to form an attachment to any individual who can provide a dependable source of physical and psychological protection (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Although the vast majority of theorizing and empirical work has been devoted to understanding how this process unfolds in infant–mother dyads, the same principles underlying this process should also apply to infant–father dyads. In infancy, most children will form attachments to their fathers around the ages of 9–12 months according to the normative phases of attachment development because these individuals have been consistently present in their infants' daily lives

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and have regularly addressed their various attachment-related needs (see Marvin & Britner, 2008, for a review). More precisely, in addition to viewing their fathers initially as simple responders to their reflexive attachment behaviors (e.g., spontaneous crying, smiling), infants may begin to perceive their fathers as physical and psychological *secure bases* from which to explore the surrounding environment. Around the same time, infants may begin to view their fathers as *safe havens* to which they can return in times of need and/or distress (i.e., when the attachment system enters a relatively high state of activation; see Ainsworth et al., 1978).

On the basis of their repeated daily experiences with their fathers, infants quickly learn just how capable their fathers are at adequately addressing their attachment-related needs for both secure base and safe haven provision and will begin storing such relational knowledge in cognitive-affective mental structures called *internal working models of attachment* (Bowlby, 1973; see also Belsky & Fearon, 2008). Over time, infants will rely on these internal working models to calibrate their behavioral attachment systems according to the kind of care and support they expect to receive from their fathers. This attachment-building process is considered a universal and inherent aspect of human development that exists across all races and cultures, at least from evidence gleaned from infant–mother relationships (see Ainsworth, 1989; Mesman et al., 2016; Posada et al., 2013), and is understood to shape individuals' later behavior and relationships with peers, romantic partners, and other close persons across the lifespan (Ainsworth, 1989; Berlin et al., 2008; Hazan & Diamond, 2000; Smiler & Heasley, 2016).

Using the Strange Situation paradigm (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969), researchers purport that the quality of infants' internal working models of attachment can be discerned based on how infants calibrate their attachment systems toward their fathers during a pair of mildly stressful separation–reunion episodes (see Ainsworth et al., 1978, and Solomon & George, 2008). Infants classified as *secure* seek proximity to their fathers upon being reunited (typically through direct physical contact), are comforted by such proximity, and reengage in exploring the environment within a relatively short period of time. On the other hand, the behaviors of infants classified as *insecure* are less harmonious, such that their behaviors function to minimize or maximize interaction with the father. *Insecure-avoidant* infants appear to minimize their attachment needs in that they do not seek physical proximity to their caregiver and focus almost entirely on continued exploration. *Insecure-resistant* infants, in contrast, seek proximity to and contact with their fathers upon reunion but are unable to derive comfort. Instead, these infants maximize their attachment needs by exhibiting continued distress and may even resist contact with the caregiver once it is achieved (e.g., by pulling away from a caregiver when held). Because of their continued heightened distress, insecure-resistant infants also do not successfully reengage in exploration. Infants classified as disorganized lack an organized strategy for interacting with their fathers, leading to a range of atypical, odd, overtly conflicted, and/or fearful behaviors in their presence (see Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 2008; Main & Solomon, 1986, 1990).

In empirical research, the Strange Situation and its accompanying classification system continue to be the "gold standard" for measuring the quality of infants' attachment to their fathers. Interestingly, this standard persists even though researchers have occasionally questioned whether this procedure could slightly miss the mark regarding how children typically rely on their fathers as attachment figures (see van IJzendoorn, 1995; K. Grossmann et al., 2002; Paquette, 2004; Volling & Belsky, 1992). For example, the Strange Situation's explicit focus on provoking and measuring infants' attachment-related behavioral responses to distressing situations could perhaps underestimate how fathers—versus mothers—would support their infants' attachment-related needs in more benign contexts that do not involve such distress.

In other empirical studies, researchers have employed reliable and valid measures such as the Attachment Q-Set to assess child–father attachment quality in both naturalistic and laboratory

settings (Waters & Deane, 1985). In studies of children who have outgrown the Strange Situation/Attachment Q-Set and acquired the linguistic and cognitive capacities to report on attachment relationships, researchers have used survey measures such as the Security Scale to assess children's self-reported perceptions of their parents' behavior toward them in attachment-related contexts (Kerns et al., 1996; Kerns et al., 2000). Studies have also employed other measures such as the Attachment Story Completion Task (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999) and the Separation Anxiety Test (Klagsbrun & Bowlby, 1976) to measure children's attachment-relevant representations of their fathers. (For a comprehensive review of measures used with older children, see Dwyer, 2005.)

Attachment theory postulates that fathers—like mothers—become bonded to their infants through the process of caregiving, but they—like mothers—*do not* form attachments to their infants. Parents do not form attachments to their children because they are not inherently motivated to use their children as secure bases from which to explore or as safe havens to which to retreat for physical and/or psychological protection (see Dykas & Cassidy, 2013). Thus, the infant's attachment is nonreciprocated, and the father's *caregiving bond* is categorically different from the attachment bond his child establishes with him. Broader findings indicate that these caregiving bonds are designed to emerge because men are biologically prepared to respond to their infants' attachment-related needs and that fathers' neurological and hormonal functioning in the presence of children is similar to that of mothers (e.g., Abraham et al., 2014; Scatliffe et al., 2019). For example, when men interact with their children shortly after birth, they react similarly to mothers by showing strong affective reactions and becoming emotionally enthralled with the baby (Parke & Tinsley, 1981; Storey et al., 2000).

Of special note, infants do not form attachments to their biological fathers simply because they are genetically related, as evidenced by attachment research (see Dykas & Cassidy, 2013), as well as a broad range of cross-species, cross-cultural, and other social science research (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). Attachments develop to biological fathers only in situations in which these caregivers have a repeated daily presence in their infants' lives and infants come to view their fathers as older, stronger, and wiser persons who address their attachment-related needs (Bowlby, 1969/1982). If a biological father is either completely or consistently absent in an infant's daily life, an infant will not form an attachment to him. For this reason, some infants might be prone to not forming attachments to their teen fathers because their fathers could be consistently absent and/or subjected to extreme gatekeeping or exclusion (see Kiselica & Kiselica, 2014). Infants might instead form attachments to other biologically or nonbiologically related males—such as grandfathers, uncles, and significantly older male siblings—who are consistently present and are perceived as providing security.

Selected Father-Related Factors Contributing to Child–Father Attachment Quality

In this section, we examine some notable putative factors that may influence the ways in which fathers address their children's attachment-related needs, which in turn contributes to the quality of the infant–father attachment relationship.

Cultural Perceptions and Expectations: Men and Masculinity

Although attachment theory supports the notion that infants develop attachments to their fathers and data indicate that men are prepared biologically to respond to infants' care-seeking signals, attachment theorists have historically viewed the infant–father attachment bond as secondary to—and less critical than—the infant–mother attachment bond (Bretherton, 2010). For example, throughout Bowlby's (1969/1982, 1973, 1980) original writings and especially in his earlier work on *maternal deprivation theory* (Bowlby, 1953), he highlighted the significance of a

mother's love and affection and how the recurrent absence of such feelings could eventually contribute to dire psychological outcomes for a child. He made almost no significant mention of fathers. For example, there was no complementary theorizing on the adverse effects of *father deprivation* on child development. Bowlby further bolstered his claims through the notion of *monotropy*, a term he created to refer to infants' natural proclivities to order attachment relationships hierarchically and to create a principal attachment to one specific caregiver, which he claimed was typically the mother. Overall, Bowlby paid considerably less attention to infant–father attachment relationships, consistent with social and cultural norms at the time regarding child-rearing. Mothers were the primary caregivers, and Bowlby's observations and claims about the attachment-related primacy of mothers were understandable and expected.

Since the time of Bowlby's seminal writings, fathers have been increasingly viewed as more important to children and their development. Now, when fathers are absent, people acknowledge that such absences have had, or could likely have, a lasting impact on individuals' understanding of themselves and their lives. Some authors have referred to this absence as "father hunger" or "the wound" (Bly, 1990; Lee, 1991; McLanahan & Teitler, 1999), whereas others have provided alternative and more multifaceted views (Lamb, 2012; Pleck, 2007; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). A wealth of demographic data both within and outside of the USA points to the fact that fathers are increasingly more likely to be involved in their infants and young children's lives and to share parenting responsibilities with mothers even when separated or divorced (see Henz, 2019; Livingston, 2014; Meyer et al., 2017). Culturally, fathers also appear to be "stepping up the plate" more to raise their children when mothers' psychological health could be compromised (Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016). Given these demographic trends in the USA—and in much of the English-speaking world—cultural perceptions and expectations of fathers have been changing significantly over the past 75 years (Kimmel, 1996; Smiler, 2019).

When attachment theory was first introduced, fathers were commonly viewed as "bread-winning" disciplinarians who were invested in their families but relatively aloof to being active parts of children's emotional lives (Cabrera et al., 2000; Pleck, 2007; Lamb, 2012). For example, the majority of mainstream portrayals of fathers in early American television from the 1950's through the 1970s depicted fathers as White, hard-working men, and the undisputed heads of households. Fathers were also portrayed as genial and wise, and clearly had their children's and family's best interests in mind. The 1980s marked a transition when this image was expanded to include African–American men (e.g., *The Cosby Show*). Around the same time, White fathers were typically reimagined as "househusbands" or well-meaning yet relatively naïve "bumbling fools" who regularly made unwise decisions and provided dubious guidance to their children and families for entertainment purposes (e.g., *Home Improvement*, *The Simpsons;* Hunter, 2009; Wahlstrom, 2011).

During the past 25 years, cultural perceptions of fathers have shifted such that fathers are now more commonly viewed both as having higher stakes in their children's emotional lives and as relatively competent caregivers (e.g., *Modern Family*, *Fresh off the Boat*). One reason for this shift may be related to contemporary changes in how men and masculinity are conceptualized (Rotundo, 1993; Smiler, 2019; Townsend, 1996), which may be altering sociocultural norms dictating the way fathers should—and should not—be (c.f., Shwalb et al., 2013).

Masculinity refers broadly to cultural ideals and expectations for boys and men. Psychological research on this construct has alternately focused on psychological traits that are deemed as masculine—that is, the masculine belief structure or ideology that prescribes some behaviors and proscribes others—as well as the stress and strain of adhering to such an ideology (Smiler, 2004). Approaches to masculine ideology often highlight emotional stoicism and independence versus interdependence (see reviews by Smiler & Epstein, 2010; Thompson Jr. & Bennett, 2015, 2017; Thompson & Pleck, 1995; Walker et al.,

2000). Trait-based approaches to personality have also tended to position emotional expression and relationship interests as less masculine and more feminine (e.g., Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Building masculine males starts early in childhood when boys are typically instructed to look outside themselves and think about how to handle life situations with fewer amounts of emotional language, whereas girls are typically encouraged by others to use emotional language, look inside themselves, and consider their feelings (see Adams et al., 1995; Brody & Hall, 2010; see also Lynch & Kilmartin, 2013).

In the context of attachment, certain male stereotypes, masculine ideologies, and men's adherence to such stereotypes and ideologies could influence how men are socialized to promote the formation of secure attachments in their children, particularly to boys. Evidence suggests that fathers' differential behavior toward their sons starts at birth. For example, fathers tend to describe children in more gender-typical terms within 72 h of birth and do so more strongly for sons than daughters (Karraker et al., 1995). Although very limited data demonstrate how masculinity influences sensitive caregiving (Lee & Lee, 2018), researchers have argued that a main function of the masculine ideal is to defend against tender feelings (e.g., being hurt), because the expression of such feelings could be viewed as immature, weak, and/or dependent (see Bruch et al., 1998; Lynch & Kilmartin, 2013; O'Neil, 1981). Thus, if fathers adhere to such an ideology, it could limit their willingness or ability to demonstrate emotional support to their children (see Pleck, 2010, for a review of linkages between masculinity and fathering behavior). Sensitive parenting may also be difficult to achieve because emotional warmth, which includes the ability to read and respond to a child's feelings, could be challenging due to men's lower levels of emotional expression (e.g., Levant et al., 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2006), which may be viewed as adherence to a particularly restrictive set of "emotional display rules" (Wester et al., 2016). This is not to say that most men fail to either demonstrate warmth to their children and/or have children who see them as "cold," but

rather that warmth may appear different for mothers and fathers. For example, men may be more likely to express care primarily through their attention and physical presence, whereas women may be more likely to express care through verbal statements of affection and emotional intimacy.

Fathers' Attachment- and Caregiving-Related Scripted Knowledge

Fathers are also influenced by images of fatherhood with which they are familiar prior to becoming fathers themselves. Such images arise from direct experience as sons and as caregivers, indirect experience through friends and known others, and media-based images. From a modeling perspective, men who describe their own fathers as highly involved are more likely to be highly involved in their own children's development (Hofferth et al., 2012). However, a man's beliefs about what it means to be a good father could play a substantial role in how he behaves as a father (Masciadrelli et al., 2006; Maurer & Pleck, 2006), and these beliefs can overcome poor modeling. For example, although men may describe their fathers as poor-quality models of fatherhood, they can still be highly involved with their own children if they express a desire to be better fathers themselves (Hofferth et al., 2012). Modeling may also not require in-person or "real life" models, as evidence suggests that television can contribute to fathers' beliefs about children (Kuo & Ward, 2016). Cross-cultural data further indicate that boys who have had positive early experiences caring for other children tend to be more involved with their own children (Pleck, 1997).

From an attachment-caregiving perspective, fathers were at one point youngsters themselves seeking attachment-relevant support from their caregivers. Similar to their future offspring, fathers developed internal working models of how attachment relationships operate. Moreover, according to attachment theory, they built *secure base scripts*, which are the most fundamental building blocks of these models and contain the basic temporal-causal knowledge of how typical attachment-related events unfold (Bretherton,

1990; see also Vaughn et al., 2016; Waters & Waters, 2006). If—as a child—a man experienced a sensitive and supportive father during times of need, then that man should have developed a corresponding secure base script that dictated something like, "When I am upset, I go directly to my father and talk to him about what is bothering me" (Waters et al., 2017). In contrast, if a man's attachment-related experiences with a caregiver were unfavorable, he may develop a corresponding script that reflects disharmony in the child–parent attachment relationship. For example, a man could have scripted, "When I am upset, don't try and show it because it's just going to make my dad mad."

Over the course of time, it is likely that fathers have acquired a host of scripts related to how people treat each other under attachment-related circumstances—as evidenced by the different methodologies that researchers have used to measure the quality of these scripts in adulthood (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2009; Waters & Waters, 2006). In the context of fatherhood, these secure base scripts could contribute significantly to the way in which men provide care to their offspring. Fathers who have relatively rich and detailed secure base scripts should have some basic sense of how to accommodate their children's various attachment-related needs. For example, a father whose script contains the temporal-causal sequence, "When I was upset, my father would rub my back and tell me everything would be OK," could reproduce it in the present to help his own child overcome some difficulty (e.g., "My child's pretty upset right now, so I'll rub his back and tell him everything is going to be OK."). When fathers lack such scripts, it may make it more difficult for them to act appropriately toward their children because they lack the cognitive knowledge (e.g., a mental schema) for how to physically, psychologically, and/or emotionally respond when a children are expressing attachment needs (Waters & Roisman, 2019).

Fathers' Attachment Security

Beyond storing secure base scripts, fathers' internal working models of attachment could also provide general rules for how attachment-relevant information may be processed cognitively and emotionally (Dykas et al., 2011; see also Dykas & Cassidy, 2011). Decades of research based on the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George et al., 1984, 1985, 1996) and its related coding systems (e.g., Main & Goldwyn, 1998) have revealed that adults use different strategies to manage memories, emotions, and thoughts related to past attachment experiences. These strategies are most often referred to as an adult's attachment organization or "state of mind with respect to attachment" (Main et al., 1985; see also Hesse, 2008), and they are linked to the quality of adults' secure base scripts (e.g., Dykas et al., 2006). As observed in the AAI, adults who demonstrate a *secure/autonomous* state of mind are capable of processing attachment-relevant information in a relatively open and flexible manner, such that they do not (or very rarely) defensively suppress or exclude information that might be distressing or psychologically painful to explore. On the other hand, adults who implement defensive strategies in the AAI appear to consistently suppress and/or exclude the processing of attachment-relevant information. More precisely, individuals classified as *insecure-dismissing* defensively minimize attachment-related thoughts and feelings through techniques such as passively or actively refusing to discuss the specific details surrounding childhood attachment experiences. Individuals classified as *insecure-preoccupied*, on the other hand, defensively maximize these thoughts and feelings to mask authentic pain. They might, for example, show heightened and/or diffuse emotionality, exaggeration of, and preoccupation with attachment-related needs (Hesse, 1999, 2008).

Fathers' *attachment styles*—or the self-reported personal expectations and behaviors that fathers typically exhibit in the context of adult romantic relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)—are also thought to provide a window into the nature and quality of their experience-based internal working models of attachment (Fraley et al., 2013). If fathers report styles of being relatively uncomfortable with closeness and intimacy, incapable of depending on others, and/or uncertain that others could be relied on

when needed, then these fathers would score high on avoidance as assessed using standard measures such as the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998). Fathers who report styles of apprehensions about being rejected, unloved, and/or abandoned by close others would score high on anxiety. When fathers endorse both avoidant- and/or anxiety-related expectations and behaviors, the presumption is that their internal working models of attachment are insecure. When fathers do not endorse such expectations and behaviors, their internal working models of attachment are considered secure. Although meta-analytic data indicate that these attachment styles share minimal overlap with adults' AAI classifications (Roisman et al., 2007), they are correlated with measures tapping into the quality of adults' secure base scripts (e.g., Dykas et al., 2006).

Overall, the quality of fathers' internal working models of attachment is expected to make a contribution to their caregiving behavior and the overall quality of the child–father attachment relationship. According to the general tenets of the intergenerational transmission of attachment model (van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997, 2019), a father who possesses an adequate amount of secure base script knowledge, a secure/autonomous state of mind with respect to attachment, and/or a secure romantic attachment style will likely have the prerequisite emotional and psychological resources to perform effectively as an available, responsive, and sensitive parent. His offspring will, in turn, have the parental secure base/safe haven they need to develop a secure attachment to their father. Fathers who have more unfavorable scripts, states of mind, and/or attachment styles are at greater risk of not performing as a suitable secure base and/or safe haven for their children, which may ultimately result in an insecure child–father attachment relationship. Given that children also require tremendous attention from mothers, an underlying sense of insecurity could lead fathers—especially insecure preoccupied or anxious fathers—to treat their children negatively if mother-related care toward children limits or interferes with mother-related care toward fathers (see Rholes et al., 2011).

These theoretical patterns could also be disrupted under real-life circumstances if fathers consistently have limited daily contact with their children. These situations are most obvious with noncustodial and teen fathers (e.g., Kiselica & Kiselica, 2014), as well as some fathers who are not home with their children during nonwork hours (Bernier & Miljkovitch, 2009; for a more detailed analysis of how work impacts fathers' involvement with their children at home, see Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). Some fathers might also voluntarily relinquish—or "hand-off"—secure base/safe haven provision to their children's other caregivers. Under these circumstances, a father may or may not have the internal working models and accompanying resources to provide a secure base/safe haven, but the impact of these models on his child's attachment development may be negligible if fathers are relatively absent or deferential to other attachment figures. Relatedly, another complex matter relates to the different ways in which fathers and mothers assign and divide responsibilities as children age. If some fathers focus more on one aspect of attachment-related care (e.g., secure base provision) and less on the other (e.g., safe have provision), fathers' internal working models may not influence children's attachment development comprehensively (see Seibert & Kerns, 2009). Children will then develop expectations regarding which parent to seek out (i.e., first, second, or not at all) when engaged in various forms of attachment-related exploration or safety-seeking.

Another important consideration is that fathers' internal working models of attachment may evolve as their children develop attachments to them. Although internal working models of attachment—once formed—become increasingly stable and resistant to change over time, change is possible (Bowlby, 1973). Fathers who developed incomplete secure base scripts during their own childhood might acquire more substantial secure base scripts by watching positive interactions between their children and mothers or learning about attachment through

attachment-based parenting programs (such as Circle of Security Parenting; Powell et al., 2006). Some insecure men may also become more secure during the course of fatherhood by perhaps learning new ways to nondefensively process attachment-relevant social information or by acquiring more robust secure base scripts (see Roisman & Haydon, 2011). Such changes could increase the amount of emotional and psychological resources fathers have to provide their children with an available, responsive, and sensitive secure base/safe haven. These men could, for example, overcome defensively dismissing the importance of attachment by learning how to value attachment bonds and to "be there" emotionally for their children in ways that their own attachment figures may not have been there for them in times of need and/or distress.

Child–Father Attachment and Children's Developmental Outcomes

Attachment researchers continue to uncover how child–father attachment relationships contribute uniquely to children's broader health and well-being. A growing body of literature suggests that fathers play an especially important role in fostering children's exploratory interests and tendencies (Grossmann et al., 1999; Grossmann et al., 2008; Paquette, 2004). This proposition stems in part from the well-known finding that fathers—compared to mothers—often spend a greater percentage of their time interacting with their young children in physically stimulating and exciting ways (see Parke, 2013). During these types of interactions, fathers may be keenly interested in their children's abilities to participate in demanding bodily and/or environmental tasks, especially stereotypically based on gender (see Stevenson & Black, 1988). Fathers may also be inclined to present their children with both implicit and explicit opportunities to stretch their physical limits or to take modest behavioral risks in exchange for some foreseeable reward. They may, for example, "push the envelope" regarding what their children may accomplish physically to

help their children achieve a sense of accomplishment (see Hagan & Kuebli, 2007; Morrongiello & Dawber, 1999; Murphy, 1997). As children age, fathers also appear to have a tendency to expect their sons and daughters to perform relatively well in physically demanding and thrilling activities, such as youth sports, that would promote exploration-related aspects of child and adolescent development (Lindstrom Bremer, 2012; see also Stupica, 2016).

In ordinary non-distressful situations, fathers' natural proclivities for instigating physically stimulating and exciting interactions likely motivates children to rely upon their fathers frequently as secure bases for exploration rather than as safe havens for physical and/or psychological protection. If fathers respond accordingly and provide this secure base, then it should effectively contribute to children's overall sense of security and promote children's further exploration and general curiosity about engaging in future adventures. However, if fathers do not provide a secure base during these times, then it may adversely affect the quality of the child–father attachment relationship (Grossmann et al., 1999). For example, a father who encourages a child to perform well in physically demanding or thrilling activities—without being attuned and responsive to the child's resulting needs for help, guidance, or support—may be weakening the overall degree of security found within that relationship (see Stupica, 2016, for data on fathers' propensities to be relatively harsh toward children while engaging in physically demanding goal-oriented tasks). Research also indicates that fathers typically tease their children more than mothers (Parke, 2013). Excessive, misguided, or unsympathetic teasing by fathers when children need secure base support could significantly lessen children's confidence and curiosity in engaging in future exploration-related activities.

The quality of the child–father attachment relationship could also have a distinct impact on children's psychosocial adjustment. A key tenet of attachment theory, supported by decades of research, is that secure attachment relationships should set the stage for children to develop healthy emotion regulation strategies, socially

competent behavior, and favorable relationships (for a review, see Thompson, 2016; see also Schore, 2005). Although modern attachment theory further suggests that this tenet is parent-sex neutral—meaning that neither fathers nor mothers should be at an advantage or disadvantage in promoting children's attachment security and later psychosocial adjustment—favorable child–father attachment relationships could provide distinct pathways for children's later adjustment in regard to their emotion regulation strategies, socially competent behaviors, and peer relationships, especially if fathers' attachment-salient proclivities for "play-time" with their children—described above—could promote children's adjustment (see Amodia-Bidakowska et al., 2020). For example, such adjustment could be related to father-typical characteristics such as excitement, goal-setting, and perhaps even teasing if these characteristics are infused into fathers' secure base/safe haven provision (see Baker et al., 2010, for data regarding how fathers' emotion socialization is linked to children's social competence).

Review of the Empirical Literature

In the following sections, we provide a selective review of empirical studies that have examined attachment dynamics between fathers and children under the age of 17 years. This review begins with a synopsis of studies that have analyzed the distribution and rates of security found within child–father attachment relationships using the Strange Situation Procedure or other well-established measures of attachment in infancy and later developmental periods. This synopsis is also accompanied by a review of studies that have examined how fathers' sensitivity, as well as a secure base and safe haven provision, are associated with child attachment security. Next, we review findings from studies that have explored how previously described father-related factors contribute to child–father attachment quality. Finally, we review studies that have examined how the quality of the child–father

attachment relationships contributes to children's developmental outcomes.

Child–Father Attachment Formation and Quality

Empirical research on infant–father attachment formation and quality began in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Lamb, 1977; Lamb & Stevenson, 1978; Parke, 1981) and continues to grow, albeit very sluggishly compared to studies of infant–mother attachment relationships (for discussion, see Ahnert & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2019). Using the Strange Situation Procedure, researchers have consistently reported that approximately 60% of infants demonstrate secure attachments to their fathers in low-risk community samples (e.g., Brown et al., 2012; Kochanska & Kim, 2013; Kuo et al., 2019; Braungart-Rieker et al., 2014). Although sex differences in attachment to fathers have not typically been reported in studies using the Strange Situation Procedure (e.g., Kochanska & Kim, 2013), some data suggest that rates of security may differ between son-father and daughter-father dyads. For example, Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2006) reported that sons were more likely than expected—and daughters were less likely than expected—to be classified as securely attached to their fathers. Some data also indicate that fathers' psychiatric histories may also play an important role regarding how sons and daughters develop attachments to them. In one study, Lucassen et al. (2017) reported that infant daughters of fathers with a history of depression or anxiety received *higher* security scores in the Strange Situation than daughters of fathers without these diagnoses.

A handful of studies using other measures of child–father attachment quality provide similar evidence that a majority of children show secure patterns of attachment toward their fathers. In infancy, studies using the Attachment Q-Sort (Waters & Deane, 1985) have indicated that a majority of children use their fathers as secure bases and safe havens in unstructured laboratory visits or naturalistic settings (e.g., Fernandes et al., 2018; Monteiro et al., 2008; Pinto et al.,

2015). Studies using self-report measures to assess older children's attachment representations also provide emerging evidence that many children perceive their fathers as serving as secure bases and safe havens across different cultures (e.g., Fernandes et al., 2020; Kamza, 2019; Kerns et al., 2000; McConnachie et al., 2019; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999).

Considered as a whole, available studies indicate that fathers' sensitive caregiving is associated with their children's degree of security with them (e.g., Chibucos & Kail, 1981; Cox et al., 1992; Goossens & van IJzendoorn, 1990). Similar to studies with mothers, when fathers score higher on global sensitivity measures (e.g., Ainsworth Sensitivity Scales; Ainsworth et al., 1974), their children are more likely to be classified as securely attached to them. In the most recent meta-analytic review of studies examining this broad link (16 studies total with a combined sample of 1355 infant–father dyads), Lucassen et al. (2011) reported that higher levels of father sensitivity were significantly associated with greater infant–father attachment security. However, some exceptions have been documented (Braungart-Rieker et al., 2001; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Volling & Belsky, 1992).

Other studies have painted a more complex picture regarding how fathers' behavioral responsiveness contributes to the formation of a secure child–father attachment. A recent longitudinal study found that a father's ability to both perceive and respond appropriately to his child's mental states promoted a secure child–father attachment relationship (Miller et al., 2019). In another multiwave longitudinal study, Grossmann et al. (2002) noted that fathers' play sensitivity—defined as their emotional support and gentle challenges in toddler-parent play situations—was a strong predictor of children's attachment representations at age 10 years and beyond (as assessed using the Separation Anxiety Task), and better predicted these attachment representations than children's Strange Situation behavior at age 12 months toward their fathers. Existing data further indicate that a variety of factors may moderate the link between fathers' sensitive behavioral

responsiveness to children's attachment signals and child–father attachment. In one study, Brown and Cox (2019) found that the amount of basic pleasure that fathers took in parenting moderated how sensitive fathers were toward their children, as well as whether children developed secure versus insecure attachment to them. Child sex may also play an important moderating role. Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2006) reported that fathers' degrees of emotional sensitivity toward their sons and daughters were of similar quality only in secure relationships. In insecure infant–father relationships, fathers demonstrated significantly less emotional sensitivity towards their daughters than towards their sons.

In another study examining child attachment in toddlerhood, Brown et al. (2012) coded fathers' daily involvement in their children's lives using a time diary interview protocol and measured their degree of sensitivity during laboratory-based child–father problem-solving tasks. Analyses indicated that fathers' sensitivity served a moderating role, such that when fathers scored low on sensitivity, their amount of daily involvement with their children was positively associated with child attachment security. But when fathers demonstrated high sensitivity, no link between fathers' daily involvement and child attachment security emerged. These intriguing findings may suggest that even if fathers are less sensitive toward their children (at least during laboratory-based problem-solving situations), still being involved in children's lives is of critical importance. "Involved fathers" can still promote secure child–father attachment relationships through overall levels of felt security in the relationship. On the other hand, when fathers are already sensitive, their degree of involvement in their children's lives might not have a significant impact on the overall quality of the child–father attachment relationship. These findings could appear to contradict earlier data indicating that fathers who are relatively non-involved and insensitive have less secure children than other fathers (e.g., Brown et al., 2007). However, more recent work by Brown et al. (2018) indicates that child attachment security to a father could vary sig-

nificantly depending both on the role a father is playing when involved (e.g., playmate versus caregiver) and on the days on which it happens (e.g., workdays versus non-workdays). These more specific aspects of father involvement were not analyzed explicitly in the previous reports, which might explain the mixed pattern of findings.

Beyond studying the relatively broad construct of sensitive responsiveness, researchers have found that children organize their secure base behavior similarly across mothers and fathers (Monteiro et al., 2008). Researchers have thus begun to pinpoint more discrete patterns of secure base/safe haven provision that contribute to child–father attachment security (see Grossmann & Grossmann, 2019). For example, in a study that can be contextualized in terms of early safe haven provision, Braungart-Rieker et al. (2014) examined how fathers' sensitivity during the well-known Still Face Paradigm, assessed when infants were aged 3-, 5-, and 7 months, predicted infant–father attachment quality at age 14 months. The investigators reported that sensitivity was linked to infant affect similarly across infant–father and infant–mother dyads. Compared to their counterparts with less sensitive parents, infants with more sensitive fathers and mothers showed greater increases in both positive affect and self-comforting as they transitioned from the still-face episode to the reunion episode of the Still Face Paradigm. Similar to mothers, fathers of infants later classified as insecure-avoidant in the Strange Situation showed lower initial levels of sensitivity during the Still Face Paradigm than those classified as secure.

In older children, Olsavsky et al. (2020) found that fathers' observed play behaviors with their 9-month-old infants predicted infants' Strange Situation classifications at ages of 12–18 months. More precisely, when fathers demonstrated higher levels of child-oriented stimulation and relatively low-to-average levels of intrusiveness, there was a greater chance that their child would be classified as secure. Perhaps surprisingly, in this study, no evidence emerged that fathers' degree of sensitivity was associated with their infants' later quality of attachment to them. In another longitudinal study, Grossmann et al. (2002) examined whether fathers' specific sensitivity to children's exploratory play in toddlerhood predicted the quality of their children's attachment representations into the late childhood and teenage years. Fathers' play sensitivity and infant–mother quality of attachment both uniquely predicted children's internal working model of attachment at age 10 years and into adolescence.

Selected Father-Related Factors Contributing to Child–Father Attachment Quality

Cultural Perceptions and Expectations: Men and Masculinity

To our knowledge, no published study has yet explicitly examined how fathers' adherence to masculine norms is directly linked to either child–father attachment quality or fathers' attachment-related sensitive caregiving and secure base/safe haven provision (although some studies have examined these links in adult males; DeFranc & Mahalik, 2002). Indirect evidence indicates that a stronger adherence to masculine norms is associated with lower levels of instrumental and expressive parenting across childhood and adolescence, as well as to higher levels of harsh discipline during these developmental periods (Petts et al., 2018). Similarly, researchers have recently investigated how the quality of child–father attachment relationships are linked to fathers' testosterone levels, which could be considered a proxy for the competition-nurturance behavioral tendencies found in men (van Anders, 2013). In one study, Witte et al. (2019) reported a marginal but nonsignificant negative direct effect between fathers' testosterone levels and the quality of their infants' attachment to them, indicating that lower testosterone levels could be associated with greater infant attachment security. According to this study, lower testosterone could prepare fathers to respond appropriately to their infants' attachment signals, and testosterone levels could interact

with different hormones and neuropeptides to mediate the quality of the infant–father attachment relationship.

Fathers' Attachment- and Caregiving-Related Scripted Knowledge

To date, two published studies have explicitly examined how the quality of fathers' secure base script is linked to the child–father attachment. In the first study of its kind, Monteiro et al. (2008) reported that the quality of Portuguese fathers' secure base scripts uniquely predicted their children's attachment security, as assessed by the AQS. In a subsequent study, Trumbell et al. (2018) similarly reported that higher secure base script scores among fathers were associated with less intrusion and less emotional disengagement with their children during laboratory-based free-play sessions. The link between poor secure base scripts and emotional disengagement toward their children was especially pronounced in fathers who were experiencing high levels of marital discord.

Fathers' Attachment Security

Studies using the AAI to assess fathers' attachment security have provided evidence that secure fathers typically have more harmonious relationships with their children than insecure fathers (Cohn et al., 1992; Grossmann et al., 2002; van IJzendoorn, 1995). In a recent longitudinal investigation, McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012) reported that secure fathers demonstrated more sensitivity toward their infants, whereas dismissing and unresolved fathers were more likely to engage in hostile caregiving. Fathers classified as unresolved were also more likely than other fathers to demonstrate role-reversed caregiving and emotional disengagement.

On the basis of these data, it is not surprising that fathers' AAI classifications have also been linked to their children's quality of attachment to them (e.g., Grossmann et al., 2002). McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012), for example, found that fathers' secure AAI classifications predicted children's secure Strange Situation attachment classifications, and this relation was mediated by the father's degree of sensitive caregiving. In a study of older children, Bernier and Miljkovitch (2009) similarly reported that when divorced fathers had full custody of their children, their degree of preoccupation with past attachment experiences was linked to more insecure attachment representations. However, no such link between father and child attachment emerged in non-divorced families. Bernier and Miljkovitch suggested that this pattern might have emerged because fathers had a secondary caregiving role to mothers, although we suggest that the findings may be driven by non-divorced fathers' abilities to use the children's mothers as models for their own parenting behaviors.

Studies examining fathers' attachment styles have provided some additional, albeit mixed, evidence that fathers' internal working models of attachment are linked to child–father attachment dynamics, especially with regard to caregiving-related emotions and cognitions (see Jones et al., 2015). For example, in a study of 5-month-old infants and their parents, Feldman (2003) reported that fathers' security scores were positively associated with more synchronous interactions with their infants (in particular their daughters) during the Still-Face Procedure. Researchers have also linked fathers' avoidant attachment styles to greater parenting-related stress, more unfavorable caregiving knowledge/skills, more ill-defined role expectations of fatherhood, and less interest and comfort with parenting across the transition to parenthood (Fillo et al., 2015; Kor et al., 2012; Nygren et al., 2012; Rholes et al., 2006). Anxious attachment styles, on the other hand, have been linked to more parenting stress and risk for child abuse (Alexander et al., 2001; Howard, 2010; Kor et al., 2012; Nygren et al., 2012; Rholes et al., 2006). Despite these findings, other studies have failed to find links between fathers' attachment styles and child–father attachment dynamics (e.g., Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2005; Wilson et al., 2007).

Child–Father Attachment & Children's Developmental Outcomes

A growing number of studies has shed light on how child–father attachment contributes to different developmental outcomes. With regard to children's confident exploration of the environment, Paquette and Bigras (2010) created a 20-min laboratory-based analog to the Strange Situation (i.e., the Risky Situation) to code infants' social and physical risk-taking behaviors in the presence of fathers. The risks include interacting with an increasingly intrusive male stranger and encountering a steep set of stairs. These researchers found that the majority of children's capacities to explore the environment and take risks were activated when fathers were present, although a minority of children responded hesitantly to exploration opportunities and risky situations. Subsequent data from these researchers also indicated that children's responses to their fathers during these risky situations could be a better predictor of children's socio-emotional adjustment than their responses to their fathers during the Strange Situation Procedure (Dumont & Paquette, 2013). These experimental findings mirror naturalistic data reported by Stevenson and Crnic (2013), which showed that healthy social adjustment in childhood was linked to fathers' capacities to activate their children's physical and exploratory inclinations, such as when fathers are providing children with stimulation and being appropriately aware of their needs for interaction.

Researchers have explored how child–father attachment quality impacts children's emotional and behavioral regulation both separately and in conjunction with child–mother attachment quality. Kochanska and Kim (2013) found that infant–father attachment insecurity, especially in combination with infant–mother attachment insecurity assessed using the Strange Situation Procedure at age of 15 months, put children at the greatest risk for developing behavioral problems during the early school years. They also reported that children could be protected from developing such behavioral problems if they developed at least one secure attachment to *either* parent, indi-

cating that neither parent could be seen as the "primary" protective factor. Similar findings have also been reported for older children (Bureau et al., 2019). However, researchers have also found that insecure child–father attachment is associated with more conduct problems in middle childhood, regardless of the quality of attachment to the mother (Bureau et al., 2016). In other studies, elementary-aged children were more likely to demonstrate negative self-images and report dysregulated eating-related behaviors if they possessed more insecure attachment representations of their fathers (Bureau et al., 2019; Goossens et al., 2012). Despite this growing evidence, the relative impact these attachment bonds have on children's emotion regulation is still being debated as more empirical findings emerge. Kuo et al. (2019), for example, recently examined infant stress reactivity and reported that even if infants had secure attachments to their fathers, these infants still demonstrated difficulties regulating stressful emotions if they had an insecure attachment to their mothers. These findings support the notion that a positive paternal attachment may not undo the effects of an infant's less-favorable attachment to the mother.

Research findings also indicate that child–father attachment relationship quality is linked to children's functioning outside of the home in social contexts. For example, Fernandes et al. (2019) reported that the quality of children's attachment to their fathers at the age of 3 years uniquely predicted children's social competence at the age of 5 years. Some studies of younger and older children have also indicated that child–father attachment relationships do not necessarily play "second fiddle" to child–mother attachment relationships in predicting children's social competence, such that both types of relationships are equally important in predicting children's abilities to interact with new persons and peers in socially competent ways (Kerns et al., 2000; Kochanska & Kim, 2013; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999; see Main & Weston, 1981, and Suess et al., 1992 for contradictory data with younger children).

Meta-analyses have either provided inconclusive data or have led researchers to assert that

more research is needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn about the exact relation between child–father attachment and social competence (Groh et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2001). Indeed, any interpretation of the available meta-analytic findings is clouded by the limited number of studies available. Further clouding these results is the analytic need to pool children from very different developmental periods (e.g., from early childhood to late adolescence) into a singular analytic snapshot to boost the overall sample size. A variety of confounding factors within specific studies also muddies the interpretation of these meta-analytic findings. These factors include the use of nonstandard measures to assess attachment, father-related sampling issues, and the lack of analyses examining moderators such as child sex.

Concluding Remarks

The theoretical and empirical work summarized in this chapter provides a broad overview of the processes through which fathers can fulfill their children's attachment-related needs. This work also illustrates how the quality of child–father attachment relationships is connected to fathers' contextual and personal backgrounds, as well to children's developmental outcomes. We commend previous researchers who have sought to examine these relationships in greater detail over the past few decades. We also join the expanding chorus of scholars clamoring for more research on child–father attachment processes, especially in light of the ever-evolving impact that fathers are having on raising their children in modern times (see Ahnert & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2019, for a recent commentary on the paucity of scholarly work on child–father attachment). To guide future theory building, research, and applied work on child–father attachment relationships, we end our chapter with some concluding remarks.

The current literature lends strong support to the notion that fathers' attachment-related interactions with their children are often tied to fathers' more general focus on provoking and challenging children to engage in physically arousing/exploration-inciting activities (Grossmann et al., 2008). More observational research in both the laboratory and in naturalistic settings, along with experimentation, could shed needed light on the extent to which fathers will go in order to incite, reinforce, and/or perhaps limit their children's exploration, especially before fathers' behavior becomes insensitive (e.g., pressuring, harsh, and/or punitive). Ideas about scaffolding and sensitive instruction within children's zones of proximal development from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, as well as microgenetic designs that examine moment-to-moment changes in children's competence in their fathers' presence, could be particularly useful in these endeavors. These types of designs could, for example, elucidate the time and manner in which fathers shift from being an exploration-focused secure base to a comforting safe haven and the circumstances under which these shifts do (and do not) occur. It is possible that secure fathers are more capable than insecure fathers in smoothly switching between their roles as secure bases and safe havens for their children.

Relatedly, relatively little is known about the social-cognitive processes underlying fathers' caregiving behaviors and how individual differences in these processes may be associated with the quality of child–father attachment relationships. Studies that examine fathers' attention to and memory for their children's exploration-based behaviors could discern whether fathers possess social-cognitive biases that make them less or more attuned to children's successes and struggles in navigating the world. Miller et al.'s (2019) recent longitudinal study linking fathers' degree of mind-mindedness to their sensitive caregiving and child–father attachment quality could also set the stage for understanding how fathers take children's perspectives into account when they are reinforcing—or limiting—their children's exploration. Similarly, fathers could possibly have specific, and perhaps dedicated, sets of secure base scripts that incorporate proto-

typical, temporal knowledge of how exploration-related events should unfold. To date, research on secure base scripts has focused indirectly on themes related to exploration (e.g., people's behavior in ordinary, nonemergency situations before human needs for protection and security become salient; see Waters & Waters, 2006). It would be intriguing to directly assess fathers' exploration-based scripted knowledge, particularly fathers who stress masculine norms such as independence or risk-taking for themselves or their sons. Assessing the form and function of such scripts could be particularly useful in understanding how fathers expect attachment-related events to unfold when children face their physical, psychological, and emotional limits when exploring. Given that researchers have already created an alternative to the Strange Situation to explicitly examine fathers' promotion of children's exploration of the environment (Paquette & Bigras, 2010), perhaps it is also time to create alternative measures of adult attachment (e.g., the Adult Attachment Interview) that could capture fathers' secure versus insecure strategies for processing thoughts, feelings, and emotions related to exploration in the context of their past or current relationships with attachment figures. Such efforts would mirror and expand other work arguing that men have distinctive patterns of communication (McHugh & Hambaugh, 2010; Tannen, 1990), and in specific realms related to emotion - or their experience of depression - that require gender-sensitive approaches to understanding and measurement (Addis, 2011; Lynch & Kilmartin, 2013; Wester et al., 2016).

The cultural impact on fathering and attachment is also an important area for future study. To our knowledge, no studies have explicitly examined how fathers' adherence to masculine norms and ideals shapes the quality of child–father attachment relationships in infancy and childhood. In our review of the literature, it also seems that scholars rarely consider how these ideals may shape fathers' caregiving in attachment-relevant contexts. Although masculine norms are constantly changing and fathers are becoming more emotionally available and nurturing as a whole (Petts et al., 2018), these norms may still

lead a significant number of fathers to minimize emotional disclosure in their relationships with their children and/or to incorporate more extreme (or less flexible) attitudes into their caregiving. For an extreme example, a father who adheres strongly to masculine norms might choose to stop serving as a secure base or safe haven if he perceives his son as rejecting the father's masculine ideals. This proposition might help explain the relatively high rates of psychological distress and homelessness among gay male and transgender teens (see Parent & Moradi, 2009). However, a father's own sense of underlying attachment security may serve as a protective factor in these circumstances, by facilitating that father's sensitive caregiving toward his son despite their disparate approaches to masculine norms.

Another important direction for future theoretical and empirical work is to examine how fathers *together with mothers* can collaboratively co-construct their children's attachment security (see Fagan, 2020, for a recent account of this topic). Past research examining the unique contributions that fathers and mothers make to children's attachment security has been important in establishing the importance of fathers. However, the idea that "one parent is more important than the other" is becoming an outmoded notion not just in attachment research but across numerous other disciplines (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Given the direct focus on fathers in this chapter, we did not have the opportunity to delve deeply into how father–mother interactions and the various qualities of these relationships (e.g., relationship satisfaction, interparental conflict, cooperation, caregiving interests, priorities) might promote or weaken children's attachment security or how such attachment security might subsequently influence children's overall psychological health (see Madigan et al., 2016). Moving forward, family system approaches to the study of child attachment would be prudent. In a detailed analysis, Witte et al. (2019) found that the quality of infants' attachments to their fathers—but not mothers—could be predicted by fathers' and mothers' mutual cooperation and support for each other when working together in their roles of parents. Of course, this work should

be expanded to the full range of diverse family structures present today, including single- and stay-at-home fathers, families with gay parents, parents residing separately, and step- and blended families (Livingston & Parker, 2011; McKelley & Rochlen, 2016). Military families, where the repeated and extended absence of one or both parents, as well as families impacted by the death of a parent (with young children at home), also present important and unique contexts for examining the influence of paternal attachment.

Our review has several important implications for prevention and intervention programs, as well as clinical mental health settings. Most important is the clear evidence that the fundamental principles of attachment theory apply to fathers (and men) in the same ways that they apply to mothers (and women). Thus, theoretically based approaches to working with mothers should be able to be adapted for fathers and show similar efficacy. Such a process would require what is effectively "cultural competence" in working with men (Liu, 2005), and such principles would also be necessary based on whether the program's target audience differed in race/ethnicity, SES, or other demographic categories. Given the importance of fathers' secure base scripts, helping men challenge their existing images of fatherhood and (re-)conceptualize their notions of how a good father behaves could produce positive results for children and fathers. Instead of focusing on general principles, these efforts might need to be very detailed to help replace limited or incomplete scripts instead. Similarly, when working with men who want their sons to conform to current masculine norms, helping them think about their children's developmental levels may be particularly important for setting age-appropriate expectations. Age-related cognitive limitations in problem-solving, for example, seem particularly relevant in considering what "independence" might look like at different ages.

Finally, in policy settings, knowledge of child–father attachment relationships could be useful in a variety of decision-making contexts. In situations where fathers are being legally separated from their children, we encourage courts to attend to the extent to which children have developed secure attachments to their fathers and men's demonstrated abilities to serve as secure bases and safe havens. In separation and divorce cases, such consideration helps underline the need for equitable custody arrangements that allow fathers to continue to maintain their (assumingly good) relationships with their children. In criminal cases that lead to incarceration, efforts should be made to minimize the geographical distance between children and their incarcerated father, as greater distance adversely impacts the likelihood of visitation.

At the same time, we need to recognize that some children have insecure attachments to their fathers and that some fathers are not effective at serving as a secure base or safe haven for their children, and that a father's mere physical presence in a child's life in insufficient to create such a connection (Dykas & Cassidy, 2013; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). In dyads where this is the case, policymakers and the courts must remember that attachments to absent parents *cannot* be created overnight but instead are the product of repeated, good-quality interactions between fathers and children. Giving fathers romanticized and fanciful opportunities to create instant love with their children, or having fathers insist that their children treat them like "a dad" when they have not been present, could be quite harmful to the child's emotional and psychological well-being. Some children may also defensively protest against seeing chronically absent fathers in order to protect themselves from additional hurt.

Teenage and low SES fathers frequently encounter significant barriers in accessing human services, especially services directed at promoting healthy child-caregiver bonds. Some of these barriers are structural, such as programs explicitly designed for mothers that may not allow fathers to participate (e.g., breastfeeding cafes, "mommy-and-me" activities). On the other hand, some barriers may be based on inaccurate stereotypical beliefs (e.g., men are incompetent or uninterested parents) or force men in low-paying positions with little control over their workday to choose between earning money and attending a parenting program (Bellamy & Banman, 2014; Devault, 2014; Kiselica & Kiselica, 2014).

Policymakers should consider giving struggling fathers equal access to programs that promote positive child–father interactions, which could ultimately foster secure attachment relationships. Some programs could also be created uniquely for fathers to promote their sensitivity toward their children by addressing masculine norms and other male-typical issues.

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Fathering Adolescents and Emerging Adults

Kevin Shafer and Nathan Jeffery

Adolescence and emerging adulthood are ambiguous terms that encompass many life events including: puberty, maturation, sexual debut, moving out of the home, attending college, entering long-term romantic partnerships, and becoming a parent. Definitions of these life stages are often based on biological, social, and cultural meanings (Dorn et al., 2006). In the United States and many other rich nations, adolescence typically encompasses ages 10–18, while emerging adulthood covers ages 19–29. Each represents a critical phase of the life course, marked by a myriad of changes that lay an important foundation for adult physical, psychological, social, physical, social, and economic well-being (Sawyer et al., 2012). Adolescence is notable for its biological changes, including physical growth, strength, hormonal changes, and development of reproductive capacity. While biological changes are less common in emerging adulthood, psychological changes are common in both stages. Both adolescents and emerging adults experience significant increases in their autonomy, self-expression, identity formation, complex decision-making ability, and mental health. Stressors, stress, and the emergence of psychopathologies are common, as well (Deighton et al., 2014). Social pressures associated with the transition to adulthood and important life choices, which are constrained by one's social location in adolescence and emerging adulthood, about education, career, family, and other dimensions of life are confronted in these two "decades of decision" (Nelson & Barry, 2005).

Parenting adolescents and emerging adults are substantially different from parenting a young child or an older adult. Increased autonomy, reduced caregiving, and movement toward becoming equals are all common in these transitional decades. As a result, parents often spend less time in shared activities with, tend to be less affectionate toward, and can conflict more often with children in this age range (Arnett, 2014; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Perhaps counterintuitively, then, the opportunities and risks associated with adolescence and emerging adulthood mean that parent–child relationships are critical to understanding how individuals navigate these developmental periods and how their life chances are shaped (Collins & Laursen, 2004).

Scholarship on father–adolescent relationships suggests that fathers are traditionally less engaged in caregiving and emotional support than mothers and tend to focus their attention

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on discipline and leisure activities (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). However, the shift of paternal engagement in recent decades is well documented (Livingston & Parker, 2019). Although gender inequalities within families persist, fathers are doing more caregiving, emotional support, and other parenting tasks than in the past. However, our understanding of fathering with adolescent and emerging adult children is limited by a double paucity of empirical scholarship. Little work considers the unique contributions of fathers to the physical, psychological, social, and developmental well-being of adolescents and emerging adults. This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that parenting research sits at the crossroads of applied and academic scholarship, including sociology, psychology, biology, family studies, education, public health, religion, and many other disciplines. Thus, a complete answer would ideally be multidisciplinary.

Our overview of father–child relationships with adolescents and emerging adults is guided by an extension of ecological models that specifically focus on father involvement and its impact on the well-being and development of children at multiple stages of the life course (Cabrera et al., 2014). Thus, this model is easily applied to understanding how fathers engage and interact with adolescent and emerging adult children and how men's parenting is associated with their biopsychosocial development and well-being. This model also considers a range of paternal attributes, including their own childhood experiences, cultural factors, family and household characteristics, social context, and interpersonal relationships, that can influence fathering and, in turn, children. Although no overview can be exhaustive, our discussion focuses on the father–child relationship in adolescence and emerging adulthood, how these relationships have unique effects in these life stages, and the various factors that either impede or facilitate father involvement during these unique developmental periods.

Father–Child Relationships in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood

Attitudes About the Paternal Role

The father–child relationship is central to an ecological framework and significantly changes as children get older (Roy, 2014). There are various explanations for paternal behavior (Petts et al., 2018). Gender socialization, beginning at an early age and continuing over the life course, provides scripts about how mothers and fathers should interact with their children. Many fathers continue to be socialized into a "secondary" parental role—often considered as helper or substitutes to mothers rather than equal co-parents. Others argue that fathers desire to be actively involved and engaged with their children, encouraged to do so by recent shifts in paternal norms and expectations. Despite these shifts, fathers in the United States, Canada, and many rich nations confront conflicting norms about their role in families. On the one hand, fathers are increasingly expected to be engaged in caregiving and emotional work with children—behaviors that have traditionally been viewed as "female coded." At the same time, fathers are still expected to provide financial support for their families and act as disciplinarians in the more traditional, authoritative role associated with fatherhood.

Despite these trends, paternal participation is often hampered by structural impediments like work, lack of integration into maternal and child health care, and few public policies aimed at helping fathers actively engage with their children and co-parents. As a result, these new norms are weakly institutionalized into family life (Cherlin, 2020). New norms about the paternal role may also be strongly focused on engagement with younger but not older children. For example, norms about the paternal role may lead fathers to increase their participation in physical care and monitoring very young children but do little to increase involvement with children who are becoming increasingly independent and less

dependent on their parents to meet their physical or even emotional needs (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Eggebeen, 2013; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Such a pattern would suggest that fathers approach their role and its associated responsibilities differently by child's age.

Consider data from the Fathering Across Contexts Survey (FACS), a survey that includes more than 4000 biological-, adoptive-, and stepfathers in the United States and Canada. For the sake of simplicity, we provide descriptive statistics by child age from the Canadian subsample. Young children here are between the ages of 2 and 9 years of age, while adolescents are 10–18 years old. Using a standardized scale of fathering attitudes with seven items scored on a 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) scale, there is little evidence that attitudes about what fathers do and their significance for child development and well-being varies by child age. Indeed, there was only one statistically significant difference among the seven measured items. Fathers of adolescents were slightly more likely to agree they should pull back from their parenting responsibilities if parenting could negatively impact their careers. Notably, however, the mean score on this item is relatively low for fathers, regardless of child age (Table 1).

It appears that fathers have similar views about the paternal role regardless of the child's age. These patterns raise questions about whether fathers of adolescents and emerging adults uniquely interact with their children or if attitudes about parenting are more stable over time now than in the past. Although scholars agree that parenting, generally, and fathering, specifically, change as children get older, research addressing similarities and differences in areas of paternal engagement is largely absent from the literature. Indeed, most of our knowledge about father–child relationships and interactions is predicated on data from younger children, with comparatively smaller literature on adolescence and emerging adulthood. In the next sections, we discuss similarities and differences in fathering across child age and present some descriptive data on important questions regarding fathering with older children.

Table 1 Fathering attitudes by child age

	Young children	Adolescents
It is essential for a child's well-being that fathers spend time interacting with their children.	3.17	3.23
It is difficult for men to express tender and affectionate feelings toward children. (RC)	2.17	2.14
A father should be as heavily involved in the care of his child as a mother.	3.08	3.13
Fathers play a central role in the child's personality development.	3.16	3.18
Fathers enjoy children more when they are older.	2.25	2.25
If it keeps him from getting ahead in his job, a father is too involved.[a]	1.64	1.76
In general, fathers and mothers are equally good at meeting child needs.	2.91	2.92
Total	19.42	19.39

RC reverse coded

[a]statistically significant difference between groups (*p* < .05, two-tailed test)

Measuring Father Involvement Across the Child's Life Course

Father involvement can be conceived as a multidimensional construct that includes both instrumental and expressive behaviors (Pleck, 2010, 2012). Instrumental fathering tends to focus on providing for a child's health and needs, including behaviors like engagement in positive and/or harsh discipline when children misbehave, caregiving, and monitoring a child's actions and whereabouts. Expressive parenting, meanwhile, is aimed at the psychological and social well-being of children. Paternal participation in these behaviors is often operationalized through measures like father–child relationship quality, warmth, and providing children with emotional support. Notably, while these general categories of behavior generally persist as children age, father–child interactions in each domain change through developmental stages. For example, children are less apt to express nuanced emotions about family circumstances at age 4 than they are at age 14. Thus, measurement should reflect these

differences while simultaneously mirroring general categories of paternal behavior. Consider, for example, measures in FACS that are based on standardized measures provided by organizations like the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN) or secondary data sets that are commonly used in studies of father involvement, like the Survey of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD) or Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). To illustrate these issues, Table 2 shows how FACS measured similar domains of paternal behavior across child ages.

Differences in measuring father involvement across age are notable. Consider, for example, the measurement of positive control. Among younger children, positive control is measured through non-coercive disciplinary strategies. For adolescents, however, it is more focused on the kinds of activities children are engaged in, with whom they are engaged in those activities, and other general information about how children spend time. Some concepts, like caregiving, are much more difficult to measure among older children than young children. The provision of physical care gets comparatively rarer as children age, since older children are often highly capable of providing care for themselves. As a result, FACS measured caregiving among young, but not older, children. Other concepts, however, are more universal. For example, warmth, emotional support, and father–child relationship quality can largely be measured similarly regardless of child age. To be sure, it is likely that the measurement of these concepts in FACS are far from perfect and its imperative that researchers invest more time and attention into considering how to best measure father involvement differently by child age. Currently, there is no literature that addresses variability in the measurement of fathering across developmental stages.

Variability in Father Involvement with Adolescents

In addition to thinking about differences in how fathers parent children as they age, we should also consider the frequency of those behaviors and if they vary by child age. Unfortunately,

research on changes *in* fathers in how much warmth, emotional support, or physical care they provide their child remains elusive in the literature. Again, the FACS data may provide some insights into potential changes in father involvement as children age—although these trends are not measured within father or child. Here, we use the measures outlined in Table 2 from the Canadian FACS to illustrate similarities and differences in fathering across child ages. We standardized scores on all measures to make the child age groupings comparable. These results, found in Fig. 1, from a sample of 2199 Canadian fathers suggest that warmth, emotional support, and harsh discipline are all more commonly displayed with younger children than adolescents. Our findings seemingly follow popular conceptions of parents acting affectionately toward young children abound. While the mean scores for warmth and emotional support are relatively high for adolescents, lower scores may be indicative of fewer norms and expectations about how fathers should show affection toward older children. The use of harsh discipline with younger children likely reflects attitudes about spanking and its use among some fathers as a potential, albeit poorly conceived, corrective measure. Such behaviors are far less common toward older children. Reflecting a similar pattern of age-specific parenting behavior, fathers are more likely to engage in positive control with adolescents than young children. They may do so because older children are provided more freedom and left unsupervised for longer periods of time than young children—meaning that fathers may be engaged in increased monitoring of their whereabouts, with whom they interact, and how they are doing in school.

One question common in the literature is whether fathers interact differently with their adolescent sons than their adolescent daughters. The motivation for such behaviors can be varied. Fathers may be more engaged parents with sons than daughters because their sons are participating in male-typical activities (Kuo et al., 2018) at an age defined by relatively strong gendered preferences, attitudes, and behaviors (Eggebeen, 2013). Essentialist beliefs about the paternal role

Table 2 Father involvement measures in FACS Data, by child age

	Younger children (2–8 years old)	Older children (9–18 years old)
Instrumental fathering		
Positive control	Give child a time out if misbehaving	Know where they are after school
	Extra chores if misbehaving	Know where they are on weekends
	Take privileges if misbehaving	Know who they are with
	Give warning if misbehaving	Know where they go
		Know who they spend time
		Know how they spend money
		Know about problems at school
Harsh discipline	Spank if misbehaving	Get angry at child
	Hit if misbehaving	Criticize child
	Make fun of them if misbehaving	Shout/yell at child
		Threaten physical harm
		Grab, push, or hit
		Boss them around
		Insult or swear at them
Expressive fathering		
Warmth	Express affection	Help them with important things
	Praise child	Let them know you care
	Easy going with child	Listen carefully to them
	Affection nicknames given to child	Act supportive, understanding
	Brag about child	Act loving, affectionate
	Think frequently about child	Have a good laugh together
	Enjoy holding/cuddling child	Let them know they are appreciated
		Tell them you love them
		Understand the way they feel
Engagement	Getting child to laugh	Listening to concerns
	Soothing child	Discuss daily activities
	Listening to concerns	Teaching right and wrong
	Discussing family issues	Teaching cultural values
	Teaching right and wrong	Communicating about important issues
	Teaching cultural values	Providing emotional support
Relationship quality	Feel disappointed in child (RC)	
	Wish child was different (RC)	
	Feel proud of child	
	Feel angry or irritated with child (RC)	
	Understand their child	
	Argue/fight with child (RC)	

RC reverse coded

suggest that fathers influence their children in ways that are distinct from mothers explicitly because of their gender. These beliefs, based on biological determinism, are common in the United States and other Western cultures (Randles, 2020). In adolescence, fathers may feel the need to socialize their sons into masculine, gender-typical roles as they begin to make important decisions about their life trajectory (Solebello & Elliott, 2011). Although there are good theo-retical reasons to suspect that there are differ-ences in how fathers approach their sons and daughters, little empirical data on the question exists—particularly among adolescents.

Using the same sample of Canadian fathers, we considered father involvement with adoles-cents by child gender. As illustrated in Fig. 2, we found that there were statistically significant dif-ferences for all five fathering behaviors. Fathers exhibited more warmth, provided more
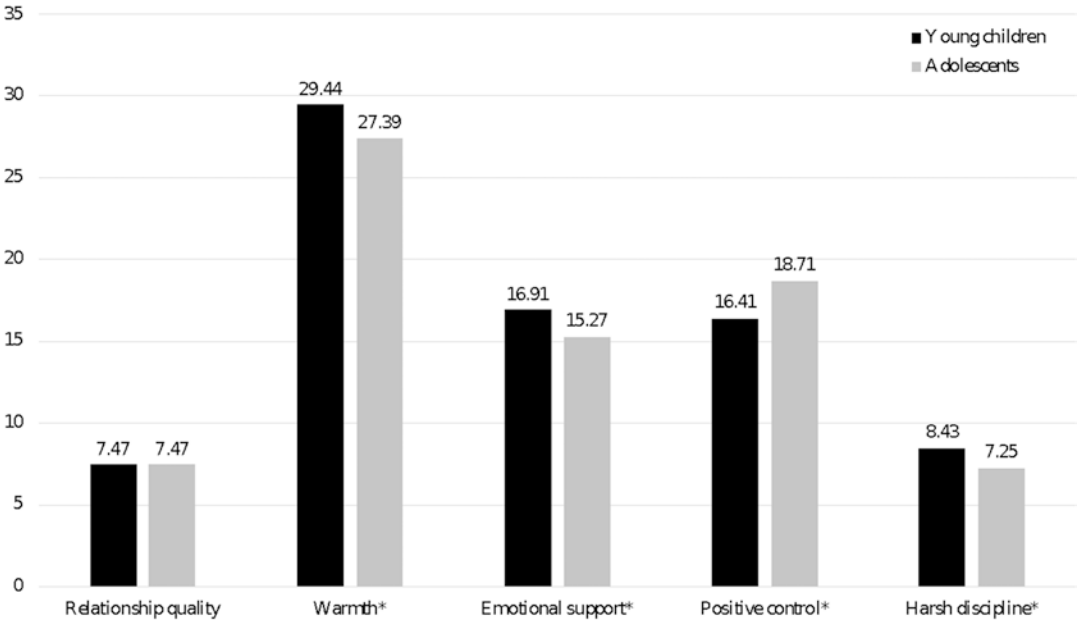
Fig. 1 Mean scores on father involvement measures by child age
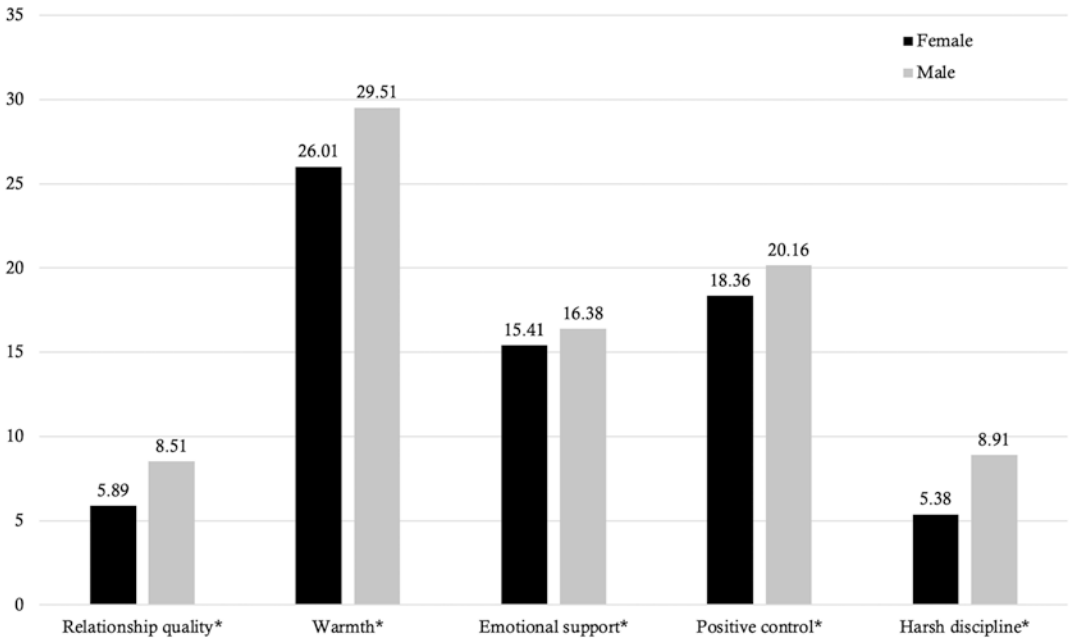
Fig. 2 Mean scores on father involvement measures among adolescents by child sex

emotional support, engaged in positive control more frequently, and perceived better relationships with sons than daughters—a finding mirrored in research using the child perspective on paternal relationship quality (Mitchell et al., 2009). In contrast to these trends, however, fathers were more likely to use harsh discipline with sons than daughters, producing a mixed

picture for understanding fathering, gender, and adolescence.

Combined, these patterns suggest that fathers' parenting may be highly gendered. On the one hand, such trends seemingly benefit boys over girls. Warmth, emotional support, positive control, and good father–child relationships are critical to the physical, psychological, social, and developmental well-being of adolescent children (McKinney & Renk, 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). For example, children with less warm fathers are more likely to experience both internalized and externalized problem behaviors (Shafer et al., 2017). On the other hand, adolescent boys are receiving significantly harsher discipline from their fathers than girls. Such patterns may reflect the desire of some fathers to instill masculine ideologies in their sons, including the use of aggression, anger, and even violence as legit means that can be used for compliance (Bucher, 2014; Solebello & Elliott, 2011). Alternatively, benevolent sexist attitudes may also shape these behaviors, making fathers reluctant to use particularly harsh disciplinary strategies against their daughters.

Father Involvement with Emerging Adult Children

How these patterns play out with emerging adult children is less well-known, and data on the question is sparse. Parents tend to be involved in helping emerging adults transition toward more personal autonomy and financial independence, though there is considerable variability in both among emerging adults (Arnett, 2014). For example, recent estimates from the US Census Bureau (2019) indicate that one-third of 19- to 29-year-olds live with their parents. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of parents of emerging adults report they provide their children with some sort of financial support, and nearly 45% indicated that they "frequently" or "regularly" provide economic aid (Arnett & Schwab, 2013). Similarly, various life circumstances and comparatively high levels of instability when one is in their twenties mean that many emerging adults may live with their parents long-term, short-term, or transition in and out of the home many times

(Copp et al., 2017). This variability emerges from structural challenges faced by many emerging adults. It has become increasingly difficult in the United States and many other high-income countries to obtain financial and occupational stability within the third decade of life. However, these challenges are not universally experienced, and group-level differences in the risk of low personal and financial autonomy in emerging adulthood have been observed. Emerging adults raised in economically privileged families tend to have greater access to educational opportunities, are more likely to have stable career trajectories, and commonly establish financial independence and well-being at an earlier age (Sorgente & Lanz, 2017). Thus, parent-emerging adult–child interactions are defined by a complex equation of life course experiences, contextual factors, and individual- and family-level characteristics.

The transition to personal independence in emerging adulthood also changes the nature of the parent–child relationship. Instead of parents taking responsibility for their child's well-being, as they do with young children, parents and emerging adult children typically interact as equal partners interested in development, health, and well-being. Parents tend to monitor their children with less vigilance and frequency than during adolescence. Commands and discipline wain significantly during this life stage, as well (Arnett, 2014). Instead, parental involvement with emerging adults is better described as an intimate relationship between adults, built on a foundation of open communication, spending time together, and friendship. Moreover, comparatively few parents of emerging adults report reductions in closeness or increases in conflict (Arnett & Schwab, 2013). These changes in the parent–child relationship suggest that traditional measures of engagement with dependent (18 or younger) children are not easily used to describe engagement in emerging adulthood. Yet, measures covering parenting behaviors with emerging adult children are not readily available. Given the changing context of child development to include significant engagement with children in their twenties, future work would do well to develop instruments that would allow scholars to

collect quantitative data that supports the growing body of qualitative literature on fathering with emerging adults.

A further gap in the literature is the lack of empirical studies on the similarities and differences in mothering and fathering with emerging adult children. Parenting with this age group may be gendered in ways that mirror patterns found in infancy, early childhood, and adolescence, or parenting may become increasingly gender neutral as children leave the household. However, our understanding on this question remains murky. On the one hand, emerging adulthood, like adolescence before it, is marked by decisions that are often highly gendered. Decisions about attending university, course of study, romantic relationships, children, career, and many other important life events are all strongly gendered and hallmarks of the third decade of life. As a result, fathers may forge relationships that are unique from mothers. Men may be more engaged in gender-typical topics with their children like finances, provide "practical" advice about schooling and associated career trajectories, and push for more traditionally gendered relationship patterns as their children become increasingly independent. Traditional masculine norms about parental roles and relationships may also lead to drops in how much social and emotional support among fathers provide their children, relative to the levels of mothers. On the other hand, the transition to independence and adulthood may lead to convergence in parenting behaviors. For example, Arnett's (2014) qualitative descriptions of relationships between parents and emerging adult children are largely gender neutral, focusing on the slow transition to acting as co-equals, and the different types of support parents provide their children. Thus, future work would do well to attend to these issues.

Other Dimensions of Fathering and Child Age

Ecological models place fathers within a web of influence, where they interact and work with others to parent. The most important of these relationships is with the co-parent (commonly the biological mother). Co-parenting refers to the partnership focused on the physical, psychological, social, and developmental well-being of their children. Although there are several conceptual and operational definitions of co-parenting in the literature (see Bowen (1993) and McHale and Irace (2011) for a full discussion), we focus on the more inclusive definition that considers various dimensions of parental alliance. This formulation of co-parenting is more inclusive, focusing on how residential or nonresidential co-parents work together to make decisions about children and engage in emotional work together, their agreement on how to parent their children, and how respectful they are about one another's parenting decisions (McHale et al., 2019). Some scholars have conceptualized and operationalized co-parenting in a parent-centric way that focuses on whether decisions about children are made by one parent, through parental consensus, or somewhere in-between (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Simes, 1991). Others consider child-centric co-parenting, focused on how well parents work together to meet goals around child socialization, attachment, and other markers of well-being (McHale & Irace, 2011). Measures that consider both decision-making processes and childrearing collaboration are most reflective of the wide-ranging expectations associated with parental roles and responsibilities (Feinberg, 2003).

Like involvement, thinking about co-parenting with a multidimensional lens better reflects research showing the positive benefits of co-parenting for families, in general, and children, specifically. We conceptualize it to consist of three dimensions: undermining, alliance, and gatekeeping. Undermining is behavior taken by the co-parent against the father to reduce their legitimacy to make decisions regarding the child and their autonomy as a parent. For example, mothers may belittle or make negative comments about fathers to reduce their engagement in a myriad of behaviors (McHale et al., 2019). Alliance, in contrast, addresses how well parents work together to meet children's needs, communicate with one another, and focus their efforts on positive child outcomes (Fagan, 2014). For example, do fathers work with their co-parent to make joint decisions? Do they share pertinent

information with one another? Finally, gatekeeping refers to the beliefs and behaviors used to discourage cooperative co-parenting and inhibit the father's engagement with children. Gatekeeping can be overt, such as making it hard for a father to spend time with their child or passive, like telling neighbors how bad a father is at parenting.

Parents who work together see substantial benefits to their relationships and personal benefits in the form of reduced stress levels, fewer mental health issues, and improved physical well-being (Choi & Becher, 2019; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). Other concerns, such as work–family stress, are also partially mitigated by strong co-parenting relationships (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). The emotional, physical, and social needs of young children are more likely to be met when parents work together (McHale & Irace, 2011), leading to improved social development, fewer behavioral problems, psychological well-being, and social–emotional competence (Kwon et al., 2003; Murphy et al., 2016). In adolescence, co-parenting is particularly meaningful for avoiding risky behaviors and shaping positive life trajectories into adulthood. Co-parenting is positively correlated with life satisfaction, mental health, and developmental outcomes and is negatively associated with stress among adolescents (Riina & Feinberg, 2018; Teubert & Pinquart, 2011; Zou & Wu, 2019).

In a thematically consistent development, the size of the research literature on co-parenting adolescent children pales in comparison to the voluminous literature addressing the issue with young children. Moreover, little work has focused on similarities and differences in co-parenting relationships by child age. There are some reasons to expect that co-parenting is different in young children than in adolescents. Traditional gender norms are particularly strong early in children's lives, given the plasticity of their developmental, cognitive, and social trajectories, coupled with high physical care needs (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). As children age, these norms may weaken—changing how parents work with one another. Similarly, as we noted earlier, norms that impel fathers to be actively engaged in parenting, typically alongside their partners, with

their young children are weaker with older children. Clear expectations become increasingly opaque as children age may have a negative effect on co-parenting behaviors. On the other hand, prior studies and the data presented thus far in this chapter paint a potentially different picture. Fathers clearly indicate they want to be involved with their adolescent children, and there are few differences in their attitudes about the paternal role across child ages. These trends may also extend into co-parenting, as well. If they do, it is possible that co-parenting remains relatively stable across children's developmental stages.

We again used the Canadian FACS sample to get a descriptive picture of co-parenting with young children and adolescents. Our measure is derived from the standardized instrument produced by FRPN (Dyer et al., 2018). We measure the three dimensions discussed earlier as separate dimensions of co-parenting (full information about the scale can be found in Dyer et al., 2018). Using a 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) scale, undermining and gatekeeping were both measured with three items, while alliance was measured with five items. Example items include: the mother contradicts decisions I make about the child (undermining), the mother and I discuss the best way to meet the child's needs (alliance), and the mother tells the child what he/she is allowed to say to me (gatekeeping). Using the same age split as discussed earlier, Table 3 shows statistically significant differences in paternal reports of alliance and gatekeeping by child age. These differences are small but important (alliance: $d = 0.18$, $p < .05$; gatekeeping: $d = 0.17$, $p < .05$). Fathers of adolescents indicate that they communicate less and make fewer shared decisions about parenting than fathers of young children. At the same time, fathers of adolescents report

Table 3 Dimensions of co-parenting behavior by child age

	Young children	Adolescents	d
Undermining	4.44	4.57	n/a
Alliance[a]	14.95	13.57	0.18
Gatekeeping[a]	3.71	2.44	0.17

[a]Statistically significant difference between groups ($p < .05$, two-tailed test)

that they are less subject to maternal gatekeeping attitudes and behaviors.

Overview of Results

Overall, the results in this chapter results provide more evidence that fathering with adolescents is unique. In some ways, fathering adolescents looks like fathering young children. It appears that there are few, if any, differences in attitudes about the paternal role between fathers of young children and adolescents. Regardless of the child age, dads tend to believe that their involvement is critical to the development and well-being of children. We found one small difference in attitudes by child age. Fathers of adolescents were more likely to endorse career prospects over engagement at home, which may reflect concerns about increasing costs associated with intensive parenting of adolescent children (Lareau, 2011). In other ways, there are important differences. Weaker norms about how fathers should engage with older children may help explain why fathers show less warmth and provide less emotional support to adolescents than young children. At the same time, their ecological theory suggests that there is a bidirectional relationship where adolescents may challenge parents in ways that contribute to reduced warmth. Concerns about the health and well-being of adolescents who are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and have more autonomy may lead to higher levels of positive control than with young children. Differences in fathering behavior between adolescent sons and daughters are also notable. Finally, there are notable differences in the co-parenting relationship. While levels of undermining behavior appear to remain stable over childhood, there are differences in how well parents communicate and work together with one another to provide for the child's needs. At the same time, fathers of adolescents report encountering less closed gatekeeping, on average, than fathers of young children.

Overall, fathering behaviors toward adolescent and emerging adult children are complex and bring together several issues: a lack of institutionalized norms about parenting older children, strong gendered roles in fathers, and questions about what constitutes active paternal engagement as children age. Future work would do well to attend to these questions. To date, most of our scholarly efforts on these issues have focused on fathering young children. However, shifts in paternal roles, responsibilities, and expectations suggest that we must do more work to understand fathering with older children and how it is similar to and different from what dads with young children and mothers with adolescents and emerging adults do.

Predicting Father Involvement

Paternal engagement with children is the result of a complex formula of personal characteristics, attitudes about the paternal role, opportunities for involvement, and structural constraints that make involvement challenging. Ecological models help us understand how these various factors work together or against one another to influence fathers and their engagement in meeting the physical and emotional needs of their children (Cabrera et al., 2014). This model asserts that men's fathering behaviors, and their contributions to child well-being and development, are influenced by individual and family characteristics, immediate systemic influences, and external factors such as social policies and cultural norms. In this section, we consider several factors associated with father involvement across levels.

Personal Characteristics

Ecological models argue that fathers' personal characteristics influence how they parent their children and can act as resources that facilitate positive father involvement through warmth, provision of emotional support, positive discipline, and good father–child relationship quality (Palkovitz & Hull, 2018). Cabrera et al. (2014) point out a myriad of individual factors that may be associated with fathering behavior: paternal history, personality, beliefs, social networks, socioeconomic status, and work feature prominently. These characteristics are likely to work both independently but also interdependently to influence paternal engagement. For example, adherence to traditional masculine norms is

negatively associated with attitudes about the paternal role, emotional engagement, and caregiving (Petts et al., 2018). At the same time, however, the relationship between masculinity and fathering behavior can be moderated by other individual characteristics, like mental health (Shafer et al., 2019a) and religiosity (Shafer et al., 2019b). Thus, scholars should consider both direct and combined effects of these characteristics in research on the antecedents of paternal engagement with children.

Fathering attitudes Masculine norms vary across cultures and contexts. For example, traditional North American conceptions of masculinity emphasize self-reliance and individualism (Petts et al., 2018). In contrast, many Latino cultures include concepts such as *familismo,* which underscores a man's obligations and responsibilities with his family—a concept missing from traditional American and Canadian concepts of what it means to be a man (Glass & Owen, 2010). Most research has focused on men's acceptance or rejection of traditional North American norms and their influence at the individual level. Today, men find themselves confronted with conflicting norms about masculinity and contemporary ideals, expectations, and attitudes about what fatherhood means and what dads do. Traditional masculine norms emphasize the importance of breadwinning, limited emotional expression, avoiding anything "feminine," toughness, dominance over women, hyper-competitiveness, risk-taking, self-reliance, and hyper-sexuality (Mahalik et al., 2003; Petts et al., 2018). In contrast, the "new fatherhood ideal" has become increasingly prevalent in recent decades, emphasizing an ethic of care and involvement. This ideal is associated with shifting expectations and behaviors for fathers, including higher involvement in childcare, housework, and increased gender equity at home and in the workplace. While stronger adherence to traditional masculinity is correlated with lower acceptance of the new fatherhood ideal (see Petts et al. (2018)), the two are not necessarily opposite anchor points of a spectrum. The culmination of men's struggle to navigate between these two sets of expectations is known as *the new male mystique*, a term coined by Aumann et al. (2011). Such contradictions may vary across child ages. When parenting young children, men may lean more toward involvement in home life, slowly shifting toward authoritative roles as children get older and increasingly independent.

Prior work on the relationship between adherence to masculine norms and father involvement has yielded decidedly mixed results. Differences in the relationship between masculinity and fathering may be the result of methodological differences across studies. Studies using comprehensive, standardized measures of masculine norm adherence, however, find a moderate relationship with multiple dimensions of instrumental and expressive fathering behavior (Shafer et al., 2020). Notably, Petts et al. (2018) focused on fathering by child age, noting that the relationship between masculine norm adherence had a weaker, albeit significant, negative relationship with instrumental parenting behaviors with adolescents than with young children but stronger negative associations with expressive behaviors. In the same study, belief in the new fatherhood ideal had bigger effects on fathering with adolescents than young children. Together, these patterns suggest that the relationship between adherence to traditionally masculine norms, the new fatherhood ideal, and father involvement may depend on the strength of expectations depending on the child's age. Robust norms about childcare with young children may lead masculinity to have stronger countervailing effects. Meanwhile, norms around men's parenting tend to be much weaker with adolescents than with young children. As a result, masculinity is less bound with instrumental parenting, although it remains important to expressive parenting. At the same time, however, observance of the new fatherhood ideal appears to have a stronger influence on how men parent in the absence of consistent expectations. The degree to which these patterns shape fathering with emerging adults is, regrettably, not well known.

Religion   Another characteristic strongly associated with fathering is religiosity. Many studies of religion and fatherhood focus on select groups, like Evangelical Christian men (Bartkowski & Xu, 2000; Wilcox, 2004). Studies that consider a broader group of fathers are less common, despite the centrality of religion to the identity, attitudes, values, and beliefs of many fathers (Mahoney, 2010). Religious fathers frequently sanctify their family relationships, giving them spiritual significance (Mahoney et al., 2003). Together, these patterns suggest that religion can act as an important personal resource that strengthens paternal identity and increases father–child engagement (Tichenor et al., 2011). Studies have consistently demonstrated that family religiosity can yield positive effects for adolescents and emerging adults. Much of the effect may be attributable to how religious parents, including fathers, interact with their children (Petts, 2011). Some studies have considered differences in religious fathers' parenting behaviors by child age. Lending further support to the idea that father–child interactions in adolescence are not widely institutionalized, Shafer and colleagues (2019b) found that religiosity had similar or even larger effects on the warmth, emotional support, and positive control of adolescent children when compared to behaviors with young children. Notably, however, religiosity increases fathers' use of harsh discipline—particularly with adolescents. Thus, religiosity is associated with increased expressive and instrumental parenting among adolescents and potentially harmful authoritarian practices. These patterns may be rooted in amplified concerns about behaviors commonly engaged in by adolescents, including drinking, drug use, and sexual behaviors, that commonly run counter to values held by highly religious fathers (Hoffman et al., 2017).

Family-of-origin   Men often interact with their children in ways that frequently reflect how they were parented as a child (Roy, 2006; Roy & Smith, 2012). Qualitative studies, particularly those focused on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) fathers, find that experiences in a father's family-of-origin (FOO) have divergent effects on their own parenting. For some, experiences with one's own father can shape paternal identity and behavior (Bouchard, 2012; Brown et al., 2018; Guzzo, 2011). For others, interactions with mothers, kin, or mentors are particularly powerful (Roy et al., 2008; Roy, 2014). In some cases, men may try to compensate for their own father's poor parenting with their own children (Bar-On & Scharf, 2016; Daly, 1996). Notably, adolescence appears to be a particularly formative period for shaping father involvement—suggesting that fathering behaviors with adolescents and emerging adults are particularly relevant for understanding intergenerational effects on men's parenting.

Paternal diversity   Many personal characteristics play an important role in shaping how men parent adolescents and emerging adults. Fathers are not a monolith, and there is substantial diversity in paternal relationships, circumstances, and how men are structurally situated relative to resources that facilitate their engagement with children. Many studies focus on romantically involved heterosexual men that live with their biological children. Fathers may or may not be biologically related to their children, reside with their children, be partnered with the mother of their child, or be a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Indeed, increased family diversity is one of the hallmarks of the past few decades (Sanner & Jensen, 2021). Racial and ethnic differences in family life are rooted in racialized social structures that limit BIPOC fathers' access to important resources such as employment, educational attainment, health, and social support (Manning, 2019). Immigrant fathers often face similar constraints, along with the challenge of parenting in ways that may be inconsistent with prevailing norms in their new country (Bornstein, 2017). Fathers that identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community remain stigmatized in the population at-large yet are often highly involved, warm, supportive parents (Cameron, 2009). Scholarship addressing diverse groups of fathers and how they parent adolescent and emerging adult

children is generally lacking. As a result, it is difficult to discuss similarities and differences in fathering adolescents and emerging adults across groups. Yet, these questions are significant, given how critical these life stages are for understanding adult well-being.

Fathers' Relationships

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the importance of the relationship between parents through our discussion of co-parenting and gatekeeping. However, other paternal relationships are also critical to understanding involvement and engagement. Here, we extend our discussion of family diversity to consider how family structure may be associated with how fathers engage with adolescents and emerging adults.

Nonresidential fathers Divorce, nonmarital fertility, cohabitation, and other family issues mean that many adolescent children do not live with their biological fathers. The available evidence suggests that nonresidential fathers parent differently from residential fathers and that the predictors of adolescent well-being vary according to paternal residential status (Berge et al., 2014; Campbell & Winn, 2018). Early studies on nonresidential fathering suggested that father–child contact was positively associated with adolescent behavior and well-being (King, 1994; King & Heard, 1999). Later studies, however, found mixed support for this relationship (King & Sobolewski, 2006). One potential reason for these differences lay in the diverse ways in which nonresidential fathers parent their children—particularly adolescents. For example, Cheadle et al. (2010) found four distinct patterns among nonresidential fathers, three of which exhibit low levels of involvement with adolescents. More relevant to adolescents is *how* nonresidential fathers interact with them. Warmth and emotional support, for example, are associated with internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems. Recent evidence suggests that nonresidential fathers may have a stronger effect on problematic behaviors than residential fathers—particularly at high levels of father–child conflict (Little et al., 2019). In contrast, positive behaviors, like warmth and emotional support, appear to foster strong father–child relationships, which is key to understanding the positive influence nonresidential fathers have on their adolescent children (King & Sobolewski, 2006; Palkovitz, 2019). Nonresidential fathers also contribute to adolescent well-being in other ways. Financial problems are common in households without two parents, and child support payments help assuage many of the negative effects associated with economic marginalization that often comes from living in a single-parent household (Gold et al., 2020).

Emerging adult children are far more likely to live apart from their fathers than adolescents, often due to cultural norms that emphasize the significance of personal independence in the third decade of life (Fingerman & Yahirun, 2016). These norms may alter how residential status influences the father–child relationship. Expectations about the transition to adulthood in the United States can lead to tension, negative feelings, and irritation between co-residing emerging adults and parents (Davis et al., 2018; van Gaalen et al., 2010). In contrast, coresidence with parents may yield benefits for emerging adults. The ability to gain advice, support and other forms of assistance in a timely, face-to-face manner may yield significant benefits (Arnett, 2014). Evidence for both patterns exists. For example, Fingerman et al. (2017) found that coresidential emerging adults report that they have more positive experiences with and receive significantly more support from their parents than emerging adults that live independently from their parents. At the same time, however, they are also more likely to become irritated with and have negative feelings toward their parents. These countervailing forces may be one reason why there appear to be few differences in the effects of parental support on child psychological and social well-being by emerging adult residential status (Birditt, 2014; Fingerman et al., 2017).

Non-biological fathers Perhaps the most work focused on a diverse set of fathers has considered stepfathers—nonbiological fathers who are

either married to or cohabit with a child's biological parent (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Stepfathers face several challenges in their parenting—particularly around their roles and expectations (King, 2009). Many stepfathers see themselves less as fathers and more as involved relatives, friends, or mentors (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Marsiglio, 1992). While many stepfathers are hesitant to take on parenting roles and responsibilities commonly associated with biological fatherhood, many mothers want stepfamilies to look, feel, and act like biological nuclear families from the start (Weaver & Coleman, 2010). Adding to the complexity of these issues, children, particularly adolescent children, typically want a close and supportive relationship with their stepfather—but do not want their stepfathers to influence the rules, values, or culture of the family (Kinniburgh-White et al., 2010). Family discord over the proper role and responsibilities of stepfathers can have long-lasting consequences. For example, Jensen et al. (2017) found that lingering stress from parental separation and stepfamily life is significantly associated with emerging adults' psychological well-being.

International Variability

Parenting practices vary across contexts. Work on fathering from many countries suggests that there are important cross-cultural differences in how men parent. For example, McNeely and Barber (2010), in a study of adolescents from 12 nations, demonstrated that there was significant cross-national variability in what children viewed as supportive and loving parenting. The importance of quality time, affection, time, emotional support, and autonomy varied significantly across nations in their study. Similar variability is likely among parents of emerging adults and may be dependent upon cultural norms about when children become adults, leave home, and child autonomy (Parra-Cardona et al., 2019). Moreover, important structural differences in the ability to access higher education and the economic prospects of emerging adults may also inform cross-cultural and cross-national differences in fathering with this age group.

Prior work addressing these issues tends to focus on how work-family policies and government support to help shape the time fathers spend on parenting responsibilities and temporal inequalities between mother–father dyads. Overall, systemic support for fathering is associated with men's investment in family labor (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2018; Thébaud, 2010). Research from a range of nations also suggests that structural supports are critical to understanding paternal involvement. Fathers in Italy report feeling a significant conflict between cultural norms that emphasize traditional masculine approaches to parenting and their desire to be highly engaged in providing emotional and social support to their children (Magaraggia, 2013). Work among British fathers shows that there are deep divisions across ethnicity, nativity, and social class regarding their perceived parenting roles and responsibilities (Williams, 2007). The history of colonialism and Apartheid make these fissures deeper and more challenging for South African fathers (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Shafer et al. (2020) demonstrated the significance of gender egalitarianism in social policy for understanding why Canadian fathers are more involved with their children than their American counterparts—despite significant cultural similarities between the two nations. Emphasizing the importance of such support, Brandth and Kvande (2019) demonstrated that Norwegian fathers were more involved and engaged in the lives of their children due to the generous family policies and supports available in that nation.

Fathering and Child Outcomes

Adolescents

Child psychological, physical, social, and cognitive well-being is central to the ecological framework. Fatherhood matters according to the model insofar as it positively impacts children, their health and well-being, and their developmental trajectories. As children get older, research on parenting and child outcomes expands from basic cognitive, emotional, and motor skills to more complex measures of child well-being. Many

studies on fathering with adolescent and emerging adult children focus on behavior and other outcomes associated with health, well-being, and life chances (Shafer et al., 2017). These issues are particularly relevant during life stages that are characterized by the potential for increased involvement in behaviors, institutions, and social situations that set trajectories into adulthood (Sawyer et al., 2012). At the most fundamental level, the same fathering behaviors that predict positive outcomes among young children do so among older children, as well. Warmth, emotional support, and positive father–child relationships are associated with the psychological, social, physical, and developmental outcomes of adolescents (Twamley et al., 2013).

Behaviorally, research addressing paternal effects on adolescents tends to address internalized and externalized problems. Internalized issues are frequently reflected in poor mental health and attitude, while externalized issues can include yelling, screaming, or low-level delinquency—behaviors that are commonly called "acting out." Adolescents with warm and responsive fathers tend to experience lower levels of internalized problems, including depression, negative emotions, and impulsivity (Allen & Daly, 2002; Coates & Phares, 2019; Day & Padilla-Walker, 2009; Dermott, 2008; Twamley et al., 2013). Research suggests that fathering has particular utility in helping adolescents learn how to manage stress, develop good problem-solving skills, and acquire resilience to negative emotionality (Allen & Daly, 2002). Likewise, father involvement is negatively associated with drug use, drinking, truancy, shoplifting, and other externalizing problems (Shafer et al., 2017). These latter issues may have a particularly strong correlation with paternal investment in monitoring how children are doing in school, having knowledge of peer networks, and their child's schedule, whereabouts, and activities (Waller et al., 2015). Notably, as we indicated earlier in this chapter, fathers engage in more monitoring and positive control with adolescents than young children.

Paternal engagement has positive effects on adolescent educational outcomes, as well. On average, fathers spend significantly less time helping children with educational tasks than mothers (Livingston & Parker, 2019). However, when fathers are engaged with their children's schoolwork and other educational tasks, they help create cognitively stimulating home environments, often provide their children with two parents emphasizing the significance of education, and help generate clear and consistent expectations about school (Jeynes, 2015). As a result, adolescents with educationally engaged fathers tend to get better grades, do better on standardized tests, attend school with greater regularity, participate in extracurricular activities at school and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college (McBride et al., 2005). Notably, the relationship between paternal involvement and adolescent educational outcomes is not due to selection effects. Paternal influences are positive and significant regardless of parental educational attainment, racial/ethnic identity, residential status, or socioeconomic status (McBride et al., 2005; McWayne et al., 2013).

Adolescents also socially benefit from paternal involvement. Pro-social behavior, executive functioning skills, self-esteem, and an optimistic outlook are all associated with fathers' emotional support, warmth, and engagement (Dermott, 2008). Moreover, fathers appear too positive about their children's peer networks. Father involvement is linked to children picking positive friendships and being well-liked by their peers and other adults. Adolescents are also more likely to demonstrate positive and timely moral development and have secure attachment styles when they have strong, positive relationships, built on high levels of involvement, with their fathers (Palkovitz et al., 2014; Torres et al., 2014). Fathers may have a unique and particularly positive influence on the social development, health, and well-being of their adolescents because they frequently engage in parenting practices that are unique from the ones frequently engaged in by mothers. These paternal behaviors encourage adolescents to take on healthy risks, demonstrate unique types of interpersonal interactions that can be beneficial in social settings, and emphasize

the importance of adaptation to unique or challenging situations (Kuo et al., 2018; Palkovitz et al., 2014).

Emerging Adults

Perhaps unsurprisingly, significantly less attention has been paid to the influence of fathers on emerging adult outcomes. Yet, there is good reason to suspect that father involvement plays an important role in helping emerging adults flourish during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Much of the work addressing the question of connections between fathering and emerging adult well-being focus on the delicate balance between involvement, autonomy, and parental control. For example, father involvement has been linked to great self-sufficiency, financial independence, and self-regulation in late adolescence and young adulthood (Nelson & Barry, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). A substantial portion of the scholarship on fathering and emerging adulthood is concentrated on university students. This work shows that paternal engagement in the lives of their children has substantial positive effects on multiple dimensions of emerging adult well-being. Positive parenting, including from fathers, helps emerging adults adjust to the unique challenges associated with the difficulty and instability associated with the third decade of life (Turner et al., 2001). Nevertheless, there are good reasons to suspect that effects of paternal warmth, support, and involvement are not simply limited to a subset of 18- to 29-year-olds (Padilla-Walker et al., 2016). For example, parental involvement is associated with psychological adjustment to new life circumstances and the ability to integrate into new groups and situations, which are commonplace in emerging adulthood (McKinney & Renk, 2008).

Although standardized measures focused on father involvement remain elusive, studies focused on parent–child relationship quality highlight the significance of positive paternal bonds for emerging adults. Emerging adults tend to be more focused on schoolwork (Waterman & Lefkowitz, 2017) and do better in school (Turner et al., 2009) when they have strong relationships with their fathers. The likelihood of engaging in

risk behaviors, such as binge drinking, drug use, and smoking, is also lowered by good father–child relationships (Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Kennedy & Hofer, 2007; Padilla-Walker et al., 2016). The behavioral benefits of a healthy paternal bond may be rooted in improved internal regulation (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013) and the importance of father–child relationships for reducing impulsiveness and limiting unhealthy risk-taking in late adolescence and emerging adulthood (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007, 2010). Notably, emerging adults benefit from parents that encourage autonomous decision-making. In contrast, fathers who exert undo control on older children often prompt negative psychological, social, and behavioral reactions (Nelson et al., 2011). These reactions range from increased psychological distress (Padilla-Walker et al., 2008) to engagement in criminal behavior (Johnson et al., 2011). While research has focused on important outcomes in emerging adulthood, future work might do well to look at a myriad of economic, social, psychological, health, and other indicators of well-being and flourishing in emerging adults to generate more complete literature on the effects of father involvement among emerging adults.

Discussion and Conclusion

Adolescence and emerging adulthood represent two decades of significant developmental change that set the stage for adulthood. Parenting, including fathering, plays an important role in shaping the developmental, social, psychological, physical, and emotional outcomes of adolescents and emerging adults. The importance of father–child relationships for older children is underscored by the significant change, instability, autonomy, and importance for the future that mark these developmental stages. Although most studies on fathering behavior and its effects focus on infants and young children, work considering the impact on adolescents and emerging adults demonstrates that father involvement matters regardless of child age. At the same time, little scholarship has considered similarities and differences in

fathering from infancy to emerging adulthood. Future work should address this limitation by addressing the unique contributions of fathers to the health and well-being of older children. These questions take on added significance given that adolescence and emerging adulthood help set trajectories into adulthood and later life.

One particularly noteworthy omission from research on fathering among adolescents and emerging adults is the lack of measures that reflect developmentally appropriate parenting with older children. Indeed, many measures tend to "tweak" items designed for much younger children. While there may be some theoretical and methodological utility in this approach, it fails to consider which behaviors yield the most benefits for older children, does not reflect developmental changes, and may not capture those parenting behaviors that have the most value for adolescent and emerging adult outcomes. While some work has considered these issues among adolescents, the problem is particularly prevalent for emerging adults. Future work should consider how to best address the many issues that surround emerging adulthood—including questions of how to capture father involvement with a group that demonstrates significantly higher autonomy from their parents than younger groups of children. Moreover, measures should capture the diverse experiences that exist among both adolescents and emerging adults. Again, the question is particularly important among emerging adults. There is significant variability in the educational, occupational, romantic, economic, social, psychological, and physical experiences of 18- to 29-year-olds. Some go to university directly from high school, while others start their careers. Some move out of the home almost immediately after graduating high school; others remain at home and still others "boomerang" back to living with their parents. Scholars should consider ways to capture "good fathering" in a way that captures the positive effects of father involvement across these diverse experiences while also taking them into account.

As with other areas of fathering research, the bulk of the scholarship has focused on how fathers benefit children. This work is important and should remain central to the literature, given that fathering affects a broad spectrum of outcomes that shape the life chances of adolescents and emerging adults. Of course, society is not static, and this work needs to consider various social changes that influence the lives of older children. To provide just one example, intensive parenting has become increasingly commonplace in the United States as a response to growing levels of social stratification and decreased social mobility (Lareau, 2011). These parenting practices emphasize building the academic, extracurricular, and social profiles of children, providing them with credentials that are viewed as necessary in an increasingly competitive and challenging economic environment. Most research demonstrates fathers are less engaged in these behaviors than mothers (Dermott, 2008; Hays, 1998), instead focusing on "intimate rather than intensive" parenting that prioritizes "forming an emotional relationship with the child" (Shirani et al., 2012, p. 27). At the same time, studies that focus on intensive parenting behavior rarely address the question in fathers—particularly during adolescence. Yet, given the significance of adolescence and emerging adulthood, there may be particularly important ages to consider how fathers engage in parenting behaviors with an eye toward "setting up" their children for the future by attempting to get them into elite educational institutions through building resumes filled with extracurriculars and superlatives (Shirani et al., 2012).

Notably, work on the predictors of father involvement continues to escape the same level of scholarly attention as that, considering how fathers benefit children. However, there are many good reasons to suspect that the characteristics that predict father involvement with younger children may differ from those that predict involvement with older children. Expectations about paternal roles and responsibilities are less institutionalized among adolescents and emerging adults than in young children, infants, and babies. Social and institutional supports tend to focus on helping fathers of younger children more than fathers of older children. Fathers are frequently at a different stage in the life course

when parenting adolescents and emerging adults than young children—meaning they have different experiences with work, family, and other social institutions. Future work would do well to consider contextual differences over the life course of *both* children and fathers (Roy, 2014). Moreover, it is important to consider that the mechanisms by which fathers affect their children also vary by child age. For example, paternal depression is associated with increased internalized and externalized problems in children, but the mechanisms differ across child age. Among young children, paternal depression works *through* parenting behaviors to affect child behavior. In adolescents, depression has *direct* effects on behavioral outcomes (Shafer et al., 2017). These differences can be attributed to developmental changes that allow adolescents to be more aware of the emotional states of their parents, coupled with men's tendency to exhibit depressive symptoms through externalized means, like anger and yelling (Addis, 2008; Rosenfield & Mouzon, 2013).

Work on fathering with adolescents and emerging adults has yet to engage with family diversity in meaningful ways. Fathering research continues to be an enterprise largely focused on the White, middle-class American families. While greater scholarly attention has been paid to patterns across a diverse range of family circumstances with younger children (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020), far less attention has been paid to diversity and fathering with adolescents and emerging adults. From an ecological perspective (Cabrera et al., 2014), placing fathering into structure is critical for understanding the barriers to and facilitators of engaged parenting. Different groups of fathers deal with different social circumstances, have varying levels of access to important social resources, and are closer to or further away from the ideals institutionalized in the standard North American family (Letiecq, 2019). Moreover, understanding how fathers benefit adolescents and emerging adults need to be considered within context. The labels of "good" or "bad" father often depend on child outcomes, which are highly correlated with personal and social circumstances. Relatedly, research on fathering among adolescents and emerging adults should address how child characteristics influence fathering behavior. Children's psychological and physical health, disability status, educational circumstances, and many other characteristics can influence how fathers engage with their roles and responsibilities (Shafer & Renick, 2020). As such, children and other members of the family system need to be far more present in the fathering literature than they are at present.

Application of Results

Nevertheless, the research we do have on father involvement with adolescents and emerging adults provides us with important implications for programs, interventions, and practice. A strong emphasis should be placed on the relationship that children have with their fathers. As Palkovitz (2019) notes, good father–child relationships can be built on a myriad of different behaviors that are unique to families. This perspective is particularly important given the paucity of standardized measures addressing fathering with adolescents and emerging adults. In the absence of standardized assessment tools, it may be best to think more holistically about the father–child relationship. Family interventions that include families with adolescent or emerging adult children need to recognize that one size fits all approaches to paternal engagement are unlikely to be successful. It is critical to recognize that fathering looks different over the life course of children. Approaches that work with young children are unlikely to be successful with adolescents and emerging adults. Critically, researchers need to think about ways in which we can better measure and model father involvement with older children. It is unlikely that current models can capture well what fathers do for adolescent and emerging adult children. As a result, we must consider new ways to better address the measurement and evaluation of fathering in age-appropriate ways. Doing so will help clinicians, practitioners, and programs working with fathers, as well.

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Fathering Adult Children and Grandfathering

Amber J. Majeske and Mary Marshall

Fatherhood Across the Lifespan: Adult Children and Grandfathering

"We are going to be late," Tim yells through the house to his son as they rush to get the soccer equipment together for the upcoming game. Tim and his son, Isaiah, look forward to playing soccer together in a community league. Their shared interest in soccer has kept them connected for many years. Sophia and Kai, Isaiah's children, rush ahead of their father and grandfather to the car. While they are driving, Tim reflects back on his father and how the traditions have changed over time. Tim watches how his son fathers his children differently than he did his children. He recognizes that he was different from his father too and wonders how Isaiah's son will father. There has been so much change in the world over the past decades, and he can see it in the way he grandfathers his grandchildren and fathers his adult children today compared to how he, himself, fathered his children when they were younger and the way his father, David, grandfathered as well.

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Tim, Isaiah, and Kai all reflect the differences we expect to see in fathering adult children and grandfathering as reflected in life course theory. Life course theory differs from staged-based theories (such as Life Span Development) in that it does not focus as much on development. Rather, life course has a more distinct emphasis on the historical timing and cultural context of events, how lives are linked between individuals, human agency, and the trajectory of an individual (Elder et al., 2003). Thus, understanding which generation someone is fathering in plays a role in how they father. It may be important to note the main generations of fathers: Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000, Generation X (those born between 1960 and 1980), Baby Boomers (those born between 1940 and 1960), and the Silent Generation (those born between 1925 and 1939) (see Fig. 1). Current fathering scholarship focuses on early childhood and fathering with Millennials and Generation X as fathers. As such, there is also a great deal of fatherhood research focused on infants and toddlers (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020; Shorey & Ang, 2019). Depending on when the data was collected, fathers of infants through early childhood are often in their 20s and 30s (see example in Fig. 1). Currently, the youngest Generation X fathers would be about 40 years old, and many of them are currently fathering teenagers and young adults. Comparatively fewer studies are on fathering adult children and grandparenting even

Family Structure A: Silent Generation as the Oldest Living Generation

David (88 years old)—Silent Generation
Father to Tim, Grandfather to Isaiah, & Greatgrandfather to Sophia and Kai

Tim (68 years old)—Baby Boomer Generation
Father to Isaiah, & Grandfather to Sophia and Kai

Fig. 1 Fatherhood and grandfatherhood structure with generation. Note: This figure shows two possible scenarios for the fictive family portrayed in this chapter. It shows the fathering and grandfathering relationship to other generations of children and grandchildren

though those relationships continue to evolve and be meaningful reflecting changes in cultural contexts as they fathered their children (Fingerman et al., 2020; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Unlike Millennials, those from Generation X did not have email accounts or cell phones as teenagers, Google was not yet invented, and they were adults before 9/11 happened. They were at the dawn of technological advances with personal computers, cell phones, and similar technologies coming out during their young and middle adult years (Whitehouse & Flippin, 2017). Thus, their technological experiences differed in many ways compared to what their children now have can shape fathering interactions. Likewise, as young adults, Baby Boomers were a part of the Hippie movement and the Vietnam Conflict. Many of their children and grandchildren may not recognize this cultural and historical influence in their young adult lives as their fathering was being shaped. Finally, we have the Silent Generation. There are many who forget that not all older adults are Baby Boomers, which is part of where its nickname as the "silent" generation comes from. This, pre-Baby Boomer generation was often married or in adult life during the 1950s and was influenced greatly by the post-WWII cultural changes in the world. Thus, the historical and cultural influence that a father experienced, especially during their teen and young adult years will likely have a great influence on their fathering and grandfathering throughout their life course. As such, this chapter takes a life course lens in understanding fathering adult children and grandfathering experiences.

Fathering Role

Fathers and mothers have different experiences with their adult children (Fingerman et al., 2020). Unfortunately, there is a lot more work on mothers' experiences than fathers (Fagan et al., 2014; Palkovitz et al., 2014). From a recent review of topics in family gerontology, parenting accounted for about 11% of the articles (n = 111/995) Humble et al., 2020). Of the 111, only 17 report specific findings about fathers. Thus, only 2% of all family gerontology articles and 17% of family gerontology parenting articles reviewed focused on fathering. Thus, most of what we know about parenting adult children is from mothers' points of view. Nonetheless, the research that does focus on fathering adult children gives us important insights into their experiences. Fathers report that as they mature in understanding emotions, they become more aware of the costs and rewards of fathering their adult children (Stelle & Sheehan, 2011). As fathers begin to better understand the possibilities and roles of fathering in adulthood (i.e., mentor, companion, disciplinarian, and financial consultant), there may be both more benefits and costs to families and individual well-being.

Fathers are involved with their adult children in different ways as they move through the life course. Younger adults are often exploring the world, attending college, starting new careers, and establishing romantic relationships, which provide continued opportunities for parents (Igarashi et al., 2013). The interactions and support fathers give during this time may differ from

later in life. While not differing between fathers and mothers, middle-aged parents reported providing a substantial amount of emotional support (80%), advice (87%), and practical help (69%) to their young adult children (Fingerman et al., 2016). On average, parents also give about 10% of their income to young adult children, regardless of their own socioeconomic situation (Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013). Parents also tend to provide assistance to all adult children every couple of weeks; however, more frequent support was given to adult children who need assistance rather than being involved equally with all children (Fingerman et al., 2009). For middle-aged children and their aging parents, much of the research focuses on the support provided upstream to the parents (Fingerman et al., 2020). However, less is known about how aging parents and fathers view their role and involvement in their middle-aged children's lives. One study looking at support exchanges shows that aging parents continue to provide middle-aged children practical support, emotional support, listening to their children talk, giving advice, and financial support (Kim et al., 2011). This support reflects the needs of adult children. For example, these middle-aged adults (Generation X) with more student loan and credit card debt than previous generations (Whitehouse & Flippin, 2017), received more financial support than previous middle-aged adults. With rising educational costs, middle-aged adults are continuing to provide financial support to their adult children (Fingerman et al., 2009). As with previous work, findings were not reported separately for mothers and fathers, even though the study included parent dyads when possible. Taken together, fathers are involved in their adult children's lives and continue their role as a father; however, information for fathers specifically is not available except by extrapolating quotes from qualitative analyses (Napolitano et al., 2020).

In fathering, not all children are fathered the same, and this differential treatment can last into adulthood with lasting effects. In a recent study of middle-aged fathers, predominately middle-class and 35% ethnic and racial minority, it was found that middle-aged fathers may be more reactive to their aging fathers' differential treatment of middle-aged siblings than aging mothers (Jensen et al., 2017). Middle-aged fathers were particularly sensitive to their older fathers' use of financial and practical support to siblings. Middle-aged fathers, in turn, showed less differentiation toward their young adult children. These middle-aged fathers seeking to be different than their aging fathers were in the treatment of their children as siblings compared to how they are treated demonstrates how family ideas change over time.

Father–Adult Child Relationships

The involvement that fathers have with their children can affect their overall well-being. To begin, fathers of adult children generally experience less psychological distress than mothers (Reczek & Zhang, 2016). Specifically, fathers did not experience cognitive limitations in response to higher levels of criticism and demands by adult children compared to mothers. It may be that this involvement in the father's life is protective by encouraging good health behaviors (Thomas & Umberson, 2018). Yet, mothers still receive more social support from their adult children than do fathers (Reczek & Zhang, 2016). Moreover, middle-aged fathers' worries about their young adult children negatively affect their sleep, whereas providing support to their young adult children benefited their sleep (Seidel et al., 2017). These findings were not present for mothers whose sleep was more influenced by feeling stress from supporting their adult children. Overall, involvement in the lives of their adult children plays a role in fathers' health and well-being.

Moreover father–child relationship quality also plays a role in fathers' health and well-being. Specially, fathers experience a less rapid decline over time compared to mothers when there is relationship dissatisfaction with children (Reczek & Zhang, 2016). Further, fathers experience elevated depressive symptoms when they report more negative relationships with their children (Polenick et al., 2018). This association was stronger for father–daughter relationships than

father–son relationships. In the same study, fathers had better self-rated health when they had more positive relationships with their daughters. With the presence of positive and negative relationship ties, fathers may feel ambivalent, having mixed or contradictory emotions toward the same child. Overall, fathers report higher levels of ambivalence toward their children than mothers (Pillemer et al., 2012). However, fathers experienced lower levels of ambivalence toward children who were married, held similar values, and were better educated. Also, fathers reported lower levels of ambivalence for daughters than sons, the opposite was true for mothers. In terms of life course theory and social construction, these findings suggest the importance of considering the unique linking of the lives of fathers with their children. The expectations that fathers' have for their children in adulthood, differences in personality, and ideas that as empty nesters their fathering expectations would have decreased may explain the ambivalent relationships. Moreover, these findings confirm the importance of exploring parents separately as relationship quality is not uniform for mothers and fathers and influences health and well-being.

While the previous findings focus on father outcomes, bidirectional effects indicated that adult children are also affected by the relationship they have with their fathers. One study looked at positive and negative relationship ties separately between fathers and children (Polenick et al., 2018). Adult children experienced higher levels of depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction when they had more negative ties with their fathers. For sons, having positive ties with their father was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms. This bidirectional effect of relationship quality on both fathers and adult children speaks to the importance of considering both members of a dyad and how it can affect their mental and physical health.

Intergenerational Ties

In reflecting on our vignette of Tim, Isaiah, and Kai in their intergenerational relationships of fathering, we can see how the relationships

fathers have with their children have long-lasting effects throughout the lives of the children and the fathers. Further, we notice that as Tim is still fathering his adult son Isaiah, he is also grandfathering Kai. He may continue to grandfather Kai as Kai becomes an adult. Men are often experiencing fathering adult children and grandfathering young to adult grandchildren at the same time. It may be that the experiences of one influence the other. It is possible that some of the emotional maturity that men experience that helps men see the costs and benefits of fathering (Stelle & Sheehan, 2011) come as they begin to grandfather as well.

As life expectancy increases in the USA, people are spending 20–30 years of their life in the role of the grandparent (Kirkwood, 2017; Margolis & Wright, 2017; Stelle et al., 2010). In fact, up to 80% of older adults in the USA identify as grandparents (NAC & AARP, 2020). The demographic trends indicate older adults are becoming grandparents at later ages, while also enjoying more healthy years as a grandparent due to increased health and longevity (Margolis & Wright, 2017).

Understanding this long-lasting role in the lives of older adults is important, yet understudied, especially the particular role of the grandfather. Prior research has often centered on the grandmother while describing the grandparenting concept as a whole. It is erroneous to conclude that the attitudes and behaviors of grandmothers represent grandfathers as well. However, grandmothers are often perceived as more involved in the lives of grandchildren and more willing to participate in research. Previously, grandfathers were not in their grandchildren's lives as long as grandmothers due to age differences in marriage (e.g. men often married younger women) and a shorter life expectancy for men. Therefore, grandmothers were often in their role as a grandparent for more years, increasing the cultural notion of grandparenting being a feminine task.

This "grandmother bias" in research may have created a scenario in which findings about grandfathers are being compared to grandmothers, and therefore grandfathers are viewed as a deficit rather than a uniquely different set of roles and

relationships (Stelle et al., 2010). This idea that grandfathers are examined using a deficit model has been addressed by many researchers (Mann et al., 2013; Stelle et al., 2010). For example, findings that show grandfathers as "uninvolved" may be using a measure of involvement with grandchildren that was based on grandmothers' preferred methods, such as talking on the phone (Mann, 2007). This may devalue the importance of masculine styles of involvement, such as sharing advice or acting as a mentor to grandchildren (Mann, 2007; Mann et al., 2013). Scholars argue that grandfathers need to be examined as separate individuals with their own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding their role and relationships with grandchildren. Further, when grandfathers are involved in research, they may be more reserved when discussing their family or minimize their own contributions to their grandchildren's lives, such as financial support, caregiving, and emotional support (Scraton & Holland, 2006). Additionally, some research uses reports of contact and/or time spent with grandchildren as a proxy for relationship satisfaction, which may make it appear as though grandmothers have higher quality relationships. However, grandchildren do not always report their "favorite" grandparent being the one with whom they spend the most time, with some choosing their grandfather even though they report spending more time with their grandmother (Mann et al., 2013). Overall, there is a lack of research on grandfathers, particularly regarding relationships with grandchildren across different ages, family sizes, or family structures (Bates, 2009; Mann et al., 2013).

While life expectancy increases, it becomes more important to examine relationships and interactions across generations, such as the role of grandparents in family life. Researchers are now working to fill in these gaps by looking specifically at grandfathers. This research is still new and relatively sparse but provides a lot of interesting information that can inform research, practitioners, programs, and policies. Grandfathering research has shown that grandparenting may look different for grandmothers compared to grandfathers, driving the need for more research that parses out the unique experiences of grandfathers. Practitioners, such as psychologists and social workers, can benefit from understanding grandfathering by having a greater understanding of what role grandfathers play in grandchildren's lives, what support grandfathers need, and how grandfathers benefit from their relationships with grandchildren. Understanding more about grandfatherhood can inform programming and policy decisions geared toward grandparents.

Grandfather Role

It is important to understand the unique role that grandfathers fulfill, which may differ from the foundation of research that has skewed toward measuring the roles and meaning of grandparenting by looking largely at only grandmothers. Some researchers have started to ask the question if grandfathers engage with grandchildren in different ways, thus enacting a different role than what has been defined currently as "grandparenting". Grandfather involvement may be defined by contact frequency, participation in activities, and commitment (Bates & Taylor, 2013b).

The role grandfathers play is both informed by the perspective of both the grandfather and the grandchild. Some of the characteristics grandsons use when describing grandfathers include upholding the family image, sharing skills, maintaining bonds, creating shared family spaces, and encouraging multigenerational generativity (Bates & Goodsell, 2013). Grandfathers echo the importance of these characteristics when describing grandfatherhood, reporting they value their responsibility to keep family bonds strong and build the continuum of the family (St George & Fletcher, 2014). The activities and responsibilities grandfathers report doing are more advisory and instrumental in nature and related to matters such as education, work, and finances (Mann et al., 2013). It could be that the preferred activities and responsibilities grandfathers enact are a continuation of the gendered role they were in as a parent (Scraton & Holland, 2006). Grandfathers may find the transition into grandparenthood easier when they can draw on their experiences as a father. This may reflect the importance of feeling as though their support as a grandfather is providing a tangible outcome for their grandchildren.

However, while grandfathers still report participating in instrumental activities, there has been a shift in recent cohorts to an increase in emotional bonding and affection (Mann et al., 2013).

Being a grandfather often means not having full responsibility for the daily tasks and strains associated with child-rearing. Grandfathers can enjoy the opportunity to do fun activities with their grandchildren leaving discipline or other less enjoyable responsibilities to the parents. In one qualitative study a grandfather remarked, "Being a pop, I think my role is to spoil them something wicked, to be different to their dads and hope they love me for it." (St George & Fletcher, 2014, pg. 362). American families tend to follow the "norm of non-interference", meaning grandparents are expected to provide support without interfering in the parent–child relationship or how parents choose to raise their children (Kirby, 2015; Mann, 2007). Grandparents often negotiate with their adult children, overtly or covertly, their roles and responsibilities to their grandchildren (Bates, 2009; Mann, 2007). Grandfathers note that they are aware they are background figures and remain cognizant that they are not the parent (St George & Fletcher, 2014). However, there are times when conflict can arise because these boundaries are blurry and grandparents feel pulled between supporting their families and not interfering (Kirby, 2015; Mason et al., 2007). The parent–grandparent conflict over matters of caring for grandchildren can be seen in other cultures, such as Vietnamese and Russian (Hoang & Kirby, 2020; Sivak, 2018).

Taking into consideration the diverse range of experiences across cultures is important when discussing the research about grandfather roles and behaviors. While it may be the norm in Western cultures for grandparents to maintain restrained involvement with their grandchildren without permission from the parents to be more involved, this may not be the case across all cultures. For example, in other cultures, grandparents may have a more formal role in transmitting family values and stories due to historical significance of slavery or persecution (Shwalb & Hossain, 2017). Additionally, the variations in structural factors across cultures may influence grandparent involvement like living arrangements and employment expectations. In cultures where multigenerational living is common, grandparents and therefore grandfathers, are likely to be more involved in their grandchildren's lives just through proximity to them on a daily basis and report higher levels of happiness when spending time with them (Dunifon et al., 2020). However, most research currently examines grandparents across cultures as a whole rather than focusing on the unique aspects of grandfathers across cultures (Shwalb & Hossain, 2017).

For many grandfathers, this role gives them a chance to "do over" their experience of child caregiving. Perhaps they felt they did not have time or the ability to play an active role as a father because of expectations of working long hours or societal ideas of fatherhood at the time. Some grandfathers report feeling regret over their lack of involvement as a father and see this time as an opportunity to be more involved with their grandchildren. Many grandfathers report taking time to explore their new role in the social and emotional development of their grandchildren (St George & Fletcher, 2014).

Grandfather–Grandchild Relationships

Relationships with grandchildren can provide benefits to grandfathers emotionally and physically. While much of the research has focused on grandmothers or grandparents, understanding the unique relationships grandfathers have with their grandchildren can provide valuable insight into this part of the life course. Grandparents report this role giving their life meaning (van Leeuwen et al., 2019), and over half of them say they feel being a grandparent improves their mental health, encourages socialization, and increases their physical activity (Patty & Nelson-Kakulla, 2019). Involved grandfathers report fewer depressive symptoms and more positive affect (Bates & Taylor, 2012). Grandfathers feel closer to grandchildren who live nearby and with whom they have more frequent contact (Davey et al., 2009;

Tornello & Patterson, 2016). Grandfathers who are younger and report better health have more closeness with grandchildren (Davey et al., 2009).

When it comes to picking a favorite, grandchildren often pick their grandmother (Ross et al., 2005). However, this research often ignores the various ages and stages of a grandparent–grandchild relationship, missing the nuances of how this can change over time. For example, older grandchildren choose their grandfather as their favorite at higher rates (Mann et al., 2013), possibly due to the changing dynamics of how time is spent together as the grandchild grows. Grandfathers tend to report a similar pattern of increasing enjoyment and closeness with their grandchildren as they grow older. Interestingly, grandfathers do not report any increase in well-being upon the birth of their first or any additional grandchildren (Di Gessa et al., 2020), indicating that they do not immediately feel a positive change the same way grandmothers do. However, as grandchildren become older, grandfathers find more opportunities to participate in the types of activities that they find meaningful and interesting with their grandchildren. Whereas grandmothers tend to engage in caregiving work, grandfathers tend to engage in more instrumental tasks (Mann et al., 2013). During infancy and early childhood, grandchildren require more caregiving and nurturing tasks, but as they grow into adolescence and early adulthood, instrumental and instructional tasks become more important. Additionally, grandfathers may find they have more time to spend with grandchildren as they approach retirement and more money to initiate activities together (St George & Fletcher, 2014). This illustrates the importance of looking at grandparent–grandchild relationships over the life course rather than just one snapshot in time.

The level of involvement or frequency of contact the grandfather has with their grandchild is one aspect of the grandparent–grandchild relationship that may indicate relationship closeness and satisfaction. Overall, the research in this area is mixed. Some research has found that the level of contact a grandparent had with their grandchild was not associated with that grandchild's likelihood of choosing them as the "favorite" (Mann et al., 2013). This indicates that grandchildren do not feel that level of contact is the most important factor in having a positive relationship with their grandparents. Additionally, some grandfathers report that too much contact with grandchildren is associated with a lower positive affect (Bates & Taylor, 2016). It is possible that spending a large amount of time together is more likely to indicate grandfathers are acting in a more custodial or caregiving role, which may increase emotional and physical fatigue. However, other research has indicated that an increased level of contact was associated with grandfathers reporting a positive relationship (Taylor & Bates, 2014).

Grandparents being in close proximity to grandchildren is not always the case now as families move apart for jobs or educational opportunities. Approximately 40% of grandparents report having to travel a long distance to see one of their grandchildren (Lampkin, 2012). Long-distance grandparents can still foster a strong relationship with their grandchildren through using tools like phone, email, texting, and other social media to stay in touch with grandchildren (Bangerter & Waldron, 2014; Charenkova & Gevorgianiene, 2018), or by planning longer visits with grandchildren (Sigad & Eisikovits, 2013). Some grandparents may not live that far from their grandchildren, but barriers such as living in an assisted living facility make frequent contact more challenging. For example, grandparents in nursing homes report that their relationships with grandchildren changed after their move because they found their grandchildren's schedules too busy to accommodate visits or felt that they had less to offer as a grandparent (Charenkova & Gevorgianiene, 2018). However, this research is focused on grandparents, rather than the specific relationships between grandfathers and grandchildren.

Grandfathers and grandchildren shared what was important to maintain a good relationship. Being there, spending time together, feeling care and support, and feeling a connection were important parts of the relationship (St George & Fletcher, 2014; Taylor & Bates, 2014). The activ-

ities that grandfathers and their grandchildren do together include family gatherings, personal visits, and religious activities (Taylor & Bates, 2014). While granddaughters report more time sitting and talking with grandfathers, grandsons report more outdoor activities (Taylor & Bates, 2014). Overall, grandparent–grandchild relationships have a variety of positive and negative outcomes for grandparents depending on the type of role they are enacting in their grandchildren's lives. The research has mostly focused on grandparents rather than the unique relationships of grandfathers. It appears that many grandfathers report positive relationships with grandchildren and enjoy the role; however, this may not be true in cases where grandfathers feel unprepared to take on a more custodial role for their grandchildren.

Health and Well-Being of Grandfathers

Being a grandfather may impact the overall health and well-being of older adults in both positive and negative ways (Hank et al., 2018). Grandfathers that participate in leisure activities and report feeling a sense of commitment to their grandchildren have lower reports of loneliness (Bates & Taylor, 2016). Additionally, grandfathers who participate in spiritual activities with their grandchildren report greater feelings of positive affect (Bates & Taylor, 2016). Grandfathers also report a sense of joy and happiness in their role (St George & Fletcher, 2014). There are some positive physical aspects of grandparenting including better self-rated health (Zhou et al., 2017). While there are many positive effects of grandparenting, there can be some negative effects as well. Grandparenting can create financial strain as grandparents may choose to work fewer hours, retire early, or pay for necessities or vacations for grandchildren. Grandfathers on average provide more financial support to grandchildren than grandmothers (Ho, 2015). More research on the particular mental and physical health outcomes for grandfathers is needed.

Grandparents providing care for grandchildren (custodial parents) experience a variety of impacts on their health. There are currently about 2.2% of grandchildren in the USA being raised by custodial grandparents (Pilkauskas & Dunifon, 2016). Grandfathers may also act as a male figure in the lives of their grandchildren when their adult daughters are single mothers (Harper & Ruicheva, 2010). When compared to grandmothers, grandfathers in this role report higher feelings of powerlessness, more challenges with daily parenting tasks, and more dependence on their social support networks (Bullock, 2005). However, while grandmothers in a custodial role show more health declines, grandfathers see very little changes in their health (Hughes et al., 2007). The burden of caregiving may take a bigger toll on women than men, explaining why grandfathers may not see as many health declines in custodial roles as grandmothers do. Grandfathers, who may not have had as heavy of the caregiving load as fathers to the extent their female counterparts have, may not experience nurturing burnout by the time they age into their role as grandfathers. Overall, factors that impact health outcomes for women may not have as much of an effect on men as can be seen with fathers and mothers (Reczek & Zhang, 2016). Generative grandfathering may be one way in which grandfathers are protected against negative health outcomes. As grandfathers participate in the lives of their grandchildren in the domains that are particularly suited to them, they report greater feelings of joy and meaning (St George & Fletcher, 2014). Participating as an involved grandfather is also associated with positive affect and reduced reports of depressive symptoms (Bates & Taylor, 2012). Overall, having the opportunity to engage in activities that allow grandfathers to feel generative may be protective of their health.

Grandparents in a custodial role report feelings of depression, overwhelm, and stress (Hayslip Jr et al., 2019). While living with and providing the majority of care to grandchildren (e.g. skipped generation household) can negatively impact health for some grandparents (M. F. Taylor et al., 2017), providing limited care to

grandchildren is associated with benefits to grandparents through increased physical activity and social connections (Chen et al., 2015). Specifically, one study found that providing limited childcare for sons was more beneficial to grandparents receiving support later in life than providing childcare for daughters (Geurts et al., 2012). Overall, grandparents providing care for grandchildren can be rewarding, but the demands of constant childcare may lead to mental and physical health challenges.

Additional Theories on Fathering and Grandfathering

In addition to life course theory, there are a number of theories used to describe the roles, responsibilities, and benefits of grandparenthood. These additional theories can help researchers and clinicians to better understand the role and experiences of older fathers and grandfathers. These theories include exchange and reciprocity theories, role enhancement theory, Erikson's psychosocial theory, and socioemotional selectivity theory.

Exchange and reciprocity theories are used to explain why grandparents provide support to their grandchildren as well as why adult children exchange support with their aging parents. Families often choose to support one another over the life course to combat economic strain and uncertainty (Meyer & Kandic, 2017). The ability to provide support for each other may differ based on who needs what (Fingerman et al., 2009). Aging parents both provide and receive support from their adult children. The need adult children have for grandparent support, either through financial support or caregiving, can be related to larger societal issues such as lack of parental leave, high cost of professional caregiving, or increased work hours (Meyer & Kandic, 2017). Grandparents may continue to provide practical and financial support into their grandchildren's adulthood. Likewise, young adult grandchildren can provide needed support to grandparents.

Role enhancement theory recognizes that men and women experience distinct experiences as they move from one stage to the next (Tiedt, 2013). This theory helps to explain the role shift fathers experience as they move from fathering children to fathering adult children. Further, it posits that grandparenting allows older adults to continue to engage in multiple roles. The role as grandparent may provide increased well-being, increased life satisfaction, and a larger social support network (Quirke et al., 2019; van Leeuwen et al., 2019).

Erikson's psychosocial theory of development utilizes a variety of stages to describe the motivating factors for humans throughout each age. Erikson describes older adults as being in the generativity vs. stagnation phase, where they place great importance on feeling they are generating long-lasting change. Perhaps even more than fathering adult children, grandparenting may fill the role of feeling generative (e.g. continuing to build family/legacy). Other researchers have extended this work to create "generative fathering" (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997) and "generative grandfathering" (Bates, 2009).

Generative fathering and grandfathering theories focus on the idea that there are a variety of psychological, contextual, and relationship aspects to the role of being a father and grandfather. Both fathers and grandfathers have an identity in this role, and this way of defining themselves and their life by their identity is important. Additionally, they also enact behaviors and activities as part of their role as fathers or grandfathers. Engaging in generative work, by Erikson's theory, would allow for healthy development in this life stage. Generative work according to generative fathering and grandfathering theory includes nurturing the next generation through purposeful work domains. Generative fathering explores the work fathers do as part of the generativity life stage and includes seven work domains: ethical, stewardship, development, recreation, spiritual, relational, and mentoring (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Generative grandfathering explores the effort, time, and resources grandfathers expend in six work

domains: lineage, mentoring, spiritual, recreation, family identity, and investment (Bates, 2009).

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (Carstensen et al., 1999) argues that older adults begin to choose activities that increase personal wellbeing or are enjoyable to them. They become more selective and maximize rewards from fewer social partners. They tend to let go of unrewarding ties (Charles & Carstensen, 2010). Motivated by limited time, they may turn to focus on the family, including adult children and grandchildren. Family connections may become increasingly more important, and this may be reflected in their roles as fathers of adult children and grandfathers.

While these theories do not represent all the theories in family gerontology that can help us understand adult fathering and grandfathering, they do provide important insight into the different views and ways fathering and grandfathering can be explored. For a more detailed look at family gerontology theory usage, see current work (Bates & Taylor, 2013a; Humble et al., 2020).

Challenges in Fathering and Grandfathering Research

In thinking back to our beginning scenario, whom did you picture? Was Tim's multigenerational family white, middle class, and biologically related? Did they represent the diversity in fathers that our society holds? Thus far, the chapter has focused on parenting experiences in general. Overall, researchers rarely differentiate between biological and divorced fathering or grandfathering experiences or look at gay experiences in fathering or grandfathering. Further, little work has been done looking at racial diversity within fathering and grandfathering. Finally, there is little work in the area of great-grandfathering.

The few studies in the area demonstrate that the experience of divorced and repartnered fathers has important implications on fathering adult children. The marital status of divorced fathers is associated with child involvement. As may be expected, repartnered fathers contact children less frequently, exchange less support

with their children, and experience poorer relationship quality with their children compared to divorced fathers who have not repartnered (Kalmijn, 2015). The cumulative negative effects of repartnering remained even when the repartnering happened after the child became an adult (Noël-Miller, 2013). However, the findings are less pronounced if divorce happens after the children have reached adulthood, as patterns in the relationships may be more established at that point (Kalmijn, 2015). Outside of contact frequency, there is little work done in this area. Grandfathers provide less caregiving and financial support following divorce and report more challenges maintaining a good relationship with grandchildren (Bao & Huang, 2020; Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2018). Beyond that, little work was identified in grandfathering after divorce or remarriage of the grandparent. Future work could consider expanding work from divorce and remarriage from earlier years into their children becoming adults and step-grandfathering.

While research has shown a general shift in treatment toward sexual and gender minorities (Russell & Fish, 2016, 2019), less is known about fathers and grandfathers, especially considering fathering adult children. Work regarding younger children suggests that gay fathers may be seen as unfit to parent, lack traditional gender roles, and deny a mother to children (Goldberg et al., 2012; Webb et al., 2017). It is likely that this discrimination is still present, and fathering adult children as a gay couple may be met with difficulties (Veldhuis et al., 2018). For gay fathering, much of the socialization and expectations of what it means to be a father may remain similar to heterosexual fathers. However, as partners, gay fathers have the opportunity to expand on strengths of their circumstances. Moreover, research suggests that gay fathers feel more confident in their parenting as their children age (Goldberg, 2009; Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012). Recent work also suggests that personal growth was higher among middle-aged and older gay fathers compared with same-aged heterosexual fathers (Shenkman et al., 2018). Further, gay fathers also experienced higher levels of purpose in life and personal growth compared to

same-aged gay men who were not fathers. Work has also shown that children of gay fathers develop resiliency skills during their school years as they navigate unique challenges such as deciding when and how to disclose their family structure (Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2019) may aid them during adulthood and into their own parenting practices. Likewise, gay fathers develop resiliency strategies through their own experiences that they may pass on to their children. Thus, while research regarding the relationship between gay fathers and their adult children is lacking, building from other work, it may be that gay fathers' less normative gender roles may allow for additional flexibility in parenting practices and resiliency continuing into children's adulthood. More work in this area is needed to better understand these relationships. For gay grandfathers, having a positive relationship with their adult children concerning their sexual identity was an important component of their positive relationship with their grandchildren (Fruhauf et al., 2009; Tornello & Patterson, 2016). Like heterosexual grandfathers, gay grandfathers report similar characteristics associated with positive relationships with their grandchildren including proximity and frequent contact (Tornello & Patterson, 2016). Further, more work in the area of GBTQ for grandfathering is also warranted (Stelle et al., 2010). For a more detailed discussion of gay fathering in general see Chapter "Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Fatherhood". In regard to racial diversity, most of the cited research on fathering adult children was predominately White. Some studies, such as the Family Exchange Study, which was the most common dataset used for studying fathering, did have a representative number of Black participants (30%; Franks & Zarit, 2011), the articles reported their findings together. So, it is unknown whether Race moderated any of the associations. Additionally, little work has been done in Lantinx and Asian-American families. There are a vast number of parenting articles conducted in Asia, especially China, and these studies primarily focus on filial obligations to parents from children (Guo et al., 2018). For grandparenting, in general, much of the work in minority research

focuses on differences among grandmothers (Crowther et al., 2015; Sneed & Schulz, 2019), or grandparents raising grandchildren (Bailey et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2015). However, little work examined other aspects of grandfathering for minorities such as grandparent–grandchild relationship quality, activities done together, or types of support offered. Yet, as racial and ethnic identities shape the culture of fathering adult children and grandfathering, benefits and challenges from these cultures will continue to inform the fathering and grandfathering practices. Further, those in intercultural marriages bring additional benefits and challenges as parents and children explore the choices of which cultural aspects to pass on to the next generation and which traditions to continue as the children reach adulthood. Adult children may benefit from understanding different cultures as they move through the challenges of the workplace and having their own families. However, it may also present additional challenges within fathering and grandfathering relationships as the intersection of culture and generation add complexity. Unfortunately, little is known about these fathering and grandfathering experiences and relationships. Expanding the current research on fathering adult children and grandfathering to include more minorities, including racial and ethnic diversity is much needed.

In grandparenting specifically, there has little work done in great or great-great grandparenting, let alone great or great-great grandfathering. Knowing our family stories is linked with positive mental health intergenerationally (Duke et al., 2008; Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Thus, work exploring stories and relationships shared with great and great-great grandfathers may add additional buffers and positive benefits for children and adults (Even-Zohar & Garby, 2016; Knigge, 2016).

Future Directions and Implications

As stated, there is a great need to expand research into fathering adult children. Most of the current work focuses on younger adult children, and

there is a great lack of minority research on fathering adult children. We encourage researchers to expand their work to include important areas such as gay fathering and race as indicated in the previous section. Incorporating life course, social exchange, and generativity theories in future research is also warranted as they emphasize the need to include fathering adult children and understanding fatherhood. Additionally, we encourage working in fathering middle-aged adult children as work in this area is particularly scarce. As individuals are increasingly living into older ages, they will have older adult children (Stelle et al., 2010). The relationship between aging fathers and their older and middle-aged children has yet to be explored as most of the work focuses on upstream support to aging parents.

With regards to grandfathering, expanding research to cover the roles and experiences of grandfathers is important (Hank et al., 2018). Continuing to examine grandfathering research through a theoretical lens using role theory, reciprocity theory, and socioemotional selectivity theory can help provide more explanation for the way that grandfathers engage in their role. Further, exploring how generative grandfathering theory may apply to grandfathers across a variety of cultures and situations is important to pushing research forward. There are a few implications for social and governmental policy, as more support for grandparents can alleviate stress-related health declines and buffer mental health for grandparents in any caregiving role for grandchildren (Doley et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2007). Such support could include increasing employment flexibility to provide grandparents with time off work to engage with grandchildren, or flexible hours to protect their financial security when caregiving is suddenly needed. Additionally, we can support grandparents by providing better parental support in the workplace (e.g. flexible work hours, parental leave) to decrease the number of time parents rely on grandparents for the care of grandchildren (Hughes et al., 2007). Governmental support for grandparents may include increasing access to welfare and programmatic support for grandparents acting as

custodial parents (Hayslip Jr et al., 2019) or subsidized housing for nontraditional families with grandparents coresiding with families or grandparents acting as custodial parents. Increasing social support for grandparents may include promoting activities and programs aimed at bringing grandparents and grandchildren together to provide a space for these relationships to develop including aspects that target grandfathers' involvement in grandchildren's lives. Finally, research on the financial impact of grandparenting as our current retirement and social security plans shift in value and purpose is important (Meyer & Kandic, 2017).

For clinicians, it is widely recognized that family relationships are important across the life course. As lives are linked to one another. Clinicians working with older family members may want to understand the differences that continue in how parent–child and grandparent–child relationships differ for mothers and fathers. While men have faced barriers to seeking help, the stigmas are beginning to decrease (Brown et al., 2019). It is important that practitioners are prepared with knowledge for fathers of adult children and grandfathers as they increase in seeking help in other areas of their life. For example, fathers may be struggling with how to support their middle-aged children. Clinicians may encourage active involvement and support of the adult child as it is associated with improved outcomes (Fingerman et al., 2020; Seidel et al., 2017). Further, generative grandfathering may benefit older adults as they move through the later stages of life. Exploring opportunities to feel generative in later life through the various domains of generative grandfathering may enhance feelings of joy, fulfillment, and an overall sense of meaning (St George & Fletcher, 2014). It may also be useful for couple or family counseling to understand how men's roles change and adapt over time as they move into fathering and grandfathering roles. Moreover, as fathers age, their children may begin to assist in making decisions. Having shared expectations of fathers' desires is predicted by their relationship quality with their children (Kim et al., 2011). Thus, healthcare professionals need to be aware that

those with struggling father–child relationships may not be able accurately to reflect their fathers' needs and wants. Finally, men's mental health is benefited by positive associations with their adult children (Polenick et al., 2018) and grandchildren (Bates & Taylor, 2012) Healthcare and other professionals may encourage positive family relationships to encourage men's health.

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Fathering in Diverse Family Structures: Separation, Divorce, and Stepfamilies

Raymond E. Petren and Anthony J. Ferraro

Being a father, by its nature, is a multifaceted complex social role with a vast array of responsibilities that can be dramatically shaped by the contexts in which men are embedded. The evolution of research on fathering has been reflective of the diversity in pathways, with men doing fatherhood through a wide-ranging set of family structures, transitions, and contexts. For many men, fathering takes place outside of the traditionally defined marital nuclear family structure. This chapter focuses on that diversity of structure and context, with a focus on men who experience separation, divorce, and stepfathering. In this chapter, we define nonresident fathers as biological fathers of the child who reside with the child less than half of the time after separating or divorcing from the child's mother, and resident fathers are those who reside with the children the majority of the time. Stepfathers are defined as male partners of biological parents who play a role in raising the child. We use the term "fathering" to broadly represent the general set of thoughts, behaviors, and experiences of fathers in their roles as parents.

This chapter considers pathways and contexts that can shape fathering and provides an overview of the essential body of research on parent–child relationships, family dynamics, and the antecedents and consequences of father involvement across family structures. As many families include both biological fathers and stepfathers, this chapter is inclusive of both, differentiating on key trends related to both groups, where appropriate. Although a deep focus on any one fathering context is beyond the scope of this chapter, we illuminate circumstances, vulnerabilities, and sources of resilience among fathers with various cultural backgrounds and those in unique contexts. Finally, we discuss implications for future research and policy.

Family Structure Prevalence and Transitions

Family structure shapes family boundaries, roles, and relationships by limiting or enabling regular access to and communication with children and other family members and by shaping subjective definitions that family members have of the roles of fathers and others (e.g., Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Several demographic shifts have influenced the pathways to and the prevalence of fatherhood across family structures in the United States. Whereas the divorce rate has decreased slightly since its peak in the 1980s (Hemez,

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2017), the proportion of births to unmarried mothers in the United States increased every year between the mid-1950s and 2011, from about 4% to just over 40% (Cancian & Haskins, 2014). Families with children born outside of marriage have been referred to as "fragile families" as relationships between these parents tend to be less committed and more prone to dissolution than are relationships between married parents (Carlson et al., 2004). After the birth of a shared child, almost half of unmarried cohabiting couple relationships dissolve by the child's third birthday, and 64% dissolve by the child's fifth birthday (Kamp Dush, 2011). As a result of these trends in separation and divorce, estimates suggest that approximately one-quarter of all children in the United States under the age of 21 have a biological parent living outside of their household (Grall, 2020). There is some variation by race and ethnicity, with Black and Hispanic children more likely to have a parent who lives outside of their household than White children (Grall, 2020). Also, mothers are more likely than fathers to have custody of children, although there has been some change over time; about 80% of custodial parents are mothers, but the proportion of custodial parents who are fathers has increased rising from 16% in 1994 to 20% in 2018 (Grall, 2020).

The prevalence of separation and divorce provides opportunities for re-partnerships and the formation of stepfamilies. Stepfamilies or "blended families" can include the coupling of at least one parent with a partner who is not the biological parent of their child, and stepfamilies can include married or unmarried partners (van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2013). In 2017, around 2.9% of children experienced a transition in parent presence (i.e., entry or absence of parent or stepparent) (Scherer & Mayol-García, 2020). Of those children, 41% transitioned from a two-parent to a one-parent family, and almost 15% transitioned from living with a single parent to living with a parent and a stepparent. Overall, approximately 13% of all adults (15% of men) report having at least one stepchild (Pew Research Center, 2020). Perhaps because mothers are more likely to live with their biological children after

separation and divorce, stepfathers are more likely to live with their stepchildren compared to stepmothers (van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2013). Together, these statistics suggest that stepfamilies, and particularly families with stepfathers, are fairly normative family arrangements in the United States.

Stepfamily formation introduces new roles and relationships to men in families. For biological fathers, stepfamily formation means that either they, their former partner, or both have gained new partners with whom family roles and boundaries are often renegotiated (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). In some cases, both partners enter a new relationship with children from prior unions, resulting in complex stepfamily structures and the introduction of stepsibling relationships (children who are not biologically related, but their parents are partnered). When stepcouples have shared children, family complexity increases, and half-sibling relationships result wherein children share one biological parent.

The integration of half-siblings reflects the phenomenon of multiple partner fertility (MPF), wherein a parent has biological children with multiple partners. Although the study of MPF is relatively recent, the phenomenon is not uncommon. In 2008, around 17% of fathers and 22% of mothers aged 25–32 years had children with more than one partner (Guzzo, 2014). Unmarried parents are more likely than married parents to have children with additional partners. Around 60% of couples in an urban cohort had at least one child from a prior union before having a shared child (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006), and administrative data from the state of Wisconsin in 2008 showed that 60% of first-born children born to unmarried parents gained a half-sibling by their tenth birthday (Cancian et al., 2011). Multiple partner fertility holds implications for fathers as having more children across multiple households results in diminished parental resources (Carlson & Berger, 2013; Tach et al., 2010), and fathers can feel displaced when mothers have new partners and children (Tach et al., 2014).

Fathering occurs across many different types of family structures, and while the diversity of

experiences within these contexts is a central element of this chapter, it is worth noting the structures themselves provide only a snapshot of the conditions in which fathering occurs. Each of these structures is defined and shaped through transitions through the dissolutions of relationships, the budding of new relationships, and the subsequent births of new children. Each of these transitions challenges fathers to adapt to new conditions and constraints while also providing opportunities to redefine roles and relationships (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). Taken together, family structure and transitions provide both context and change in which fathering occurs across family structures.

Separated and Divorced Fathers

Separation and divorce are understood to be far-reaching, and often disruptive processes for individuals that extend well beyond the legal aspects of the union dissolution. When a separation or divorce involves a shared child, the experience is further complicated and intensified by having to renegotiate relationship dynamics with former partners in the interest of shared child-rearing. This relationship is important for nonresident fathers, as their involvement with their children must be negotiated with mothers (Ganong et al., 2016). Further, family scholars have emphasized that boundary ambiguity (lack of clarity about who is in or out of the family) and role ambiguity (lack of clarity about the roles played by family members) are highly prevalent during the divorce process and even through subsequent stepfamily formation (Brown & Manning, 2009; Stewart, 2005a).

In addition to negotiating relationships with children and former partners during separation or divorce, fathers must learn to navigate the legal aspects of parental relationship dissolution. This process is, by its nature, adversarial and even though most divorce petitions involving minor children reach an agreement through alternative dispute resolution (e.g., mediation), many fathers feel discriminated against in the legal divorce process (Troilo & Coleman, 2013). As such, fathers are less likely to be satisfied with custody arrangements following divorce than mothers, and they are significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with the legal arrangements regarding custody if they are nonresidents (Bauserman, 2012). In turn, perceptions of fairness and discrimination in the legal divorce process have an effect on fathers' well-being and sense of agency in their involvement with children through the experience of shame and stigma (Battle, 2019) and perceptions of the legal system as punitive and limiting power and autonomy (Edin et al., 2019). Perceptions of unfairness in the legal process are noted as a barrier to father involvement (Troilo & Coleman, 2013), and they are associated with tensions in co-parental relationships (Russell et al., 2016; Troilo & Coleman, 2013) which is likely to further diminish father involvement (Sobolewski & King, 2005). There is some evidence that, compared to litigation, mediation, which involves the mutual resolution of parental divorce agreements with an impartial facilitator, is associated with greater father satisfaction with parenting arrangements and greater father involvement (Applegate et al., 2013).

The structural position occupied by fathers following separation and divorce is often defined by the juxtaposition of legal custody (decision-making rights regarding the children) and resident status (whether or how often the father lives with the child) or physical custody status (court-ordered child custody arrangements) at any one time. Whereas legal custody is overwhelmingly shared by both biological parents following the establishment of a parenting plan, physical custody arrangements have a great deal of variation. Physical custody is most often defined as either sole/primary or joint/shared. In situations where both parents hold at least 25–30% overnight visits for a shared minor child, the parents would be said to hold joint or shared physical custody (Amato et al., 2009). Whereas mothers have traditionally held primary physical custody of minor children following divorce, the legal rights of fathers following divorce have drastically changed over the past few decades, resulting in a

paradigm shift within the legal community, characterized by an emphasis on alternative dispute resolution and an accompanying trend toward more shared physical custody arrangements (Singer, 2009). Despite this trend, mothers are still overwhelmingly likely to receive primary physical custody compared to fathers (Meyer et al., 2017; Reynolds et al., 2007). It should also be noted that physical custody arrangements do not always determine de facto visitation or involvement (Cancian et al., 2014).

Compared to sole custody arrangements, joint custody is associated with a number of better personal and relational outcomes for fathers, including less parenting stress, better father–child relationships, and better overall adjustment (Bauserman, 2012). Perhaps because joint custody arrangements indicate parents' willingness to parent together, joint custody arrangements are associated with greater co-parenting cooperation (Leclair et al., 2019). Although most separated and divorced parents reach new levels of adjustment and equilibrium over time (Amato, 2010), additional changes in family structure further alter the context of fathering.

Family structure and complexity are often fluid (Berger & Bzostek, 2014), and some fathers go on to live in complex families whether they and/or their former partners re-partner (Arsenault & Stykes, 2019). As will be described later in this chapter, these changes in family structure and complexity can further alter fathers' living arrangements, legal status, and relationships with children and other family members. Taken together, the process of separation and divorce, as well as ongoing changes in legal, structural, and residential conditions can provide a challenging context for fathers, and how well they are able to navigate these conditions has implications for their involvement with children and their children's adjustment to family transitions. Along with these changes in the context of fathering, fathers and their families intrinsically experience disequilibrium that challenges the status quo. During these transitions, fathers must make psychological, behavioral, and relational adjustments to maintain positive involvement with children.

Father Involvement

A primary concern of scholars and policymakers has been the extent to which fathers are involved following separation and divorce, as fathers' involvement and financial contributions are expected to enhance child well-being and family sustainability (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Perhaps because separation and divorce result in unique circumstances that often involve unique barriers to direct interaction or engagement, research on separated and divorced fathers has typically included a number of dimensions of father involvement and financial contributions that reflect the unique circumstances of these men and their children, extending beyond or serving in place of models commonly used to describe father involvement in two-resident-parent families (e.g., Lamb et al., 1985).

The frequency of contact or visitation is a common indicator of father involvement following separation and divorce, and it is typically measured as how often a father sees his children or has overnight visits with them (Argys et al., 2006). Alternative indicators of contact include the frequency of father–child communication (e.g., telephone, texting, video chat). Other indicators of involvement include the frequency of engagement in specific activities and events with the child (e.g., play, helping with school, attending activities). These indicators represent an important part of understanding adjustment to divorce or separation. Research indicates that children often express dissatisfaction with the frequency of contact with nonresident fathers following divorce, and when contact is inconsistent, limited, or irregular, there exists a potential for long-term harm to the quality of father–child relationships across the lifespan (Warshak, 2014). A focus solely on the frequency of contact or involvement is generally considered incomplete, and a more holistic examination of nonresident father involvement, which is inclusive of both frequency and quality, is preferred (Adamsons, 2018).

There is some limited research that has examined the quality of nonresident father involvement, as well as the quality of nonresident

father–child relationship quality more broadly. Karre and Mounts (2012) found a link between the quality of father involvement and children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors, but conditional on resident mothers' parenting. Specific aspects of father–child relationship quality (e.g., closeness) have been examined as well, with research consistently noting the importance of quality and its subdimensions for an assortment of child outcomes (e.g., King, 2006, 2009; King et al., 2014).

Resident Versus Nonresident Father Involvement

Differences in resident and custody status provide distinctive sets of opportunities and responsibilities for fathers. In contrast to the resident or custodial fathers, structural barriers to involvement for noncustodial or nonresident fathers include geographic distance, time, and additional expenses inherent in maintaining a separate household (Hawkins et al., 2006; Pasley & Braver, 2004). Visitation arrangements can also limit the extent and nature of father involvement. For example, fathers who have overnight visits only on the weekends have fewer opportunities to engage in weekday activities such as helping children prepare for school or attending extracurricular activities (Pasley & Braver, 2004). When fathers feel that their visitation time is limited, they often choose to focus on leisure activities to make the most of the time and strengthen bonds through shared memories, which can result in negative stereotypes that characterize some nonresident fathers as "Disneyland dads" (Stewart, 1999). While such an overgeneralization is problematic in that it discounts the direct engagement contributions of fathers, this narrative has persisted over time, expressed consistently by resident mothers in qualitative work that has followed Stewart's seminal piece (e.g., Ferraro et al., 2016). Further, resident mothers that share this sentiment often express little perceived benefit from the involvement of nonresident fathers, noting that they feel as though fathers do not have a clear understanding of their children's needs (Sano et al., 2008). Despite this, research has identified clear benefits to children and families

when fathers engage in regular leisure activities with them (Swinton et al., 2008), and there have even been calls for greater integration of leisure-oriented activities into fathering programs because of their potential to foster bonds between men and their children (Brotherson et al., 2005; Jenkins, 2009). Despite negative connotations with a preoccupation with direct engagement, leisure, and play, there remain important benefits to such involvement, particularly for young children (see Diniz et al., 2021), and for many nonresident fathers, this type of engagement may be a beneficial mode to relationship building with their children.

Perhaps largely due to differences in opportunities for involvement, comparative studies have typically found that resident fathers are more frequently engaged, involved in broader sets of activities, have higher quality relationships with children, and have greater parenting self-efficacy than do nonresident fathers (e.g., Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2016; Hawkins et al., 2006). However, resident fathers are generally not as involved as are resident mothers (Hawkins et al., 2006; Hook & Chalasani, 2008). Regarding the quality of parenting, one study found that nonresident fathers were more likely to have uninvolved or permissive parenting styles compared to resident fathers and those with joint physical custody (Bastaits et al., 2015). Compared to children from intact families, children of divorce tend to desire greater effectual and instrumental involvement on the part of their fathers, which may be, in part, a function of lesser involvement in those domains by nonresident fathers (Schwartz & Finley, 2009).

Levels and Trends in Nonresident Father Involvement

Informed by earlier research suggesting a decline in nonresident father involvement and inadequate financial contributions, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 emerged, which included comprehensive child support reforms (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Additionally, the lack of nonresident father involvement raised concern about "deadbeat

dads" (Furstenberg, 1988) and led some scholars to speculate about a "package deal" in which fathers lose incentives to stay involved outside of romantic relationships with mothers (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). More recent research using mothers' reports from four national surveys shows that between 1976 and 2002, nonresident father contact with 6- to 12-year-old children increased, and the proportion of fathers who had neither seen their child nor paid child support in the past year decreased from 35% to 22% (Amato et al., 2009). Other research (Cheadle et al., 2010) took a more nuanced approach, using growth mixture modeling analyses to examine trajectories of nonresident father contact over 14 years (1986–2002), with findings indicating that father involvement following parental separation does not follow a homogenous pattern of decline (e.g., some fathers maintain a high level of involvement, become more involved, or have fluctuating periods of high and low involvement) and suggesting that concerns about low and declining father involvement may have been overstated in previous research.

Financial Support

Financial support is also an indicator of noncustodial father involvement, and some custodial fathers receive child support from former partners. Just less than half of custodial parents (mothers and fathers) of children aged 21 or younger had either formal legal (88.2%) or informal (11.8%) child support agreements in 2017 (Grall, 2020). Overall, the proportion of parents who were supposed to receive child support but received none has increased from 24% in 1993 to 30% in 2017 (Grall, 2020). In 2017, 58% of custodial parents received some type of in-kind support from a former partner (Grall, 2020). Studies typically find that gifts and items wanted by the child (e.g., designer clothes, video games) are the most common forms of in-kind support provided by fathers (Garasky et al., 2010; Grall, 2020; Kane et al., 2015). Forms of informal and in-kind support are often overlooked as they are not paid through the formal child support system (Kane et al., 2015). However, such contributions often constitute a nontrivial proportion of support pro-

vided, especially by never-married nonresident fathers (Kane et al., 2015; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2007).

Research shows that the financial contributions of nonresident fathers generally decline over time (Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2007). However, results are mixed for unmarried nonresident fathers as informal and in-kind support decline and formal child support payments increase over the first 5 years of a child's life, which may be a result of mothers establishing legal child support orders when fathers do not comply with informal child support agreements (Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2007, 2010). Much of the variation and change in fathers' financial contributions are likely due to offsetting incentives and barriers to providing.

There are a number of incentives to encourage noncustodial fathers' financial contributions. Fathers often describe financial provision as important to their roles (Vogel, 2020), and they seek to be "responsible fathers" while avoiding the shame associated with the "deadbeat dad" stigma (Battle, 2019). Additionally, fathers who are not compliant with formal child support orders may accrue legal and financial penalties. Some fathers also view child support provision as a way to satisfy mothers and discourage restrictive maternal gatekeeping (Kane et al., 2015). Despite these incentives, fathers report a number of financial, personal, and relational barriers to paying child support, including lack of income or employment, child-support orders beyond their ability to pay, an inability to keep up with unadjusted child support orders when children are born to new partners, punitive child support system enforcement actions that further limit the ability to pay, conflictual relationships with mothers, distrust of mothers or the child support system to allocate money for the child's needs, preferences for informal support payments, and lack of motivation to pay when there is little access to children (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Kane et al., 2015; Vogel, 2020).

Fathers often want to know that their financial contributions are making the intended impact. They report dissatisfaction when they perceive limited agency in decision-making around

child-related issues or believe they are viewed mostly as financial providers with little say in the use of their financial contributions (Edin et al., 2019; Troilo & Coleman, 2013). Unmarried fathers with joint legal custody also demonstrate greater compliance with child support orders and higher child support payments (Chen & Meyer, 2017), perhaps due to the perception that they are valued as fully engaged parents, not solely financial contributors.

The desire to be fully involved in the lives of their children may also be a reason that many fathers prefer to give in-kind support as providing directly for the child's wants and needs is more meaningful and helps to build bonds with the children (Edin et al., 2019; Kane et al., 2015). Whereas the perception of financial responsibility for the child may be one motivator for father involvement, the perception that their contributions are meaningful to both themselves and their children may provide a more salient experience that enhances relationships with children and builds the salience of fathers identities as meaningful contributors.

Associations Among Types of Nonresident Father Involvement

Perhaps one of the strongest predictors of nonresident father involvement is earlier involvement. Although patterns of father involvement vary (Cheadle et al., 2010), cross-lagged models show that father involvement at any one time is a strong predictor of later father involvement, and early co-parenting quality is, similarly, a strong predictor of later co-parenting quality (Carlson et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2020; Petren et al., 2021). Research also shows that fathers who have more contact with children also engage in higher quality fathering and have greater closeness with children (Hofferth et al., 2010; King & Sobolewski, 2006), and closeness to nonresident fathers is positively linked with child well-being (King, 2006; Stewart, 2003). Also, fathers' child support payments are positively associated with contact, engagement, father–child relationship quality, and sharing of child-rearing responsibilities (Amato et al., 2009; Carlson et al., 2017; Garasky et al., 2010; Hofferth et al., 2010). Both formal

and informal child support payments are associated with more father visitation (Kane et al., 2015; Nepomnyaschy, 2007), but informal support (cash payments and in-kind support) is more strongly linked with father visitation, engagement, and child-reported closeness than is formal child support (Garasky et al., 2010; Waller et al., 2018). The provision of in-kind support is also associated with the payment of child support, but only for higher-income fathers, suggesting that for higher-income fathers, in-kind support is complementary to cash payments (Garasky et al., 2010). The combination of multiple types of father involvement is important as individual types of involvement, such as contact and financial provisions are not consistently linked with child well-being when occurring in isolation (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013).

The strong link between informal support and father involvement may suggest that fathers who are more involved with children have a greater awareness of the children's needs and, in response, volunteer more resources (Kane et al., 2015; Nepomnyaschy, 2007). An alternative explanation is that fathers may pay more to bolster relationships with mothers and children and secure their involvement (Kane et al., 2015). In partial support of both explanations, Nepomnyaschy (2007) found that informal child support payments and father contact were reciprocally related, but the effect of contact on later informal payments was stronger than vice-versa. As described herein, fathers often want to be intimately involved in the lives of their children, and barriers exist that prevent such involvement can stymy their ability to recognize needs and ensure that their contributions are making an impact in the lives of their children. Targeting and fostering consistent involvement by nonresident fathers, thus, seems a worthwhile investment in supporting the financial well-being of children.

Factors Associated with Father Involvement

Contextual Factors A number of structural, demographic, socioeconomic, and situational factors are associated with the quality, frequency, and nature of father involvement. One such factor

is custody status; physical custody status inhibits or extends the time and timing of fathers' visitation, while legal custody status provides avenues for input in child-rearing decisions. Research generally shows that fathers with joint physical custody are more involved, engage in higher-quality parenting, have higher-quality relationships with children, have more supportive co-parenting relationships with mothers, pay more in child support, and have greater compliance with child support orders than nonresident fathers (Bastaits & Pasteels, 2019; Bauserman, 2012; Ferraro et al., 2018; Köppen et al., 2018). However, it is worth noting that increased communication and necessitated adjustments in families with joint custody may lead to more co-parental conflict over time (Leclair et al., 2019).

Nonresident fathers with higher levels of education tend to have more contact, engagement, communication, and closeness with children (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; King et al., 2004) and are less likely to have inappropriate or conflictual communication with their children (Bastaits & Pasteels, 2019). Paternal employment is generally associated with more father–child contact (Ryan et al., 2008), and employment stability is associated with less interparental conflict, which, in turn, is associated with more father involvement (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). Nonresident fathers with higher earnings (and those who pay more in child support) have more visitation time and are engaged in more daily activities with children, although the associations are modest (Carlson et al., 2017). Work schedules also may affect father involvement, reflecting a structural constraint of availability. One study showed that nonresident fathers who work evenings are less engaged compared to those who work other schedules (Pilarz et al., 2020). Availability is also impacted by geographic distance. Fathers who live further away have less contact with nonresident children, and moving away is associated with decreases in both contact and in-kind support (Cheadle et al., 2010; Garasky et al., 2010; Hofferth et al., 2010).

Marital status is another factor that impacts father involvement. Compared to those born to married parents, children who are born to unmarried parents experience lower levels of father involvement in the years following separation (Cheadle et al., 2010), and nonresident fathers' visitation is more frequent when they were married or cohabiting with the mother at birth (Guzzo, 2017). By their fifth birthday, only 36% of children born outside of marriage lived with their fathers, and only half of the children born outside of marriage have seen their father in the past month (Tach et al., 2010). These findings can be explained by a few key factors: (1) nonmarital relationships are less committed and more prone to dissolution than relationships between married parents (Kamp Dush, 2011); (2) unmarried parents often negotiate issues such as child custody, visitation, child support, and the division of assets outside of the legal system (Waller et al., 2018), and in such cases, fathers' rights and responsibilities may not be well-defined (Tach et al., 2010); (3) unmarried parents typically move into subsequent relationships new partners more quickly, and both re-partnerships and multiple partner fertility are associated with less father involvement (Berger et al., 2012; Tach et al., 2010).

Relational Factors Perhaps one of the most consistent factors linked with nonresident father involvement is the quality of the interparental relationship, as fathers who do not live with the child are particularly likely to rely on the mother to stay involved (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). Mothers are often viewed as primary caregivers of children (Adamsons, 2010) and, as such, are often empowered or feel responsible to engage in gatekeeping behaviors that either limit or facilitate involvement and opportunities for interactions between nonresident fathers and children (Ganong et al., 2016). An articulation of maternal gatekeeping as a concept emerged as a way of describing a subset of behaviors undertaken by mothers to restrict the involvement of men in the lives of their children; however, the concept has since evolved to consider an expansive range of types, from those that actively facilitate

involvement through the highly encouraging and supportive gate-opening behaviors, to those that are more indifferent to men's involvement, to those that actively discourage men and seek to control all aspects of the relationship through restrictive gate closing (see Puhlman & Pasley, 2013).

Low-income fathers report mothers engage in restrictive gatekeeping due to delinquent child support payments or attempts to restrict the father's new partners' involvement; alternatively, mothers may facilitate fathers' involvement, especially when fathers can help to manage child behavior (Fagan & Kaufman, 2015). Mothers report that their decisions to foster or restrict father involvement involve considerations of paternal competence, parental relationship quality, and balancing between beliefs about the importance of father involvement with the need to protect children from risk factors associated with some fathers (Nixon & Hadfiel, 2018; Trinder, 2008). Overall, maternal gate closing is associated with less father involvement (Fagan & Barnett, 2003), while findings are mixed regarding mothers' gate opening behaviors and fathers' involvement (Fagan & Cherson, 2017), and more research is needed to determine the causal links among gate opening behaviors and father involvement.

Beyond gatekeeping, the quality of co-parental relationships is a common indicator studied within the literature, with findings generally suggesting a strong, consistent association between co-parenting support or cooperation and aspects of nonresident father involvement, including contact, engagement, financial support, and father–child relationship quality (e.g., Carlson et al., 2008; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011; Goldberg, 2015; Sobolewski & King, 2005). A link between father involvement and co-parental conflict has been found less consistently, with some studies finding no association (Petren et al., 2021; Sobolewski & King, 2005) and other research finding a negative association between overt conflict and involvement (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). Longitudinal studies typically show that co-parenting is a stronger predictor of nonresident father involve-

ment than father involvement is of co-parenting (e.g., Carlson et al., 2008; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). However, a recent study showed that father engagement is positively associated with later co-parental support over the first year following divorce, and no dimension co-parenting quality was associated with later father engagement, suggesting that the relationship between co-parenting and father involvement may differ shortly following a divorce when roles and relationships are in transition (Petren et al., 2021). Taken together, it is important for practitioners to note the mutual influence of co-parenting with father involvement, how they often operate in complement to each other, and that a focus on one, without an emphasis on the other, may ultimately fail to aid these families in their adjustment. Further, beyond the amount of involvement, research indicates that the nature of the interparental relationship with the former partner is influential in the quality of nonresident father involvement, even when accounting for variation in the frequency of contact (DeGarmo et al., 2008).

New partners and children also affect father involvement. Most research has found that fathers are less involved when they have children with new partners (Berger et al., 2012; Carlson & Berger, 2013; Guzzo, 2017). Fathers who experience multiple partner fertility often engage in "selective fathering," choosing to invest most in younger children in one mother's household (Edin & Nelson, 2013); fathers report this more intensive involvement with one group of children helps them feel successful as fathers or serves to compensate for shortcomings with their other children (Tach et al., 2014). Mothers' relationships and fertility with new partners are also associated with less father involvement (Berger et al., 2012; Guzzo, 2017; Tach et al., 2010), and fathers pay less in child support and and-kind support when mothers have children with new partners (Berger et al., 2012; Meyer & Cancian, 2012). Father involvement diminishes more when new partners live with mothers and are more engaged with the child, suggesting that new partners' commitments to the mother and child may result in ambiguity in fathers' roles and

responsibilities or diminish fathers' identities (Guzzo, 2017; Tach et al., 2014).

While romantic relationships, whether dissolved or newly forming, are unsurprisingly impactful in the frequency and quality of father involvement, relationships with support networks can also make a difference. Social support provides psychological benefits to fathers and is positively associated with both the frequency and quality of nonresident father involvement (Castillo & Sarver, 2012; DeGarmo et al., 2008). Extended kin can provide support to fathers or act as gatekeepers, regulating the frequency and kind of father involvement. For example, better relationships between mothers and fathers' families are associated with a lower likelihood of dropping out of father involvement, and fathers are more likely to reengage in involvement when either they or the mother has better relationships with the other's family (Ryan et al., 2008).

Child and Father Factors While the narrative surrounding the importance of father figures in the gendered socialization of boys persists, most research shows that nonresident father contact and payment of child support do not vary by child gender (e.g., Amato et al., 2009; Garasky et al., 2010; Hofferth et al., 2010). However, fathers have closer, more engaged relationships, with more open communication with boys, than with girls (Bastaits & Pasteels, 2019; King et al., 2004; Hofferth et al., 2010). Children's age is another commonly assessed characteristic. Much of the literature indicates that child age is not a significant determinant of contact with children through middle childhood (e.g., Amato et al., 2009). However, nonresident fathers are less involved with adolescents than with younger children as adolescents become more autonomous and spend more time with peers (Garasky et al., 2010; King et al., 2004).

Fathers' perceptions are also linked with their involvement. Men who view fatherhood to be a more salient identity are more highly involved (Pasley et al., 2014), and some nonresident fathers reframe barriers to involvement in order to preserve their identities (Troilo & Coleman, 2013). Gender perceptions also shape father involvement; nonresident fathers who believe their role is to focus mostly on providing financially describe restricted patterns of involvement compared to those who believe fathers should be involved in the day-to-day care of children (Troilo & Coleman, 2012). Other research shows that noncustodial fathers' who report greater parental self-efficacy also report more involvement and warmth (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2016).

A number of risk factors are associated with nonresident father involvement. Fathers with higher levels of psychological distress (Coates & Phares, 2014) and more health problems are also less involved (Guzzo, 2017). Fathers' drug and alcohol problems (Guzzo, 2017; Waller & Swisher, 2006) and involvement in illegal activities (Coley & Hernandez, 2006) are also associated with less involvement. Further, fathers that have been incarcerated or who have more convictions since the child's birth are less likely to be involved (Coates & Phares, 2014; Geller, 2013). Intimate partner violence is also a notable factor impacting father–child relationships, and such abuse is a commonly cited reason for mothers' reluctance to marry the fathers of their children (Waller, 2002; Waller & Swisher, 2006). Interparental conflict mediates the effects of some father risk factors on their involvement (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). In the face of fathers' risk factors, unmarried mothers report engaging in gatekeeping behaviors, setting the conditions under which fathers may interact with children while ensuring their safety through supervised visitation (Waller & Swisher, 2006). Circumstances such as paternal incarceration provide additional challenges that require substantial commitments between parents to encourage continued father involvement (Arditti et al., 2019; Waller & Swisher, 2006).

Stepfathers

The Cultural Context of Stepfathering

Continued high levels of divorce, the instability of nonmarital partnerships, and the prevalence of re-partnerships mean that stepfathers, the

majority of whom are resident stepparents, have become an important part of the contemporary family. Stepfamily formation results in greater structural and social complexity. The addition of new family members and reconstituted family boundaries are further compounded by a broader cultural context in which perceptions of biological relatedness, gender, and institutional forces provide challenges to the perceived legitimacy of stepfathers as parents. Despite the general acceptance of stepfamilies as common, many researchers continue to find relevance in Cherlin's (1978) proposition that the stepfamily is an "incomplete institution" that lacks well-defined norms. Perhaps due to a continuing lack of social norms for stepfamilies, stepfathers are not always recognized as parents by children, extended family members, institutions, and social policies (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Cultural perceptions that stepfamilies are deficient, stepfathers are illegitimate or even dangerous parents and gendered perceptions that stepfathers must compete with fathers to be the "head of the household" further challenge stepfathers' roles (Ganong & Coleman, 2017; Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2007). Unclear expectations for stepfamilies and stepfathers' status as newcomers to an established family system can challenge the development and functioning of stepfamily relationships, foment tension among biological parents across households, cultivate uncertainty in extended family relationships, and challenge the ability of the family to work with social institutions that do not always recognize stepfathers as parents (Garneau & Pasley, 2017).

Stepfamily Formation and Relationship Development

Stepfathers negotiate the complexities of stepfamily formation amid several stressors related to family transitions, factors associated with separation and divorce, family complexity, the merging of family cultures and routines, ambiguities in roles and relationships, and loyalty conflicts among family members (Coleman et al., 2013). Stepfathers lack the shared family history of biological family members as they enter as outsiders to a "preexisting family dance" (Marsiglio, 2004,

p. 22) in a family whose relationships, values, roles, and routines are already established and may contrast with their own expectations (Garneau & Pasley, 2017). Boundary ambiguity and role ambiguity are common among stepfamilies, and they both are associated with a poor couple and family functioning (Brown & Manning, 2009; Coleman et al., 2000; Stewart, 2005a). In the face of such uncertainty about family roles, some stepfamilies hold unrealistic expectations or attempt to replicate nuclear family roles which can result in greater stress (Garneau & Pasley, 2017). As stepfamily boundaries and roles are renegotiated, loyalty conflicts emerge when children or mothers take sides against stepfathers due to original family allegiances (Afifi, 2003; Ganong et al., 2011; Weaver & Coleman, 2010).

The development of stepparent–child relationships is regarded as a key to stepfamily functioning (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Yet, the stepparent–stepchild subsystem is often the most fragile due to the lack of shared history and the involuntary nature of these relationships (Garneau & Pasley, 2017). The first few years of stepfather–stepchild relationships can be particularly challenging, especially when stepfamily members have unrealistic expectations or stepfathers' attempts at parenting are resisted by children (Ganong et al., 2011; Garneau & Pasley, 2017). Stepfather–stepchild bonds are closer when stepfathers avoid disciplining children, engage in warm and friendly interactions, and share interests with children early in the relationship (Coleman et al., 2013; Ganong et al., 2011). When their attempts at parenting are rebuffed early in the relationship, some stepfathers disengage (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2013). On the other hand, stepchildren report that close relationships eventually develop when stepfathers make intentional and sustained efforts to bond or when stepchildren see the value of stepfathers' involvement with themselves or their mothers (Ganong et al., 2011). Overall, stepfather–child relationships often improve over time following stepfamily formation (Sweeney, 2010).

Child-Related Factors that Impact Stepfamily Relationships A number of factors affect the development of stepfather–stepchild relationships. Perhaps because younger children are less autonomous and respond more readily to authority than do older children, younger children tend to accept stepparents more readily than older children (Ganong et al., 2011; King, 2006), and stepfathers are more likely to embrace the stepfather identity and claim stepchildren as their own when they enter the family with younger stepchildren (Marsiglio, 2004). There is also some evidence that stepfathers tend to build close bonds more easily with stepsons than stepdaughters (van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2013). Stepchild adjustment is also positively associated with stepfather–stepchild relationship quality (King et al., 2015) and engagement (Jensen, 2019). Changes in family complexity also matter; the birth of a shared child is associated with a decrease in stepparent–stepchild involvement (Stewart, 2005b).

Negotiating Stepfamily Relationships with Mothers and Biological Fathers Due to the tenuous nature of early stepfamily relationships, the formation of stepfather–stepchild relationships is intertwined with the functioning of other relationships within the stepfamily household. The quality of stepfather–child relationships is affected by both the quality of mother–child and mother–stepfather relationships (Jensen & Shafer, 2013; King, 2009; King et al., 2014). Mothers typically take the lead in managing stepfather–stepchild relationships, functioning as mediators in stepfather–stepchild relationships, especially early in stepfamily formation (Marsiglio, 2004; Weaver & Coleman, 2010). Mothers also take the lead in negotiating co-parenting teams with fathers and stepfathers, prioritizing biological fathers as co-parents and encouraging co-parental input from stepfathers when they: (1) perceive both fathers as good caregivers, (2) have cooperative relationships with fathers, and (3) feel secure as primary parents (Ganong et al., 2015). Although fathers and stepfathers do not always have much direct communication, stepfathers often express an awareness of their own roles and involvement vis-à-vis those of biological fathers (Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2007, 2010). To foster positive relationships, some stepfathers report working, directly or indirectly, as allies to fathers by supporting fathers' relationships with children, coordinating routines and roles with fathers in mind, and building respect and trust (Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2007). Similarly, some nonresident fathers are supportive of stepfathers' involvement (Bray & Easling, 2005).

Stepfather Involvement

Research focusing on stepfather involvement has included comparisons of stepfathers' involvement to that of biological fathers, examinations of whether and under what conditions children could be close to both fathers, and analyses ascertaining whether stepfather and father involvement result in additive, unique, or redundant benefits for children. Whereas early comparative research generally showed that compared to stepfathers, married biological fathers were more engaged with children (Marsiglio & Hinojosa, 2010), recent research provides a more nuanced view. Hofferth and Anderson (2003) used a rich set of covariates to compare competing hypotheses that may explain differences in father and stepfather involvement.

The evolutionary hypothesis suggests that fathers will be more invested in stepchildren to ensure the success of their biological progeny, the sociological hypothesis suggests that greater investment from stepfathers through marriage will reduce differences in father and stepfather involvement, and the selectivity hypothesis suggests that individual differences in other than biology (e.g., sociodemographic differences between fathers and stepfathers) account for differences in father and stepfather involvement (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). The findings showed that selectivity and marriage mostly accounted for differences in involvement, suggesting that fathers' biological relatedness to the child was not the determining factor in differences between biological and stepfathers' involvement (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). The

authors concluded that "biology is not as important as posited by the evolutionary model" (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003, p. 230). Subsequent research found that mothers report stepfathers generally engage in equal parenting practices (engagement, shared responsibility for care) or higher-quality co-parenting than do coresidential fathers (Berger et al., 2008). Marital status had little effect on parenting for either father type, although married stepfathers engaged in higher levels of cooperative co-parenting and shared responsibility than cohabiting biological fathers, providing some support for the sociological perspective that marriage may institutionalize relationships between stepfathers and stepchildren (Berger et al., 2008).

Overall, research suggests variability in closeness to both stepfathers and nonresident fathers in stepfamilies (King, 2006, 2009). King (2006) found that 25% of adolescents reported being quite or extremely close to both their stepfather and their nonresident father, suggesting that closeness with both fathers is possible for a substantial proportion of adolescents. Despite the potential for close relationships with both fathers, closeness with the stepfather only was most common (35%). In subsequent research, a substantial proportion of adolescents report closeness in relationships with all three parents: stepfathers, biological fathers, and mothers (Amato et al., 2016; Jensen, 2017). Although many adolescents are not close with both fathers, research indicates that nonresident father involvement is generally not associated with stepfather–child involvement directly (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Jensen & Shafer, 2013; King et al., 2014), and the entrance of a stepfather does not affect nonresident father contact or closeness with adolescents (King, 2009). Instead, other factors such as child gender, age, adjustment, stepfamily duration, stepmother–child closeness, stepcouple relationship quality, parents' marital status at the birth of the child, and a parent or stepparent education account for patterns of closeness with both fathers (Amato et al., 2016; Jensen, 2017; King, 2006).

Compared to adolescents who are close to stepfathers only, those who are close with both

fathers do not fare significantly better in terms of externalizing, internalizing, or academic outcomes, which suggests that fathers may provide few additive benefits when stepfather–child relationships are close (King, 2006). Other research found that adolescents who have distant relationships with mothers and stepfathers have more depressive symptoms and engage in more delinquent activities (Amato et al., 2016). These findings suggest that having close resident relationships, overall, is of primary importance to adolescent well-being in stepfamilies. Despite the importance of residential relationships, nonresident fathers also appear to provide some benefits. Adolescents who are close to neither father tend to have the worst socioemotional and academic outcomes, suggesting that nonresident father involvement provides benefits, especially when the adolescent is not close with the stepfather (King, 2006).

Taking Stock of the Existing Research and Implications

Taken together, recent research on fathering in the context of complex family structures has made great strides to address many of the personal, interpersonal, and environmental influences that affect family relationships and the likelihood that fathers will enact high-quality, frequent involvement in the lives of their children. Despite progress in identifying the complexity of fathering, there are still limitations to be addressed in the research on fathers and stepfathers. Existing research is somewhat limited in its ability to determine the long-term impacts of such complexity or to regularly generalize beyond distinctive subpopulations, which reflects issues in sampling (e.g., father–child relationships are often studied for adolescent children, and much of the literature focuses on stepfathers in marital relationships). The employment of dyadic and triadic data, experimental designs, and matching procedures may be particularly useful to further disentangle potential contextual influences and to strengthen the ability to make policy recommendations regarding presumptions

about the benefits of issues such as shared physical custody and different aspects of father involvement. Because of the transient nature of nonresident fathers and high levels of attrition of fathers in longitudinal surveys, many studies also fail to fully address the long-term effects of these contextual considerations on families (DeGarmo & Jones, 2019; Petren et al., 2021). Similar limitations are shared within the stepfamily literature, where there is a reliance on qualitative narratives, most frequently provided by mothers and adult children retrospectively (due in part to the difficulty in obtaining large and representative samples). New and expansive data that centers 21st-century fathers in complex family structures is needed to gain a more complete picture of fathering across family contexts. These data should also attend to GBT+ fathers and father figures (e.g., extended kin, foster fathers), as little is known about fathering in these contexts.

Issues also exist in translation between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

While research has exposed the growing complexity in fathering across family structures, the institutions and systems that determine, inhibit, or enable such interactions seem to have not kept up with the dynamic and changing nature of family life. This is due, in part, to a communication divide wherein policymakers report lacking clear and actionable directives from researchers; in turn, researchers, who often lack training in engaging policymakers, may question whether engaging policymakers is a worthwhile endeavor (Bogenschneider et al., 2019). Regardless of these challenges, such interfacing is necessary when family transitions are often accompanied by a necessary interaction with the legal system. By its nature, the legal system is adversarial and can often foster continued animosity between families (Salem et al., 2013). Such transitions further underscore the key challenges of families in these diverse contexts. There still remains a lack of consensus surrounding the impact of changing custody arrangements in nonintact family environments and whether such alterations, even when warranted, are experienced as flexibility or instability across family members (Meyer et al., 2017). Meanwhile, many unmarried parents forego the legal system, opting for informal custody and child support arrangements (Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2007). Policy responses are often guided by the implicit assumption that fathers do not want to be responsible and have typically focused on securing fathers' financial contributions, often with a heavy focus on enforcement, with little support for father involvement (Edin, 2018). Furthermore, family law frequently overlooks the unique circumstances of unmarried fathers (Pearson, 2015). Without centering the voices of these fathers and their families, policy approaches mistake the motives of most fathers, fail to recognize their desire to provide for children while building relationships with them, and privilege legal punishment as motivation while ignoring natural intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that could be fostered to support positive, holistic father involvement, child well-being, and family sustainability. Indeed, some policies unintentionally dissuade fathers' contributions (Edin, 2018), which is likely to further exacerbate stereotypes of "deadbeat dads".

Despite these issues, there have been strides made toward fostering continued father involvement in recent years, including trauma-informed programming, emphasis on kinship support networks, prison programs that are designed to foster family reunion and contacts, and shifts toward a preference for joint or shared physical custody following relationship dissolution (Arditti et al., 2019; Elrod & Spector, 2014; Ferraro et al., 2020). Nonetheless, while there are noted benefits of shared or joint physical custody arrangements, much of the research suggesting such benefits include a group of parents sharing custody that have higher education- and income levels and are disproportionately low conflict (Steinbach, 2019). Even when controlling for such effects or utilizing purposeful sampling strategies, these studies often reflect discretely defined categories of family structure that ignore family complexity and limit the potential to generalize findings. This narrow view of complex family dynamics and structure can lead to clashes between policy and the reality of family life.

These clashes can also be seen in child support determinations that ultimately omit half-siblings or fail to account for multiple partner fertility altogether (Cancian et al., 2011). Child support policies overlooking family complexity in some states require fathers to pay disproportionately more for each child and well beyond their ability to pay (Edin, 2018). Policies that ignore family fluidity also ignore stepfathers as potential sources of support, as when co-parental agreements fail to acknowledge the role of stepfathers and other nonbiological parental figures (Jennings-Lax & Traux, 2016). Given that many fathers prefer to focus their resources on all of the children (both biological and stepchildren) in one household (Tach et al., 2014), responsive policies could provide solutions that comport with these lived realities. A similar need for flexible solutions has been noted for child support policies that overlook fathers' informal financial contributions, even though fathers (and sometimes mothers) prefer such contributions (Kane et al., 2015; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2007).

The pathways to fathering, and in particular nonresident fathering, are shifting. There remains a sizable proportion of children that will grow up with at least one parent living outside of their family home (Grall, 2020), underscoring the need for systems to be responsive to such contexts. If we consider the state of interaction between society and our nontraditional families in the United States, it is reasonable to question whether current policies actually meet the best interest of the child standard that they are intended to facilitate or whether, like the notions of property rights and tender years before, we will eventually move beyond a system of preferential conditions in custody decisions that reflect judicial discretion and idealized notions of family functioning. As it stands, fathering is widely perceived as universally important to families, and despite understandably lesser involvement amongst nonresident fathers and stepfathers compared to resident biological fathers, it remains a goal to engage and encourage sustained involvement of these men in the lives of children. This goal is supported by consistent calls to action for the further development and

funding of parent and relationship education programming that specifically targets the relationship building of fathers with their minor children (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Warshak, 2014).

Human service agencies, practitioners, and therapists may consider prevention-oriented models that emphasize fostering these bonds to promote healthier long-term outcomes for men and their children across a wide range of diverse family structures and situations. Further, evaluation of such initiatives can answer prior calls for a more robust and targeted assessment of father involvement that extends beyond contact and direct care elements, utilizing new and emerging assessments that tap previously neglected dimensions of fathering within this population (e.g., caregiving play; cognitive stimulation; see Dyer et al., 2018). While there is work being done to promote fathering across the country, the ability of such entities and individuals to work toward strengthening bonds between fathers and children is limited by inconsistent methods of encouraging fathering broadly (across diverse family structures) across states, with no clear metrics universally utilized to ensure the viability and sustainability of high-quality programs and initiatives (Pearson & Fagan, 2019).

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Paternal Mental Health in the Perinatal Period

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Within the study of mental health, the lens of gender is being applied increasingly to men. While historically, psychological research may have overly studied males as representative of the general population (Holmes & Jorgensen, 1971), it arguably produced a dearth of information about the impact of gender specifically on the psychological experiences of men (Möller-Leimkühler, 2002). This is notably evident in research on parenthood, for which studies on fathers are highly underrepresented (Fisher, 2016). In addition to the challenges that are associated with the study of men's mental health, research on paternal mental health faces additional barriers related to engaging fathers during the perinatal period. These factors include social and healthcare norms during pregnancy and post-partum, which may overlook the priorities and needs of fathers. The growing inclusion of fathers in research on perinatal health has identified several conditions that are faced by fathers. This chapter will outline the two most common disor-

ders: depressive and anxiety disorders. Compounding the impact of mental health conditions are fathers' general lack of help-seeking behaviors and few interventions aimed at fathers, specifically. Appreciating the challenges that are associated with the study, diagnosis, and treatment of these conditions can help mental health providers support fathers during this important phase of a man's life.

Men's Mental Health

Over the last 40 years, a growing emphasis on understanding the psychology of men has been spearheaded by the American Psychological Association's Division 51, the *Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinities* (SPSMM; SPSMM, 2019). Of note, there is no such equivalent in the American Psychiatric Association [APA], which has historically been responsible for producing the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders (APA, 2022). As such, while the emergence of adjustments to diagnostic criteria over the last three decades (i.e., from DSM-III to DSM5-TR) has factored in greater emphasis on diagnostic considerations among specific populations (e.g., children, older adults), few adjustments of diagnostic criteria have been made to elucidate the experience of psychopathology specific to men. Nevertheless, men often experience aspects of

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psychopathology in unique ways that diverge from the commonly-utilized screening and diagnostic formulations.

To start, the construct of major depressive disorder (MDD) has been examined through a gender socialization perspective (Addis, 2008). Such examination has revealed that depressive symptoms may be underrecognized among men who seek help from mental health professionals because they do not correlate with the diagnostic criteria that are outlined in the DSM or the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) (APA, 2022; World Health Organization, 2019). For instance, the DSM-5-TR criteria for the diagnosis of major depression hinge on the experience of either depressed mood or anhedonia (i.e., loss of pleasure or hopefulness) (APA, 2022). However, men may experience unique features of MDD, dubbed "male-type depression," in which subjective sadness and depressed mood are underrepresented and replaced by features such as attacks of anger, feelings of numbness, and externalization (Martin et al., 2013). "Male-type depression" tends to be associated with more rigid adherence to masculinity norms that minimize emotional expression and emphasize stoicism and independence (Martin et al., 2013).

Similar to depression, men who adhere to rigid norms of masculinity may have difficulty expressing anxiety. Many men, across various cultures, are taught to be tough, to take risks, and to not show fear; these can contribute to men minimizing or hiding experiences of anxiety. Additionally, men often express anxiety through agitation, anger, and avoidance. This can make it difficult to notice and diagnose treatable psychopathology among anxious men, who may be presumed instead to have a bad temper (Psouni & Eichbichler, 2020). Gender norms that emphasize male self-reliance, avoidance of emotional expression, and use of problem-focused coping may also translate to men engaging more in independent work-related tasks or leisure activities (e.g., video games) in lieu of emotion-focused coping or interpersonal interactions that would otherwise bring their experiences of anxiety to the fore. It is worth noting that striving to adhere to masculinity norms and expectations is also a

source of anxiety, referred to as masculine gender role stress (Eisler & Blalock, 1991). Taken together, adhering to socialized gender norms and masculine expectations can contribute to both anxiety and the avoidance of help-seeking in its response (Fisher et al., 2021a).

The extant literature and clinical experience point to a common theme of men externalizing their depression and anxiety through any number of unhealthy behaviors such as substance use, pornography consumption, risky sexual behavior, violence, and gambling (Rice et al., 2021). Along these lines, a meta-analysis by Kuehner (2017) indicated that men are more likely to be diagnosed with "externalizing" conditions, such as impulse control, substance use, and Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity disorders, while women are more likely to be diagnosed with "internalizing" conditions such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Among some men, externalizing behaviors may in fact be the most prominent features of internalizing conditions. This may reflect a tendency to numb, avoid, or escape the discomfort of psychopathology, as well as its stigma among more traditional masculine ideologies.

Furthermore, men often experience differences in self-awareness of emotions as well as help-seeking when compared to women. Alexithymia, or difficulty articulating one's own experience of emotion, has been identified so commonly among men that several have argued for its normative male presence (Levant et al., 2014). Even when men do seek help for depressive symptoms, they may be less likely—as compared to female counterparts—to receive a mental health diagnosis or to be treated with an antidepressant medication, even when similar indicators of depression are present (Bertakis et al., 2001; Angst et al., 2002). This mix of internal and external confounds—i.e., symptomatic naming and help-seeking by men and to diagnosing and treating of men by healthcare professionals—has likely skewed the epidemiological reports of mental health conditions among men. As such, men may be seen as suffering less frequently or severely, both in relation to individuals of other genders and, more importantly, in

relation to their actual rates of psychopathology. Given the three to four times greater likelihood of men (i.e., as compared to women) to die by suicide and roughly half as likely to have sought mental health care in advance of suicide (Luoma et al., 2002), the stakes of this underrecognition are tremendous.

Transition to Fatherhood

The transition to fatherhood represents a time of unprecedented beginnings in a man's life; this is particularly true for first-time fathers. A review of studies of the transition to fatherhood over a 30-year stretch (1989–2008) supports the division of fatherhood transition into three phases based on the unique psychological experiences that men face in each period: prenatal, labor/birth, and postnatal periods (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). The authors describe the predominance of identity challenges in the prenatal period, intense emotionality in the labor and delivery period, and environmental and relational challenges in the postnatal period. More recently, a systematic review of 22 qualitative studies defined distinct patterns that typify the transition into fatherhood across all stages; the authors described these patterns in seven categories: new fatherhood identity, competing demands, negative feelings and fears, stress experiences and coping, limited support, wants of new fathers, and positive aspects of fatherhood (Baldwin et al., 2018). From these, the authors synthesized three primary contributors to mental health during the paternal transition, namely, the formation of a man's self-identity as a father, navigating the tension between responsibilities across life domains, and fears or negative sentiments related to parenting (Baldwin et al., 2018).

Limited research has been dedicated to optimizing men's involvement during pregnancy and delivery (Xue et al., 2018). During labor, fathers describe feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty about how to best provide support to the mother and other family members (Johansson et al., 2015). In a 2007 study of expectant fathers in Sweden (*n* = 1047), over 13% reported substan-

tial childbirth fear as assessed by the Fear of Birth Scale (FOBS) (Hildingsson et al., 2014). In this sample, non-native and first-time fathers were more likely to describe negative sentiments and fears associated with the pending delivery. Fathers described feeling more supported when they were allowed to ask questions and engage with birthing professionals. When sidelined, fathers tended to report subjective helplessness, at times panic, even when the birth itself was normal and nontraumatic (Bäckström & Hertfelt Wahn, 2011).

On the whole, fathers describe the experience of early fatherhood as largely favorable. For example, in a qualitative study, the majority of fathers described their experience of becoming a father as positive for their health, such as improved diet, exercise, physical activity, and less alcohol use and risk-taking behaviors (Garfield et al., 2010). At the same time, several stressors can increase the likelihood of psychopathology during this period. These include less consistent sleep, loss of intimacy in partnership, changes to agency in personal scheduling, and transition to new scheduling patterns. A recent study also found that 70% of fathers met the criteria for being overweight or obese, which may confer additional mental health risks (Garfield et al., 2022). Taken together, fatherhood can be challenging to the consistent engagement of health behaviors that are correlated with psychopathology. For more detail related to the psychological features of the transition to fatherhood, please refer to Chap. 5 ("Transition to Fatherhood").

Paternal Peripartum Depression

Major depressive disorder (MDD) impacts approximately 15% of men over the course of their lifetimes, at a rate that is roughly half that of women (Hasin et al., 2018). While this 2:1 gender ratio has been demonstrated across various studies and global populations (Kessler & Bromet, 2013), the tendency to underrecognize depressive disorders among men may overemphasize this finding. The impact of unrecognized

MDD in men is substantial, both with respect to the risk for suicide (Quevedo et al., 2011), as well as lost productivity and impairment to interpersonal functioning; this includes the engagement of men with their romantic partners and in their roles as fathers.

Early studies of the clinical presentation of major depression across genders suggested that, as compared to the experiences of overt sadness and oversensitivity described in female participants, male participants reported greater experiences of numbness and inability to cry, as well as aggression, irritability, and a sense of failure (Hammen & Padesky, 1977). As compared to depressed women, depressed men are more likely to camouflage and withhold the expression of their symptoms; they are less likely to use the word "depressed" and more likely to divert from the emotional experience of depression by focusing on physical ailments (Swami, 2012; Warren, 1983; Wexler, 2009). Additional features that are common to depression in men include attacks of anger, demands for autonomy, emotional constriction, externalization, numbing, and irritability (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2000; Pollack & Levant, 1998).

The experience of postpartum depression (PPD) in fathers has gained greater visibility, both in academic and popular forums, in the last decade (Abdollahi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, many individuals (mental health professionals included) are often surprised to learn that roughly 10% of fathers will experience PPD and that this rate can elevate up to fivefold for male partners of women who experience maternal PPD (Goodman, 2004). Several barriers to diagnosis persist, arguably starting with the very tools that are designed to guide diagnosis. For instance, the DSM does not specifically note that the MDD specifier "with peripartum onset" can be used for male-identifying parents, which may leave its readers assuming that the peripartum onset applies only to mothers (APA, 2022). In addition, while the DSM-5-TR defines the "with peripartum onset" specifier as MDD with onset either during pregnancy or within the first 4 weeks postpartum, research on both maternal and paternal mental health supports the extension of risk into the first year of parenthood (Matthey et al., 2000; Davé et al., 2010). This is particularly true for fathers, whose experience of PPD is most likely to occur during months three to six postpartum, well out of the reference range defined by the DSM (Paulson & Bazemore 2010).

While epidemiological research is limited in this domain, the range of reported incidences of PPD in fathers is 4–25% (Melrose, 2010). A 2016 meta-analysis of paternal depression between the first trimester of pregnancy and the first year postpartum reported a meta-estimate of 8.4% across 74 studies and over 40,000 participants (Cameron et al., 2016). Risk factors for PPD include a baseline history of depressive symptoms or substantial anxiety during pregnancy, low income or educational status, poor job quality, limited social support, exclusion from baby bonding, low parenting, self-efficacy, and relationship dissatisfaction (Bamishigbin et al., 2020; Bradley & Slade, 2011; Chhabra et al., 2020; Giallo et al., 2013; Goodman, 2004). Male endocrinologic changes associated with the peripartum period, including changes to testosterone, estrogen, oxytocin, and cortisol, likely also contribute to a father's risk for PPD (Sundström Poromaa et al., 2017).

The most strongly correlated risk factor for paternal PPD is the experience of maternal PPD, which may increase paternal rates of depression to 25–50% of men in the first year postpartum (Goodman, 2004; Paulson et al., 2016). In turn, the presence of paternal PPD has been associated with worsened symptom severity of postnatal depression in female partners during the first 6 months postpartum (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010). These bidirectional interactions underscore the value of prompt seeking of mental health services. However, depression itself may pose a self-fulfilling risk to help avoidance. For example, in a study that included a national sample of 1989 fathers from the Fragile Families and Wellbeing Study, depression emerged as the only predictor of less mental health help-seeking; in that study, only 3.2% of the fathers reported using mental health services (Isacco et al., 2016).

In men, depression is often comorbid with other mental health symptoms; the postpartum

experience is no exception. A Canadian study of over 2000 fathers (Dennis et al., 2022) revealed that 22.4% of fathers experienced comorbid depression and anxiety symptoms at some point during the first year postpartum. Risk factors associated with this comorbidity included neonatal health concerns, baseline depression or anxiety, substantial adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and intimate partner violence (IPV) victimhood (Dennis et al., 2022).

Paternal Peripartum Anxiety

Relative to PPD, less is known about fathers' experiences of peripartum anxiety. The experience of worry is common for expectant fathers during the antepartum period, reflecting a psychological state of "pregnancy anxiety" (Cameron et al., 2021). The reported prevalence of anxiety among fathers in the postpartum period varies; some studies indicate that more than 10% of fathers experience syndromal anxiety, while others estimate a range of prevalence from 2.5% to 25.4% (O'Brien et al., 2017; Leiferman et al., 2021). These studies point to a common finding, namely that the perinatal period represents a time of greater risk for the onset of anxiety disorders among men.

The phenotypic expression of paternal anxiety during the peripartum period has not been elucidated fully. Nevertheless, available data have described emergent features of panic, generalized anxiety, and social anxiety disorders, which tend to peak at or shortly after the time of birth and mitigate in severity as the postnatal period continues (Philpott et al., 2019; Leach et al., 2016). Concerns for the health of mother and baby are often cited by fathers as a predominant theme in the experience of anxiety (Cameron et al., 2021). This may be exacerbated by low paternal perceptions of control, unplanned pregnancy, and situations in which the father feels less prepared during labor and delivery (Zerach & Magal, 2017).

Balancing personal and professional needs, his partner's needs, childcare, and changes to family structure can contribute to a father's experience of mental vulnerability (Singley & Edwards, 2015). As such, paternal experiences of fatigue, poor health, poor partner or baby health, witnessing birth trauma, and feelings of inadequacy serve as risk factors for anxiety (Leach et al., 2016). Anxiety also has a negative impact on paternal relationships, perceived parenting skills, relationship with partner, and self-efficacy (Bradley & Slade, 2011). Paternal anxiety, too, has been associated with the experience of depression and other comorbid mental health conditions (Singley & Edwards, 2015).

Impact of Paternal Mental Health

Poor prenatal and postpartum mental health, in either or both parents, has been associated with detrimental effects on the family structure, as well as childhood developmental, behavioral, and physical outcomes (Pierce et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2022). Among fathers, depression and anxiety have been associated with negative perceptions of child behavior at 6 months postpartum (Skjothaug et al., 2018), as well as diminished engagement in behaviors such as soothing, hugging, and playing with infants (Singley & Edwards, 2015). Direct associations have been found between paternal depression and child outcomes, such as excessive crying in infants, changes in infant temperament, poorer motor and socioemotional development, and limited expressive vocabulary (Gentile & Fusco, 2017). Depressed fathers are also at higher risk for substance use and poorer relationship satisfaction, both of which may further impact parenting behaviors and child outcomes (Rabinowitz & Cochran, 2008; Don & Mickelson, 2012; Kouros et al., 2014).

The impact of paternal postpartum mental health on children's own wellness appears to extend beyond infanthood. Paternal PPD, in particular, has been shown to be predictive of oppositional-defiant and conduct disorders, as well as difficulties with peer interactions, in the first decade of life (Ramchandani et al., 2008). Data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) also highlighted

the association between peripartum depression in either parent and depressive symptoms in children during adolescence (Rajyaguru et al., 2021). These outcomes may be amplified when both parents experience mental health challenges.

Clinical Implications and Future Directions

In addition to building awareness of the impact of perinatal mental health conditions among fathers, an increase in screening and treatment options for men during the postpartum period would be expected to improve outcomes for the whole family. While great advances have been made in increasing the detection of maternal mental illness during prenatal and postpartum checkups, fathers are not routinely screened (Baldoni & Giannotti, 2020). Implementing routine mental health screening for fathers during obstetric and pediatric care, for instance, could normalize discussion of paternal mental health while allowing clinicians to provide appropriate psychological referrals and community resources (Earls et al., 2019). In addition, expanding research to less-frequently studied mental health conditions among fathers in the peripartum period, including obsessive-compulsive and trauma-based disorders, would provide a more comprehensive appreciation for the impact of fatherhood on men's mental health (Schobinger et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2021).

While studied and implemented predominantly among mothers, several mental health screening measures are available for use in the peripartum period. The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS; Cox et al., 1987) is a brief 10-item screen, which is commonly used with mothers and has also been validated with fathers (Matthey et al., 2001). Outcomes of the EPDS have been shown to be highly concordant with scores on another popular mental health screening, the Patient Healthcare Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9; Spitzer et al., 1999), although more research is needed on its utility with new fathers. One common and efficient screening approach entails implementing the first two items of the

PHQ-9 (i.e., the PHQ-2), which represent the experiences of depressed mood and anhedonia; should the father endorse either item, completion of a full PHQ-9 offers a more comprehensive screening for depression (Bennett et al., 2008). The Paternal Involvement with Infants Scale (PIWIS; Singley et al. 2018) is a 35-item self-report scale, which yields reliable, practical information about how and how much fathers are involved with their infants aged 0–12 months in multiple dimensions, including warmth and attunement, positive engagement, and indirect care. Finally, the Gotlund Male Depression Scale (GMDS; Zierau et al., 2002) is another instrument, which was designed to assess "male-type" depressive symptoms and which includes depressive and distressed subscale scores. While progress has been made with respect to perinatal mental health screening, at large, more validation research is needed for fathers and diverse populations (Edmonson et al., 2010; Massoudi et al., 2013).

With respect to treatment modalities, well-researched psychotherapies, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT), have been shown to be effective among mothers during the perinatal period and men at various life stages; these hold the most practical promise for effective psychosocial interventions with fathers (Fisher et al., 2021b). However, no known psychotherapy process and outcome research has addressed the relative efficacy of these approaches for fathers in the perinatal period. The impact of other well-researched modalities, including acceptance-commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, 2016) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR; Shapiro, 2002), has also yet to be described in the perinatal period.

Cochran and Rabinowitz (2000) offer one of the most integrative approaches to treating depression in men by providing specific techniques to examine masculinity ideology in relation to depressive symptoms. Those authors also prompt clinicians to consider the range of therapeutic interventions such as antidepressant medication to explore deeper contributing factors to men's depression, such as unresolved trauma,

loss, and grief. Oren and Oren (2009) apply a similar integrative approach specifically to counseling fathers. Those authors further include an important multicultural perspective by directing clinicians to conceptualize clinical issues from salient cultural and social identities of fathers, for example, spirituality, race, and ethnicity—an approach that is modeled in this handbook. In addition, clinicians are encouraged to take a strength-based approach to counseling fathers (Oren & Oren, 2009), as focusing on strengths can improve therapeutic rapport, client retention in the counseling process, and contribute to symptom reduction (Isacco et al., 2013). Indeed, novel research has blended positive psychology with a masculinities-informed lens in a manner that emphasizes the father's strengths (alongside working on issues), which may increase the likelihood that fathers will begin, remain in, and benefit from therapy (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010). Taken together, clinicians can use a holistic approach to addressing mental health concerns with diverse fathers.

Conducting well-controlled clinical research that factors in well-established gender dynamics, including lower levels of help-seeking, underreporting symptoms, externalizing behaviors, and "masked" male depression, holds the promise to provide much more effective services to this highly underserved population. For example, when working with fathers before, during, and after delivery to mitigate paternal childbirth fears, Johansson et al. (2021) described useful approaches to encouraging fathers to share their fears more openly and to learn more about and participate more freely in the process of delivery. Baldwin et al. (2018) have suggested that relational support and more father-tailored preparatory resources may also help to improve mental wellbeing at the start of fatherhood. By the same token, our work on fatherhood engagement programs has shown that "celebrating wins"—even small ones—tends to improve attendance and outcomes.

Psychologists and other mental health professionals are in a unique position to tailor mental health services to be more inviting to men. This can be undertaken by using terminology that is more approachable to men, building insight into the experiences of emotion, promoting agency in help-seeking, and providing action-oriented therapies (Levin & Sanacora, 2007). Psychotherapy has traditionally mirrored a medical approach, which aims to remediate deficits and minimize mental health symptoms through the application of specific intervention components. Appreciating the unique presentations of mental illness, as well as mental wellness, in men allows for tailoring efforts to improve the care provided to fathers, thereby also targeting improved outcomes among the family system at large.

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Infertility, Grief, and Trauma Related to Fathering

Brandon P. Eddy, Anna Trujillo-DeFronzo, and Brie A. Turns

Infertility is the inability to achieve conception after at least 1 year of regular intercourse with unprotected sex. Infertility currently impacts 8–12% of couples, globally, within the reproductive ages (Vander Borght & Wyns, 2018). Of those couples, approximately 20–30% of those cases are solely due to male infertility (Anderson et al., 2009), while 20–30% are due to both male and female cases (Vander Borght & Wyns, 2018). The inability to conceive a child naturally can have detrimental consequences for the male partner, with one of the largest factors being never having children. The cost of medical treatments and adoption can make having children, for some men, impossible. Aside from the inability to conceive, infertility also has public health consequences, including social stigma, economic constraints, and psychological challenges for men (Bak et al., 2012).

Addressing male infertility is vital for numerous reasons. First, decreasing the social stigma that men experience would allow more men, and their partners, to discuss their challenges, emotions, and fears with one another and mental health and health care professionals. Over the past several years, medical and mental health researchers have started providing insight into the causes, treatments, and challenges associated with male infertility. Educating couples about these aspects of infertility can lead to an increase in mental health. Second, creating a dialogue and providing information to couples regarding male infertility can decrease male depression and martial challenges (Jones et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2006). Finally, many men often do not seek out treatments or information regarding infertility. Openly addressing treatment options can make couples, specifically males, feel more "in control" of their potential options.

Infertility

Causes

There are many causes and risk factors associated with male infertility, including congenital, acquired, and idiopathic factors (Agarwal et al., 2021; Krausz, 2011). Congenital factors may include anorchia, congenital absence of vas deferens, and congenital obstruction (Agarwal et al., 2021). Acquired factors contributing to infertility may include sexual dysfunction, testicular trauma, testicular torsion, and exogenous factors, such as chemotherapy or medications. Idiopathic risk factors include smoking, alcohol, recreational

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drug use, advanced paternal age, obesity, and stress (Agarwal et al., 2021).

Treatments

The majority of couples, between 50% and 75%, facing infertility will seek out various treatment options to successfully achieve pregnancy (Schmidt, 2006). The first course of treatments for male infertility usually includes medications or corrective surgery, approximately 85–90% of infertility services (Insler & Lunefeld, 1993). In the case of unsuccessful pregnancy, couples seek services from a reproductive endocrinologist (Peterson et al., 2007).

Reproductive endocrinologists, subspecialists of obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN), specialize in the treatment of infertility. Common methods of treatment include in vitro fertilization (IVF), intrauterine insemination (IUI), and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). Unfortunately, these procedures are not guaranteed to end in successful pregnancy and can be very expensive. When treatments are successful, they are often associated with other complications such as low birth weight and miscarriage (Shevell et al., 2005).

Challenges

Similar to other diagnoses, infertility can cause numerous psychological and social challenges for individuals and couples (e.g., Bak et al., 2012; Slade et al., 2007). It is difficult to separate the various challenges that a man may experience when diagnosed with infertility because emotional, sexual functioning, psychological, financial, and marital challenges are interrelated.

Emotional reactions to male infertility include shame, anger, low self-esteem, guilt, and personal failure (e.g., Myers, 1990; Wright et al., 1991). Infertility is also positively correlated to depression, anxiety, marital difficulties, and sexual dysfunction (Anderson et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2006). Males also report high levels of anxiety and self-blame (Glover

et al., 1996). Unfortunately, many men diagnosed with infertility use words such as defective and failure to describe themselves (Daniluk, 1997).

In addition to emotional reactions, men also experience changes in their sexual functioning after diagnosis. Although 10% of male infertility is related to erectile dysfunction (ED), ED can also have negative psychological causes (Saleh et al., 2003). Since many men, who experience infertility, also experience inadequacy in their sexual identity, they may pour their time and energy into work and other areas of their lives to increase their sense of adequacy (Irvine & Cawood, 1996). Opposite to their female partners, men are less likely to discuss their emotional pain and challenges related to their infertility (Daniluk, 1997).

Additionally, infertility can cause significant financial strains for couples (Braverman, 1997) and negatively impact their daily routine. Many medical treatments for infertility are not covered by insurance providers and can cost between approximately 1000 USD for medications only, to over 38,000 USD for IVF donor eggs (Katz et al., 2011). As the costs increase, the treatment availability for couples decreases. Many middle-to-low socioeconomic status couples will not be able to afford a required treatment, or adoption fees, decreasing their ability to have children. In addition to the financial burdens, an individual and couple's daily routine can be altered drastically due to the focus on treatment (Peterson et al., 2007). Daily medications and injections must be given at specific times, often interfering with work schedules and other daily obligations.

Implications

Similar to all other medical diagnoses, male infertility has numerous clinical and research implications for mental health professionals. Mental health professionals need to be appropriately educated and trained for working with men who are experiencing infertility and their partners. Unfortunately, there is a lack of clinical interventions proposed for this unique population. Marriage and family therapists (MFTs) would be

well-suited professionals to work with infertility due to the systemic dynamic between the couples and the intense emotional and psychological challenges that could be faced. Future authors should consider writing about the use of a systemic model, such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and couples facing infertility. EFT focuses on couples' primary emotions and how their behaviors influence their emotions. Because couples often hide or mask their emotions when processing the challenges of infertility, emotion-focused treatment would help couples openly discuss their primary emotions, such as fear and embarrassment, with one another.

Due to the financial strain of infertility treatment, brief approaches to therapy, such as SFBT, may be very beneficial to clients due to the future focus of the model and identifying immediate solutions to the presenting problem. Additionally, mental health professionals may miss learning about this important information from their clients due to simply not asking. Clinicians should ask about current and past medical challenges and concerns for every individual and couple they are treating.

In addition to clinical implications, research regarding male infertility should be addressed. First, research investigating the emotional and psychological aspects of infertility and infertility treatments is primarily focused on women (Fisher & Hammarberg, 2012). Researchers should investigate the emotional and psychological aspects males experience and how mental health professionals can effectively treat them. For example, researchers can assess the effectiveness of SFBT using a multiple baseline design. Second, researchers may begin to investigate how mental health professionals can assist a couple's relationship while experiencing infertility. This includes navigating issues of infertility in a current relationship when one partner has children from a previous relationship or other experiences that impact a couple both individually and relationally. Future researchers may also explore the associations between male infertility and masculinity ideology. Traditionally, men have believed that their ability to have a child increases their masculinity, and infertility may negatively impact their self-image or precipitate feelings of shame and grief.

Grief

Findings

One of the most common reasons men will experience grief related to fatherhood or during the transition to fatherhood is due to a stillborn birth or miscarriage. Stillborn births occur in about 1 of 160 births. Miscarriages, which are more common, occur in approximately 10% of all pregnancies and are characterized as an embryo or fetus dying before the 20th week of pregnancy (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2017). Though most miscarriages happen early into pregnancy, the first 8–10 weeks, miscarriage is still an extremely painful life event for parents and potential parents.

Although men do not physically experience pregnancy, they can grow attached to their baby quite quickly. The advancement of modern medicine and technology has helped parents be able to see and interact with their growing baby like never before. Research has shown that ultrasounds and other advanced imaging technology have enhanced the intimacy and reality of the father–child relationship before birth (Bonnette & Broom, 2012). Despite not holding their baby or seeing their baby face-to-face, their child is very real to them and fathers quickly establish a love for them. Fathers often read to their baby while the baby is in the womb and participate with their wives in nesting and preparation for the coming baby (Eddy & Fife, 2020). With this love and expectation come hopes and dreams for a future that they will experience with this child. Miscarriage destroys that future and often leaves men with grief, anguish, and emptiness.

While both parents experience grief and emotional suffering associated with miscarriage, men tend to experience grief and loss differently. The difference in the way parents experience grief is strongly related to gender expectations and gender roles. Society tends to have certain expectations and acceptable ways for men to

grieve, such as the traditional male stereotypes of being more stoic and less emotionally expressive (Versalle & McDowell, 2005). Research has shown that men expect themselves to support their partner and keep their own anxiety or grief under control (O'Leary & Thorwick, 2006). As a result, men are more likely to internalize their grief in order to be a strong and secure base for their partner during this difficult time (Samuelsson et al., 2001). Men experience this deep, agonizing loss in a way that goes largely unrecognized, many times by those closest to them (McCreight, 2004). Sadly, many men report feeling completely forgotten and overlooked by friends, family, and the healthcare industry in their experience with pregnancy, loss, and other perinatal mental healthcare needs (Eddy et al., 2019; Bonnette & Broom, 2012).

Challenges

There are numerous challenges associated with addressing men's grief. One challenge in relation to men's grief and miscarriage is that fathers are not the primary patient (Obst & Due, 2021). In pregnancy, the patients are typically the mother and the baby. Despite fathers being part of the family system, they are not necessarily treated as part of the family system during pregnancy. This is understandable in many ways, as the health of the baby and the mother are first and foremost to the OB-GYN physician and medical team, who do not have an explicit duty to treat fathers. It is important to note that even in cases where the medical team is inclusive of the fathers, the father may not necessarily come to all medical appointments, thereby making it difficult to include fathers in treatment or assessment. In other cases, fathers are present and involved but report feeling marginalized throughout the pregnancy process or simply being overlooked by healthcare professionals (Jones et al., 2019; Story Chavez et al., 2019).

Another challenge in addressing men's grief comes back to the role of gender. Societal pressure and expectations often have an impact on men's willingness to seek counseling services

such as individual therapy or group therapy when dealing with mental health concerns (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). However, research has also shown that if men receive encouragement to attend therapy, express themselves emotionally, and come to understand that feeling distressed or feeling a great sense of loss is normal and expected, they are more likely to engage in some type of mental health support services (Vogel et al., 2014). Overall, normalizing the grieving experience as painful, but normal and expected, helps men to feel that grieving is acceptable, and they can reach out to seek help.

The tendency for men to slip into the support role is another challenge in addressing grief. Many men are conditioned to or prefer to move into the role of supporter to their partner after a miscarriage, rather than seeking to be supported. As stated previously, men are more likely to suppress their feelings and more likely to use negative coping mechanisms, such as alcohol, to deal with their loss (Ward, 2012). The suppression of feelings and engaging in negative behaviors to cope is often problematic and can add stress and dysfunction to the couple's relationship and should be addressed.

Implications

When analyzing the best way to address and treat men's grief, several approaches come to mind. First is the need to establish a relationship between the father and the medical team. Many fathers attend medical appointments during pregnancy, especially "special" appointments such as the first ultrasound to confirm the pregnancy and the 20-week appointment at which the sex of a baby is often revealed. These medical appointments are an ideal time to establish a relationship with the father. Medical providers need not go to any extremes; establishing a relationship can be done through simple tasks such as asking the father about his excitement or anxiety related to the pregnancy or asking if he has any general questions or concerns (Yogman & Garfield, 2016). It is important that fathers feel included and engaged in the pregnancy so that they can be

included and engaged more easily, should future problems arise.

Another important consideration is for clinicians to be aware of how men experience and cope with grief differently. Men are more likely to isolate themselves and attempt to work through their grief on their own. This isolation could come in the form of becoming increasingly productive in their career or place of employment, being more engaged in household work, engaging in a hobby more than usual, or being less socially active and withdrawing from friends and family. Men are also more likely to engage in negative coping behaviors, such as drug or alcohol use. Clinicians should encourage fathers to engage in healthy coping strategies and provide an accepting, nonjudgmental space for them to process their grief. Furthermore, research has shown that therapy with men can be more effective when clinicians focus on overall functioning, emphasize male-norm strengths such as courage, and take the time to establish a good rapport or therapeutic relationship (Rochlen et al., 2010).

Trauma

Trauma is the emotional response to experiencing or witnessing a profoundly distressing event that threatens physical or psychological well-being and challenges one's ability to cope (Levenson et al., 2014). This phenomenon is found universally and can be present at any life stage, often creating life-long consequences. At the same time, trauma is an individualized experience and cannot be universally generalized. VA.gov (n.d.) estimates every six of ten men and every five of ten women will experience trauma at least once in their lifetime. Further, 7 of every 100 people are diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Of those diagnosed with PTSD, three-quarters of women and more than two-thirds of men are parents (Sherman et al., 2016). Unresolved trauma can leak into the family system. When a caregiver experiences symptoms due to trauma, it affects the ability to parent.

The transition to parenthood can be overwhelming and is often a trigger for unresolved trauma in men (Haiyasoso & Trepal, 2019). While the experience of trauma is widely studied among mothers (Klaus, 2010; Sperlich & Seng, 2018; Sandbar et al., 2012; Lange et al., 2019), the impact of trauma on fathers and fathering would benefit from more attention. Both mothers and fathers are affected by mental health difficulties following a child's birth (Dandy et al., 2020). Past research has likely focused on the mothers' roles in parenting because, traditionally, raising children was the mother's responsibility. There has been a shift in gender roles over the past few decades, wherein fathers' involvement in child development and family dynamics is equally important (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). Fathers are often responsible for nurturing and caregiving, engaging in play, providing emotional support, moral guidance and discipline, coordinating care and activities, ensuring safety, and more (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). Early intervention can lessen the impact of trauma (Lange et al., 2019) and help fathers to implement healthier parenting practices. Recent studies have focused on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (specifically psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and physical abuse) as having a significant impact on fatherhood. Substance abuse and war-related trauma have also been identified as highly consequential.

Findings

Childbirth Trauma

Childbirth has historically been associated with the experiences of women. Only recently have studies evidenced paternal mental health also suffers following traumatic birth experiences (Reed et al., 2017; Elmir et al., 2010; Etheridge & Slade, 2017). Traumatic childbirth is generally defined as a mother's or father's perceived experience of danger to the baby or the mother's life or a serious threat to the baby's or the mother's physical or emotional health (Reed et al., 2017).

Yet, this definition likely extends beyond conventional notions of trauma and to any perceived

distress experienced by a parent or baby during the birthing experience, including medically routine procedures. Mode of birth, birth interventions used, and perceived medical treatment by medical staff were frequently reported by fathers as distressing experiences that adversely impacted fathers' perception of self and their relationships with both their partners and children (Elmir et al., 2010; Etheridge & Slade, 2017). Vaginal birth, cesarian birth, vaginal birth after cesarian, vacuum extraction, and forceps delivery are the five different modes of birth.

Birth interventions refer to a range of procedures that begin as soon as a woman checks into a birthing facility. Birth interventions are used to prepare for labor, speed labor, ease labor pain, and keep baby safe in the event of a birth complication. Common birth interventions include labor induction, electronic fetal monitoring (EFM), epidural, episiotomy, oxygen, and more. While a mode of birth and accompanying interventions is an inherent component of the child birthing process, parents may still experience varying degrees of apprehension as birth experiences are often unfamiliar and unpredictable. These apprehensions are likely intensified in the presence of birth complications, particularly for complications resulting in a threat of or actual serious injury or death.

Fathers are more present and more active participants in the labor and delivery process than in previous generations (Schobinger et al., 2020). They play an essential role in the birthing process and are often the main source of support to the mother. It is also well known that partners generally coregulate to soothe and manage emotions in the face of distress. Recent research further indicates the mother's emotional state is greatly influenced by the father's emotional state during childbirth (Schobinger et al., 2020). This may suggest that overlooking fathers in traumatic childbirth experiences can threaten the mother's mental health and may have additional adverse implications for the mother–child bond and child development. Future research may consider focusing on the degree of this correlation, whether parents are aware of this influence, and if symptom reporting is impacted by it.

Despite their important role in the birthing process, there are limited studies on the impact of traumatic birth on fathers, though it is well evidenced that men experience a range of mental health problems after a traumatic childbirth experience (Etheridge & Slade, 2017). One study of 647 parents found that approximately 64% of mothers and 52% of fathers presented with symptoms of acute stress disorder (ASD) at 1 week postpartum (Schobinger et al., 2020). At 1 month postpartum, approximately 21% of mothers and approximately 7% of fathers had symptoms consistent with PTSD (Schobinger et al., 2020). Though mothers presented with a higher degree of symptoms, this study demonstrates that childbirth trauma affects both mothers and fathers. Worth noting is that fathers generally tend to minimize their needs and underreport their own problematic symptoms (Schobinger et al., 2020), suggesting the rates of PTSD symptoms in fathers is likely more prevalent than the results indicate.

Common themes reported among men are feeling unprepared, helpless, uncertain about their role, and unsupported (Etheridge & Slade, 2017; Inglis et al., 2016). Fathers report feeling unprepared for potential birthing difficulties, especially when they occurred suddenly, and helpless in witnessing their partner's pain or when not knowing what was happening to the mother or the baby. Fathers' feelings of helplessness are exacerbated when they are physically separated from the mother or baby without any communication (Etheridge & Slade, 2017; Inglis et al., 2016). Fathers largely report feeling excluded during the birthing process and postbirth. After witnessing traumatic childbirth, fathers report not being offered counseling or other sources of support. Instead, fathers felt obligated to be "strong" (Daniels et al., 2020, p. 6) and "brave" (Inglis et al., 2016, p. 129) for their partners.

The impact of childbirth trauma on women is well-researched. Studies indicate PTSD related to childbirth trauma can negatively impact the mother, couple relationship, and the child (e.g., a baby's sleep and development) (Schobinger et al., 2020). Limited research available on fathers and childbirth trauma shows that fathers

also report being greatly impacted, and both their relationship with their partner and child suffered (Etheridge & Slade, 2017; Daniels et al., 2020; Inglis et al., 2016). Men with a previous history of depression may be especially vulnerable to developing symptoms consistent with PTSD (Etheridge & Slade, 2017). Some fathers reported feeling physically and emotionally distant from their child (Daniels et al., 2020), describing themselves as "zoned out" and "uneasy" (Etheridge & Slade, 2017, p. 10). Many fathers in multiple studies reported relationship difficulties related to traumatic childbirth (Daniels et al., 2020; Etheridge & Slade, 2017; Schobinger et al., 2020). Poor parent relationships are well known to adversely impact family dynamics, further jeopardizing children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a prevalent problem worldwide and is highly correlated with psychological distress in adults. Approximately 20% of women and 5–10% of men report experiences of sexual abuse as children (Wark & Vis, 2016). CSA often goes unreported, and in reality, the rate of CSA is likely much higher. Many studies have correlated CSA with psychological distress with little difference in the way women and men are impacted (Wark & Vis, 2016). Long-term life effects of CSA for men include impaired masculine identity, confused sexuality, relationship difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, fears relating to perpetration, and substance abuse (O'Leary et al., 2016).

Themes across several studies have emerged related to the experiences of CSA and fatherhood. Men tend to view fatherhood either as an opportunity to heal and change from the context of their family of origin and their experiences with sexual and physical abuse or believe they will inevitably continue dysfunctional and harmful parenting styles (Wark & Vis, 2016).

Victim-to-Offender Discourse

Male survivors of sexual abuse often fear perpetrating. Sex offenders are three times more likely to have experienced CSA, two times as likely to

have experienced physical abuse, 13 times more likely to be raised in a home with verbal abuse, and four times more likely to have experienced emotional neglect (Levenson et al., 2014). Several researchers have tried to understand the factors that lead to CSA. While there is a widespread belief that male survivors of CSA are more likely to perpetrate, research findings vary. Some studies have found a strong link between being a victim of CSA and a perpetrator (Glasser et al., 2001), while others suggest that although perpetrators of CSA are also often victims of CSA, most victims do not move on to become perpetrators (Hanson & Slater, 1988). Factors that may increase the risk that male victims of CSA will go on to commit assault include the severity of the sexual abuse, perception of the sexual abuse experienced, limited emotional and social support, maltreatment, and lack of parental supervision (Craissati et al., 2002; Glasser et al., 2001; Lambie et al., 2002; Romano & De Luca, 1996).

Fathers who report fear of perpetrating report symptoms similar to postpartum depression and experience difficulty with physical contact, displays of affection, and emotional distance (Wark & Vis, 2016). Additionally, fathers who fear the victim-to-offender discourse worry that they will inappropriately cause arousal in themselves or their children, subsequently leading to fathers spending less time with their children, especially when alone (Wark & Vis, 2016). Thus, fathers may avoid close-contact activities, such as grooming and playing games (Wark & Vis, 2016).

Substance Abuse

Substance use disorder (SUD) is defined as recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs that cause clinically significant impairment in functioning (APA, 2013) and frequently co-occurs with other mental health diagnoses. Studies have evidenced SUD to co-occur specifically with PTSD, with studies estimating PTSD in adults with SUD to be 33–50% (Mills et al., 2006; Stover et al., 2012). Mills et al. (2006) completed a large-scale study and found a strong relationship between trauma and PTSD; individuals who experienced trauma were 95% more likely to develop a SUD than

those with no history of trauma. Substances are often used as a maladaptive trauma coping strategy (Mandavia et al., 2016).

Compared to nonfathers with PTSD symptoms, those who experienced more significant PTSD symptoms also reported greater alcohol abuse (Stover et al., 2012). Fathers often report using substances to cope with parenting stress; their parenting is often negatively impacted, resulting in overall lower parenting satisfaction and a poor parent–child relationship. Fathers specifically reported hostile and aggressive interactions, being neglectful, lower emotional responsiveness, and problematic discipline practices (Stover et al., 2012, 2018). Consequently, children of fathers who struggle with substance use are more likely to experience internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression) and externalizing behaviors (e.g., conduct disorder, substance use) that require mental health intervention (Fals-Stewart et al., 2003, 2004).

War-Related Trauma

The impact of PTSD on couple relationships in the general population is well studied compared to the impact of PTSD on parenting and parent–child relationships (Sherman et al., 2016). This phenomenon is even less studied among the military population. VA. gov (n.d.) estimates that 11–20% of the veteran military population have PTSD and 43% of the military population are parents (Sherman et al., 2016). There is little difference in parenting impact of PTSD in nonmilitary versus military parents. Both populations report lower parenting satisfaction and poorer parent–child relationships. Parents with PTSD experience higher rates of aggression, disengagement, and lack of empathy. Additionally, this population reports higher anger and irritability rates, which is linked to an increased risk of physical discipline and abuse (Sherman et al., 2016). Children of military parents with PTSD exhibit symptomology similar to children of civilian parents with PTSD, such as internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, hostility, attachment difficulties, and emotional distress (Sherman et al., 2016). For more in-depth infor-

mation on military veterans, please see chapter "Military-Connected Fathers".

Challenges

Mental health issues affect both men and women equally. Yet, it is well known that men are less likely to seek mental health treatment than women. The stigma attached to mental health treatment clashes with traditional masculine ideology, which discourages emotionality and vulnerability and encourages "the expression of aggression, power and sexual prowess; self-reliance; and stoicism" (Price-Robertson, 2012, p. 138). Research indicates that fathers consistently reported suppressing their emotions to demonstrate strength and excuse their suppressions by downplaying their role in the birthing process compared to mothers. Fathers even reported experiencing guilt for having any adverse emotional experience in their role as birthing witnesses (Etheridge & Slade, 2017; Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Though most fathers recognized emotional avoidance and suppression as an ineffective coping strategy, it did not generally influence change, and most still felt their traumatic birth experiences needed to be processed (Etheridge & Slade, 2017; Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

Sexual abuse against males is also highly stigmatized and often not acknowledged or accepted as legitimate (Price-Robertson, 2012). This is a major barrier to reporting and help-seeking, and still, men's experiences with sexual abuse and their perceptions of attached social stigma are not well understood. Research has centered on female sexual violence because the majority of sexual violence victims are disproportionately female. Research shows heterosexual men worry about being perceived as weak or vulnerable and do not want to be attached to the label of "victim," which by definition directly contradicts social beliefs regarding traditional masculine gender roles (Donne et al., 2018). Taking steps to change social perceptions surrounding sexual violence against men is critical in encouraging

men to be open about their experiences and willing to connect to mental health resources.

Adapting to parenthood is not easy. Parenthood is linked to emotional disturbance, exhaustion, sleep disturbance, and emotional reactivity (Martins, 2019). For trauma survivors, parenthood may be an especially difficult adjustment, particularly for individuals whose trauma remains unaddressed. Trauma and its impact on parenting practices as a whole have not been well researched. This is resoundingly the case for the impact of trauma on men. Future research on men and trauma is critical to understanding the impacts on fatherhood and gaining insight into programs, services, resources, and effective therapeutic modalities.

Implications

The good news is that research shows fathers are generally motivated to participate in treatment if it is made available to them (McMahon et al., 2007; Stover et al., 2012). McMahon et al. (2007) found 84% of 50 men in a substance abuse treatment program expressed interest in individual counseling for more effective fathering and 24% expressed interest in a family legal consultation. There is a clear need for parent education on a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Parenting education is not conventionally offered when couples become pregnant or after the birth of a child. While medical providers may offer educational resources to new parents, most fathers research and seek out parenting education independently. Parenting education should focus on understanding child development, how to appropriately respond to a child's needs, how to cope with the parenting challenges, and tools and strategies for providing a positive and nurturing home environment. Fathers need knowledge, resources, and support as they journey into parenthood (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

Acute intervention may be fundamental in helping men learn healthy ways of coping with parenting. However, it is normal for individuals to experience initial distress and impairment following a traumatic event, and many can process through trauma effectively without any intervention at all. Litz (2008) asserts earlier interventions should focus on less prescriptive interventions and more on assessing the risk of developing PTSD symptoms, helping individuals feel connected, validated, and safe. Earlier intervention should also focus on ensuring individuals are aware of and have access to available resources if they are needed (Litz, 2008).

Early intervention in the context of how fathers are impacted by trauma may include preventing ACEs (Lange et al., 2018) and seeking treatment at the onset of psychological symptoms that cause notable impairment in functioning. There is no one-size intervention for trauma, and several therapeutic modalities have been proven effective at treating trauma. Studies have evidenced that systemic therapeutic modalities should focus on non-pathologizing treatments and treatments that specifically challenge fathers' fears and negative views of self-surrounding parenthood (Wade et al., 1995; Wark & Vis, 2016).

Research identifies narrative therapy, relational and attachment-based modalities, cognitive therapies, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) as effective evidence-based treatments for trauma (Haiyasoso & Trepal, 2019; O'Cleirigh et al., 2019; Wade et al., 1995; Wark & Vis, 2016). For example, narrative therapy can help deconstruct societal messages related to men and CSA once treatment for acute symptoms associated with PTSD has been successfully provided (Wark & Vis, 2016). Relational and attachment-based modalities are uniquely helpful in rehabilitating attachment injuries and creating healthy connections between fathers and their children (Haiyasoso & Trepal, 2019). Cognitive therapies are popular modalities in PTSD treatments and involve learning to interrupt maladaptive negative thoughts and beliefs related to trauma to help improve daily functioning (O'Cleirigh et al., 2019). Cognitive processing therapy (CPT) is a specific type of cognitive therapy that deepens long-term adaptive coping by focusing on identifying trauma triggers and changing trauma-related appraisals (O'Cleirigh et al., 2019). Finally, EMDR is not talk therapy

but prompts clients to focus on a traumatic thought while simultaneously experiencing bilateral stimulation. This process helps to unblock the brain's natural healing processes, allowing individuals to arouse new, more favorable physiological responses to painful memories (Cuijpers et al., 2020).

The impact of childbirth trauma on men was the most limited in terms of research. Nonetheless, the available research yielded important implications. Fathers repeatedly discussed their experiences with the considerable lack of communication with healthcare professionals at all stages of the birth experience (Inglis et al., 2016). Providers should communicate with fathers regarding birth expectations, decision-making, and coping as early as possible, beginning during pregnancy and extending into postnatal check-ups. Healthcare professionals should also complete screening of fathers to determine the potential risk for developing a mental health issue so that those at greater risk are connected more directly with mental health resources (Schobinger et al., 2020).

Future Directions

There is a great need for additional research on how infertility, grief, and trauma impact fatherhood. While research on how infertility, grief, and trauma impact fathers has grown exponentially in the last decade, it still pales in comparison to available research on how these experiences impact mothers. Understanding how they impact fatherhood is increasingly important as shifts in social norms and gender roles see fathers continue to take a more active role in parenting. More research is needed on factors that mediate the negative impact which infertility, grief, and trauma has on fathers' perceptions of parenthood. Researchers should also focus on obtaining in-depth data about the various ways these factors impact fathers.

Future research should include larger sample sizes and more diverse sample characteristics. Current studies have largely focused on white males and present fatherhood as a homogeneous

experience. Race, ethnicity, culture, class, and sexual orientation may greatly influence men's perceptions of infertility, grief, and trauma as they relate to fatherhood. Identifying similarities and differences in parenting challenges based on the type of trauma experienced may also provide greater understanding and insight into potential treatment modalities and interventions.

Research is clear about the benefits of having fathers involved in raising children. Couple relationships are stronger when fathers are actively involved in child-rearing and children benefit socially, cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally (Bernier et al., 2017; Bocknek et al., 2014; Glazier et al., 2004). As such, it is vital that society does all it can to remove barriers or hindrances to paternal involvement. Infertility, grief, and trauma are three potential barriers to paternal involvement and, as such, are worthy of greater research in evaluating how these obstacles can be overcome or navigated and how men can receive support while working through them.

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Physical Health and Fatherhood

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Fatherhood and Physical Health

Fatherhood is an important transition in the lives of men who experience it. Fatherhood is also related to physical health, beginning before conception of a child and lasting through the rest of a father's life. The focus of this study is the intersection of fatherhood with physical health. In this chapter, I review how health is related to male fertility, how health behaviors change as a person becomes a father, and areas for future development in the field of fatherhood and health.

Health and Fertility

Health is linked to fatherhood even before conception. While some health issues (e.g., diabetes mellitus) may impact fertility and reduce the opportunity for men to become fathers, others (e.g., substance use disorders) may increase the risk for unplanned pregnancy. The vast majority of work in perinatal health focuses on the health of the mother. However, men's preconception health improves health outcomes of pregnancy, improves mothers' health, and can be a venue for

increasing men's use of primary care (Kotelchuck & Lu, 2017).

Exercise, through its relationship with health, has been linked to fertility. In a study of over 400,000 men from Sweden, high levels of fitness were associated with having more children, and low levels of fitness were linked with childlessness; these associations persisted when controlling for education and income in the model (Barclay & Kolk, 2020). Relatedly, obesity negatively impacts male fertility. Over 40% of the US population is obese, and over the past two decades, the rates of obesity and severe obesity in the USA have increased rapidly (Hales et al., 2020). Obesity rates among men and women are about the same in the USA, though sex differences exist within some groups. Obesity decreases sex hormone production, resulting in lower testosterone and hypogonadism (Chambers & Anderson, 2015; Palmer et al., 2012). Further, epigenetic research suggests that obesity may promote the inheritance of low sperm quality among offspring, compounding the effect of the health risk of obesity intergenerationally. However, impairments in fertility due to obesity are largely reversible with changes in diet and exercise (Chambers & Anderson, 2015). Relatedly, diabetes, both type I and type II, may also impact male fertility (Ding et al., 2015). Also relatedly, a wide range of medications may impair fertility, including calcium channel block-

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ers that are used to treat hypertension and heart failure (Brezina et al., 2012).

Smoking impairs fertility due to inducing poor sperm quality, and this effect appears to be dose-dependent, with more smoking causing greater reductions in sperm quality. In one study of 130 Indian men, half of the heavy smokers had below 5% motility in sperm cells (compared to 19% of light smokers) and 65% of heavy smokers had below 9% normal sperm (compared to 42% of light smokers) (Nadeem et al., 2012). Thus, smoking can reduce fertility and decrease men's likelihood of becoming fathers through conception. Similarly, alcohol use is linked with lower sperm count and quality (Li et al., 2011). Although some of this effect is due to the link between alcohol use and obesity (Cummings et al., 2020), alcohol also appears to have unique detrimental effects on fertility (Sansone et al., 2018).

Drug use impairs fertility as well (Sansone et al., 2018). THC, the active chemical component of marijuana, is linked with decreased testosterone levels and low sperm count at chronic use levels (Kolodny et al., 1974). Chronic use of opioids is also linked with hypogonadism and low testosterone (Abs et al., 2000; Daniell, 2002). This effect does not appear to be present for all opioids; the use of buprenorphine in the treatment of opioid use disorder may in fact increase testosterone (Bliesener et al., 2005). Cocaine use also appears to be linked to low sperm count (Bracken et al., 1990). Use of anabolic-androgenic steroids can inhibit natural testosterone production, leading to hypogonadism while administering steroids and for some period of time after use is ceased (Menon, 2003). However, other drugs can be administered during anabolic-androgenic steroid use to resume natural testosterone production and reverse hypogonadism (Damber et al., 1989; Gill, 1998). Nevertheless, the use of illicit substances, especially at high levels, appears to impair fertility.

Men's exposure to some chemical and physical agents can promote infertility, risk for miscarriage, and physical and mental developmental problems in children. Many of these exposures are linked to occupational settings. Such agents include metals (such as lead or chromium), pesticides, chemical solvents (such as those used in paints, dye, and thinners), hydrocarbons, and estrogens (used to manufacture birth control pills). Non-chemical agents can also impair fertility, including ionizing radiation (such as would be present in nuclear accident cleanup or waste disposal) and heat (such as during summer farm work or while on military deployment in hot regions). These exposures disproportionately affect men who are in occupations such as construction welding, farm work including migrant farm work, manufacturing, and military service. Further, many workers encounter multiple forms of potentially damaging chemical or physical exposures in working a single job, increasing the risk for infertility, miscarriage, or developmental problems in their children. Also, these exposures interact with other psychological factors, such as stress from poor job conditions, to further exacerbate the problem (Mehrpour et al., 2014; Sheiner et al., 2003). It is a challenge to quantify the risk for fertility from these exposures, as it can be difficult to measure the specific degree and duration of exposure and because many workers will be exposed to more than one form of toxin.

These multiple influences of health on fertility indicate that a focus on men's health as fathers must begin even before the conception of a child. Thus, lifespan-orientated interventions that begin well before fatherhood may be useful to promote the overall health of fathers and all men. After men discover they are to become fathers, there is evidence for positive changes in many health behaviors.

General Health Orientation and Fatherhood

Many men rate fatherhood as a time of important transitions with regard to health behaviors and report changes in those behaviors. At the same time, men are often without a clear plan or guide for such changes. In a study of 573 men from the UK, under half (47%) had read material on pregnancy when their partners were pregnant. Although planning was linked with reducing

smoking, reducing alcohol intake, and healthier eating habits, more than half of men (57%) took no actions to improve their health (Shawe et al., 2019).

Other work has indicated that general orientation toward health improves after the birth of a child. In a qualitative study of 10 Zulu fathers from South Africa, men identified that being healthy was a characteristic of a good father. In contrast, "bad" father behaviors put the health of the father and the family at risk, most notably by alcohol use and sexual promiscuity (including the risk of contracting and then transmitting HIV to one's family). Some men identified that traditional Zulu fatherhood involved supporting the family while at the same time having distance from children, or even instilling fear in one's own family; this archetype was identified as generally positive but fraught with challenges, including children's fear of talking to their father. Men described their own health as an asset to fatherhood and identified proactive health screenings as fitting with the "good father" ideal. Men described fatherhood as transformative with regard to health behaviors when they had engaged previously in unhealthy behaviors, prior to being fathers (Hosegood et al., 2016). In another study of 31 US fathers, participants noted increases in positive health behaviors, including improvements in diet and exercise, reduced alcohol use, and reduced engagement in risky behaviors, following the birth of their child (Garfield et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, such findings are not universal. Using data from over 3800 US men aged 15–21, adolescent fatherhood was linked to decreased odds of completing a routine physical. Fathers who attended their child's medical appointments also were not any more likely to complete a physical themselves (Boykin et al., 2021). Important differences may be present in the health impact of fatherhood by virtue of timing and maturation among fathers, and important differences between cultures and individuals may play into these observed differences in general health orientation among fathers. Age and related factors (e.g., personal financial stability and emotional maturation) may be moderators of the relationship between fatherhood and health behaviors.

Physical Activity and Fatherhood

Exercise improves physical and mental health. In terms of physical health, exercise can reduce the risk for heart disease, the leading cause of death for men (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Exercise has also been demonstrated to be beneficial for mental health, demonstrating efficacy equivalent to medication and therapy for many conditions (Morres et al., 2019). However, fathers spend less time than non-fathers engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (Pot & Keizer, 2016). This analysis indicated that the decline in physical activity for fathers is most pronounced when children are young, though some studies in the analysis found no relation between the age of children and physical activity among fathers. Research using a larger national longitudinal sample indicated that fatherhood increases the risk for weight gain and decreases self-reported health status (but also reduces alcohol use) (Torche & Rauf, 2021).

In a US national longitudinal study, body mass index (BMI) increased with age for fathers, regardless of whether or not they live with their children. On the other hand, BMI declined for men who were not fathers. Fathers who lived with their children, though, evidenced a trajectory for increasing BMI that started years before their children were born, again demonstrating the value of interventions related to fatherhood health even before men become fathers. For fathers who did not live with their children, there was a weak reduction in BMI before the birth of the child that reversed (i.e., to increase) following the birth of their child (Garfield et al., 2016).

Together, the increase in BMI and decrease in physical activity among fathers do not reflect the extant research on heart attacks. In a study of over 100,000 US men aged 50–71, childless men had a 17% higher risk of death from a heart attack when compared with men with two or more children (men with one child were at somewhat elevated risk for death from a heart attack). Because

the authors included only married men in their analytic sample, the absence of reproductive opportunities could not have accounted for the entire effect. The authors posited that chronic health conditions that impacted fertility may also impact the occurrence of heart attacks (Eisenberg et al., 2011).

While many programs are aimed to increase the physical health and activity levels of mothers (Develin & Currie, 2000; Norman et al., 2010), similar programs for fathers are underdeveloped. Given the links between fatherhood and elevated BMI and inactivity, developing effective interventions for fathers to increase their activity level is critical. Such activities could be constructed to involve their children; research supports that early childhood involvement in physical activity sets a trajectory for lifelong health (Rovio et al., 2018).

Testosterone Levels and Fatherhood

Research has consistently indicated that men who are fathers have lower levels of testosterone than men who are not fathers. In a meta-analysis of 28 related effects, men who were fathers demonstrated a small but consistently lower level of testosterone compared to men who were not fathers (r = 0.189) (Grebe et al., 2019). Longitudinal research has supported that high testosterone is associated with having a child and that after a child is born, testosterone levels decline (Gettler et al., 2011). The reason for this consistent difference has been hypothesized to be related to mating behaviors, called the Challenge hypothesis (Wingfield et al., 1990). That is, prior to fatherhood, many men invest in mating activities, find new mating opportunities, and encounter challenges from other males—all related to increased testosterone. After having children, the emphasis switches to care and support for offspring, and the decrease in the occurrence of new mating opportunities and challenges from other males results in fewer surges in testosterone. This theory was primarily investigated among birds (Hegner & Wingfield, 1987), then fish (Hirschenhauser & Oliveira, 2006), and some

mammals (Nunes et al., 2001) and has been supported in humans but has not been found to be universal; in one study, testosterone was higher among army veteran fathers aged 30–35 (Mazur, 2014). In addition, the effect was not replicated in a study of gay men, comparing fathers and non-fathers (Burke & Bribiescas, 2018). However, a substantial portion of that sample was non-monogamous, potentially nullifying the theoretical reason for the drop in testosterone after fatherhood.

Reduced testosterone is linked to several health-related concerns. These concerns include increased fat mass and decreased muscle density, potentially related to the relationship between fatherhood and obesity and physical activity described above. Reduced testosterone is treatable through bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, which includes the administration of exogenous testosterone. The doses of testosterone administered for hormone replacement therapy are not akin to those used in sports doping (which are many times higher than those administered for hormone replacement therapy). Use of hormone replacement therapy among older men is linked with improvements in physical health and mood and involves few side effects (Chrysant & Chrysant, 2018), though some studies have found elevations in risk for cardiac conditions or stroke (Anderson et al., 2016). The challenge hypothesis helps to explain a decrease in testosterone among men once they become fathers from a mating perspective. Future research may explore fluctuations in men's testosterone; for example, might testosterone increase among fathers who assume more protector and provider roles with their family.

Smoking and Fatherhood

Most literature on the health effects of smoking on children has focused on mothers. Yet, secondhand smoke may cause problems for children both in utero (when the mother is exposed to secondhand smoke) and after birth (when the child is exposed to secondhand smoke). Fathers' smoking is linked with low birth weight, illness in

infants and children, and sudden infant death syndrome (Venners et al., 2001). Further, when men with women partners do not cease smoking during their partner's pregnancy, smoking cessation among women during and after pregnancy declines (Bottorff et al., 2006). Fathers who smoke have identified that they are the targets of specific stigma surrounding smoking, with the stigma focused around smoking as dangerous and irresponsible to family care (e.g., due to the cost of cigarettes) (Greaves et al., 2010).

One qualitative study of 20 men with newborn children indicated that the men saw smoking as masculine, that they saw smoking as promoting their identity as a "family man" due to their perception that smoking helped them to remain emotionally stable, feeling a loss of freedom if they quit smoking, and resisting smoking cessation. Some men, though, did note that they constructed their own smoking reduction or cessation in terms of helping their partner to quit smoking (Bottorff et al., 2006). Another qualitative study of 20 new and expecting fathers indicated that men resented what they saw as attacks on their autonomy and challenges to their freedom; they also described contempt from their partners when the fathers did not stop smoking, despite their partners' encouragement for cessation (Kwon et al., 2015).

In contrast, among a sample of 22 Chinese Canadian fathers, men reported ceasing or reducing smoking during their partner's pregnancy. In this sample, men reported that their ideals of masculinity as fathers were the most important reason to quit smoking or stop smoking in the home. The men reported forbidding anyone else from smoking in the home, as well. To facilitate smoking cessation, they also cited Canadian norms against smoking indoors, the cost of cigarettes, and the importance of their own health as fathers. However, men who were light smokers (i.e., fewer than 10 cigarettes per day) saw less need to quit, and men also linked stress in their lives to reluctance to quit smoking. These men saw quitting smoking as a function of decisiveness and willpower and saw cessation aides as incompatible with Chinese culture (Mao et al., 2015).

In a sample of 87 Native American fathers, substance use was linked to lower involvement in their children's lives. Of note, substance use was exceptionally elevated in this sample. Over half the sample smoked presently; in addition, lifetime methamphetamine use was 34%, and lifetime cocaine use was 31%. The men in the sample also reported high rates of the absence of a father in their own lives, with only roughly half (53%) reporting that their father was involved in their lives as a child (Neault et al., 2012).

In terms of narrating reasons for quitting smoking as fathers, a qualitative study of 20 Canadian men indicated that men developed four narratives regarding quitting smoking. First, men expressed the belief that smoking should be quit "cold turkey" and with no assistance; this often resulted in resuming smoking, though some men reported that being a father helped them to maintain cessation. Second, men described a planned reduction in smoking. Many men used a baby's due date as the goal for a specific reduction in smoking and had thought-out plans for systematic reduction. These plans rarely involved consultation with health care professionals, and participants were challenged by experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Third, men reported that having a baby helped them quit smoking. The men cited a desire to fulfill a role of a responsible father, a desire to maintain their health for the sake of their child, and a desire to avoid setting a bad example for their child to start smoking. Finally, men reported a reduction in smoking due to conflict with their partner that was created by smoking (Bottorff et al., 2009). In sum, the men reported both unrealistic or maladaptive (e.g., that quitting should be cold turkey and accomplished without assistance) and realistic or adaptive (e.g., planned reductions and attention to the health of their child) reactions to smoking as new fathers.

In a qualitative and program development study of smoking cessation for Indigenous Canadian men, community key stakeholders (e.g., elders) identified the need to frame such an intervention within Canadian Indigenous Peoples cultures. This framing included the use

of Indigenous symbols (e.g., the medicine wheel) and practices (e.g., drumming), respect for the traditional use of tobacco, and use of family and collectively known role models. At the same time, some informants believed that making the program too stocked with Indigenous imagery and content would discourage some Indigenous fathers from attending. The participants in the program development study provided numerous suggestions with regard to optimizing the program for fathers, including focusing on the role of fathers as protectors of their families, supporting intergenerational activity with fathers and grandfathers, and learning from community elders about the importance of fatherhood to the community (Bottorff et al., 2019). This and similar work indicate the importance of cultural specificity in smoking cessation interventions.

Alcohol Use

As with smoking, fatherhood has been linked to reductions in alcohol use, using national longitudinal data from the USA (Torche & Rauf, 2021). Yet, problem drinking remains a health risk factor for many fathers. In a study of 309 Latino fathers from the USA, problem drinking was linked positively with traditional machismo and father–child conflict and negatively with identity as a father (Mogro-Wilson & Cifuentes Jr, 2020).

Alcohol use is also linked with interpersonal relationship violence (Foran & O'Leary, 2008). In a study of the treatment of men with co-occurring substance use and interpersonal violence perpetration, fatherhood was linked to lower violence perpetration, but no difference in alcohol use as compared to non-fathers. However, a manualized, cognitive behavior therapy-based substance use and domestic violence intervention, compared to 12-step facilitation, was more effective in reducing interpersonal violence and alcohol use for non-fathers. This weaker effect for men suggests the need for more effective father-focused interventions (Smith Stover et al., 2011).

Substance Use

Although substance use can impair fertility in the long term, men who use substances do have children. In particular, adolescents who have not been using substances for long enough to induce substantial insults to their reproductive capacity may be at increased risk for unplanned fatherhood (Sipsma et al., 2010). Other work has indicated that exposure to drugs and more permissive attitudes about drug use, even without actual drug use, was associated with adolescent fatherhood (Stouthamer-Loeber & Wei, 1998).

When substance use among fathers is present, it is linked with myriad negative outcomes. Substance-using fathers demonstrate more aggressive parenting, lower warmth, and child maltreatment, among other problems (Eiden et al., 2009; Foran & O'Leary, 2008; Stover et al., 2013). However, demonstrating the potential positive impact of fatherhood on health behaviors, substance use does tend to decline when men discover that they are going to be fathers. In a longitudinal study of justice-involved youth, the use of hard drugs dropped by 29% and the use of marijuana dropped by 23% among adolescents who became fathers compared to those who did not become fathers (Landers et al., 2015). Feelings of responsibility for a new child and a desire to provide a stable life for that child may be important factors influencing substance use cessation. Future work may address how related factors, such as investment in care for the child and investment in a parenting relationship with the mother, may influence the relationship between fatherhood and substance use cessation.

Fatherhood has also been investigated as it relates to recovery from substance use. In recovery programs for women, motherhood is a regular focus of programming (Niccols et al., 2012). Yet, little work has examined fatherhood in the context of recovery, despite estimates that half of the men in recovery programs are fathers (Rubenstein & Stover, 2016; Stover et al., 2013). Addressing the role of fatherhood has been posited to be important to enhancing men's substance use recovery (Williams, 2014), and pilot studies of programs that incorporate fatherhood

into recovery programs have demonstrated success and have been rated as useful by participants (Stover et al., 2018).

Debates and Challenges

Numerous debates still exist within the literature on fatherhood and health. Although the effects discovered thus far in research point toward fatherhood as a positive influence on many health behaviors, fatherhood is not universally linked with positive changes in health behaviors. Many fathers continue to engage in health risk behaviors that can put themselves and their families at risk. The specific mediators and moderators of the links between fatherhood and behavioral health, including ones that are unique to specific groups and health behaviors, must be more fully explored.

Numerous challenges also exist within the literature on fatherhood and health. Although this topic is relatively new, it is already characterized by a diversity of methodological approaches and a focus on marginalized groups of men.

The specific nature and impact of exposure to chemical and physical agents as it relates to fertility and fatherhood are understudied. This topic lies at an intersection of medical health, socioeconomic status, and fatherhood. In addition, exposure may also cause developmental issues among children. Further work in this area must provide a transdisciplinary approach to better understand the implications for personal and family health related to exposure to harmful chemical and physical agents.

The impact of divorce on fathers' health is unclear and needs further investigation (Bartlett, 2004). Relatedly, the impact of diverse family structures on health is not well understood. The overwhelming majority of research on fatherhood and health is focused on men who become fathers through sexual intercourse with their wives. The impact of family structures and methods of family formation, such as blended families, adoption, surrogacy, and other related factors, is largely unexplored.

Relatedly, nearly all work has focused on the experiences of cisgender (presumed) heterosexual men having children with cisgender (presumed) heterosexual women. Work is needed to navigate fatherhood and health for trans men, same-sex couples, and others.

The interaction between social and cultural factors, such as racism, may also be explored. Racism can impact interaction with health care for fathers from marginalized groups (Williams et al., 2012), potentially weakening the beneficial aspects of fatherhood.

Location of work also impacts the framing of research. Most research on behaviors such as smoking is done in the USA, UK, and Canada. In these countries, smoking is relatively less prevalent. More work must be conducted on the relationship between the construction of fatherhood and smoking behaviors in countries where smoking is more common, such as Greece, Russia, and Indonesia.

Practical Implications

Extant work on fatherhood and health has numerous implications for clinical work with men. As the transition to fatherhood is often seen as a turning point with regard to health behaviors, there is an opportunity to address potential changes in such behaviors among men who plan to be fathers and who are expectant fathers. Interventions that occur well before the birth of a child can be useful for developing habits that persist after the child is born (Bottorff et al., 2006). For example, interventions that begin in school have had success in promoting healthy masculinities (Namy et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2021).

Following the birth of a child, clinical interventions aimed to maintain physical activity and avoid weight gain may be useful. Such programs have already been developed with mothers and may be translated to improve the health of men with young children. Interventions to improve fathers' health may also use systems aside from traditional counseling. For example, online peer support has demonstrated usefulness (Fletcher &

StGeorge, 2011) and may be more accessible than traditional forms of in-person counseling.

The construction of fatherhood is complex, and relations to health behaviors as also complicated. Transdisciplinary approaches are needed to fully develop appropriate theoretical models of health that include individual, family, community, and cultural contexts. (Garfield et al., 2006). Further, as mentioned, attention to more diverse forms of family composition and ways of having children is needed (Garfield et al., 2006).

Opportunities

Myriad opportunities exist to enhance our knowledge of fatherhood and how it relates to health behaviors. Despite the nascent nature of research in this area, extant work is already characterized by a diverse range of methodologies and transdisciplinary collaboration. Further, the value of work on fatherhood has been recognized by funding agencies (Parent et al., 2018), allowing research on this topic access to the resources that come with funding. Work is already addressing culturally-adaptive and context-sensitive interventions for health behaviors such as smoking among Indigenous fathers and incorporating fatherhood into substance recovery programs.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the methodological diversity present in the available literature, many areas for further work remain. As mentioned above, research focuses almost exclusively on other-sex couples who have children via sexual intercourse. A need exists to understand how fatherhood is defined in other contexts, such as blended families and same-sex parents, and relate these family configurations to health behaviors. There is very strong promise in the application of transdisciplinary approaches to this area, including biological, behavioral, psychological, and cultural lenses that can inform and compliment each other.

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Intersectionality Theory and Fatherhood

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Intersectionality has emerged as a critical theory essential to understanding personal, relational, and social interactions (Few-Demo, 2014). As fatherhood is a personal, relational, and social experience, intersectionality theory can divulge the complexities of fatherhood through research and practice with fathers. In 1998, Collins wrote how the traditional family ideal, the Standard North American Family (SNAF; Smith, 1993), represented a gendered system that is situated within US ideologies and social constructions of race and nation. The SNAF gendered ideals of family roles align with men as head of the household, provider, and protector and women as the keeper of the household, nurturer, and caregiver (Kaplan & Knoll, 2019). Moreover, SNAF privileges the White, middle-class, heterosexual, married family (Coontz, 2016). Historically, the empirical study of families, parenting, and specifically fathering are normed with samples representing the SNAF ideological family form (Adamsons & Buehler, 2007). Collins (1998) argued that to understand families and family practices, researchers and practitioners must incorporate an intersectional analysis to understand power and hierarchies within families, to identify how families can be the place that reifies power structures and can break down and challenge existing hierarchies. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that highlights the examination of multiple dimensions of identities and social locations and how they intersect with elements of power and privilege on the individual and societal level (Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1991; Few-Demo, 2014).

Theories are not endpoints but a lens to view a phenomenon that is continually evolving and changing so as to explain processes (Bengtson et al., 2005). With knowledge of the processes of fathering, developing, and expanding, this lends scholars to look more closely at theory to understand the complexity of these changes. Intersectionality is a grassroots theory that has been interpreted and applied in multiple disciplines and structures (Collins, 2015). To preface how intersectionality theory applies to the study of men and fatherhood, we must draw upon the history of intersectionality that is centered on Black women with an emphasis on inequality and social justice. In 2009, Cole (2009) underscored a need to integrate intersectionality into the study of psychology, and more recently, Few-Demo (2014) reinforced the necessity to use an intersectional lens in family science. These scholars posited that we must acknowledge the study of

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how race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and a multitude of other identities interact with structures of power to construct distinct experiences and outcomes (e.g., personal, social, and political) for families and communities (Few-Demo, 2014). An intersectional lens can provide an overarching framework for analyzing relationships, behaviors, and family processes (Few-Demo, 2014). This approach also encourages researchers to explore within-group diversity at many levels of interlocking interactions simultaneously and variability in how groups ascribe meaning to social categories.

Theoretical emphasis has been placed on the need to employ an intersectional lens to understand fatherhood that accounts for complexities within individual, relational, and societal factors (Palkovitz & Hull, 2018). Yet, the fathering literature has been limited in applying intersectionality to research and practice. In this chapter, we first provide the history of intersectionality and the background of the use of intersectionality as a theory used in psychology, sociology, and family science. We then provide a summary of how intersectionality has been applied to fatherhood. We end the chapter with implications for future research and practice in applying an intersectional theoretical lens to work with fathers.

Foundations of Intersectionality Theory

Kimberly Crenshaw (1991) is well-known for coining the term intersectionality. Still, intersectionality has been present in critical studies for many years. Intersectionality grew out of the praxis and theoretical frameworks of feminist, black feminist, and critical race theories (Collins & Blige, 2016). Building from these theories and movements, the theory of intersectionality has developed as a paradigm (i.e., propositions, methods of analysis, system of belief) and a perspective or lens (i.e., approach) that shifts a focus from specific identities and inequality associated with these identities, to a process approach that attends to the complexities of the intersection of multiple social categories and how they are

socially located with relation to different structures of privileges and oppressions (Crenshaw 1991; Hulko, 2009). To fully understand intersectionality theory, it is essential to understand the origins of intersectionality, how it has developed over the years in research, and how it has been applied to examining the experiences of men as fathers.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is foundational in that it encourages the critical analysis of identity, context, social location, and historical time. The social justice focus of feminist theory scrutinizes identities emphasizing marginalization and empowerment (Allen, 2016). Specifically, feminist theory is grounded in the inequalities associated with gender considering the analysis of power differentials. Gender is considered as performance, which exists in a system of inequality situated in historical and social institutions (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020). Multiple waves of feminism and different variations of feminist theory have contributed to a continual critique of power to emphasize empowerment (Allen, 2016; Allen & Jaramillo-Sierra, 2015). Thus, feminism is a fluid concept that has experienced revisions due to the unveiling of different information and perspectives (Few-Demo et al., 2014).

Black Feminist Theory

One form of feminism, black feminism, places an emphasis on power and knowledge, with the foundational focus on oppression based on race, class, nation, and gender (Collins, 2000). Black feminist theory promotes consciousness, empowerment, and social justice, centering on the experiences of Black women at the center of analysis with a need for an intersectional focus on culture and social structures (Collins, 2000). A prominent proposition of Black feminist theory is the challenge of hegemonic beliefs situated within western patriarchy, highlighting the exploitation and experiences of oppression that Black women

have experienced (Collins, 2000). Hegemonic beliefs and ideals reinforce power structures. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the qualities defined as *manly* that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Paechter, 2018). In sum, Black feminism places Black women at the center and is committed to the empowerment of Black women to challenge misrepresentations and stereotypes aligned with hegemonic ideals and norms (Collins, 1991; Few, 2007).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) centers on the examination of social inequalities within the interaction of racial minority groups and social institutions (Few, 2007). CRT states that social institutions within the United States create and reproduce racism that is manifested through regulations, laws, and procedures that result in differential outcomes based on one's race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Building on critical legal studies and radical feminism, CRT began in the early 1970s when a group of individuals noticed the progress made during the Civil Rights Era was heading back in the wrong direction. CRT encompasses many important concepts: (a) race is a social construct, (b) race and racism must be understood through an intersectional lens, (c) color blindness must be challenged and not accepted as a dominant ideology, (d) experimental knowledge from people of color is integral when exploring and analyzing racial oppression, and (e) commitment to social justice and transformation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Socialized systems in family processes are a basis of a cultural standpoint of research (Few, 2007). Regarding men, CRT encompasses the intersecting identities of one's marginalized race with being male and a father. Fathers' positionality influences their experiences within socialized systems, how they navigate their spaces and how they see themselves in society as both a man and a father.

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory builds upon foundational elements of feminist, black feminist, and intersectionality theory. Intersectionality theory provides the framework to understand multiple identities and categories and their interactions with individuals, relationships, and social institutions (Collins, 2000). Categories are socially constructed through discourses and social contexts embedded in systems of power (McCall, 2005). Intersectionality is multiplicative in nature and must consider how power and privilege are negotiated at the individual, relational, and societal levels at the intersection of multiple identities, representing a matrix of interactions (Greenwood, 2008). Intersectionality brings an understanding of the complexity of interactions between social categories and social institutions to the forefront. Understanding systemic and institutional power is key to understanding how multiple identities can experience privilege and oppression within systems and institutions such as education, justice, and family systems.

Implementing intersectionality theory in the study of men as fathers is critical in moving forward empirical knowledge, policy, and practical implications toward understanding the nuances and complexities of fathering for all fathers. Intersectionality acts as a theoretical framework and methodology in the examination of identities, categories, and dimensions of social systems and institutions (Cho et al., 2013). The identities a father holds can vary and range drastically. The more constructed version of intersectionality implies that identity categories are unstable and fluid. Many theorists, when looking at intersectionality through the process-centered model, examine how individuals are "recruited" to categories, but they have the choice to choose their positions to be able to inhabit these locations (Cho et al., 2013). In addition, intersectionality highlights the conflicting dimensions of social categories as one can experience both privilege and oppression associated with social categories and their social location (Letique, 2019).

Intersectionality moves the examination of identities beyond the binary categories (Shields,

2008). In parenting research, emphasis is largely placed on the binary of gender of the parent. Yet, fathers hold a multitude of identities besides gender. Social categories, the identities that individuals identify with, occur within a social stratification of group categories, with one category impacting the power and privilege associated with another category. Individuals and groups negotiate systems of power with the understanding that there can be conflict among identities, relationships, and social structures contributing to the complexities of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Fathers can experience privileges as they interact with social structures and institutions and, at the same time, experience oppression within that structure and institution due to the interactions within the intersectional matrix. Intersectionality theory provides the framework to understand fathering within the social category of gender and the intersection with other social categories.

The intersectionality framework, originally highlighting the disparities regarding Black women and Black families within the White feminist discourse, now embodies the many ways that gender intersects with other identities (Kaestle, 2016). As such, we should be intentional with applying an intersectional lens to all genders, which includes all identifying as men. It is also important to acknowledge that *men* may not have a fixed gender. The most common type of father represented in research is cis-gender and gay men (Carroll, 2018). Gender fluid individuals do not have a fixed gender, and it can alter day-to-day and needs to be recognized in intersectional research on men. More specifically, an intersectional approach could be useful in analyzing fatherhood and all that the fathering process encompasses, providing a more comprehensive view of specific fathering nuances.

With the focus on power, oppression, and privilege, intersectionality theory provides a lens to discern the complexities of differences and similarities in men's experiences as fathers (Few-Demo, 2014). Over the past 10 years, researchers have made strides to use intersectionality when engaging in fatherhood research. In the following section, we discuss current scholarship that has employed an intersectional lens to examine fatherhood, taking an in-depth look at this research as a foundation for recommendations for future theoretical, empirical, and praxis work.

Intersectionality and the Fatherhood Literature

Taking on an intersectional lens, contemporary research on fatherhood describes fatherhood as a "multifaceted, dynamic social, and cultural construction, deeply affected by class, race, and gender inequalities" (Strier & Perez-Vaisvidovsky, 2021, p. 1). An overarching critique has been that the fathering literature has been majorly based on Anglo-centered, middle-class mainstream fatherhood, thus neglecting non-hegemonic fathers and fathers on the margins. Seeing the need for a greater balance within the fathering literature to address this gap and recognizing the utilization of a critical lens to do so, researchers have taken the torch, shifting the focus from mainstream fathering to one that accounts for greater variation.

For example, Molloy and Pierro (2020) countered the hegemonic fatherhood narrative when they engaged in research on an often-overlooked marginalized population, Appalachian fathers. Appalachian fathers face multiple geographical and structural challenges specific to their intersecting positionalities of fatherhood, rurality, and culturally specific nuances relating to the Appalachian culture. Geographically, Appalachia is a rural space where structural issues stemming from economic distress are evident: addiction, mental health issues, medical conditions, unemployment, and under-employment (Burton et al., 2013). Federal and state policies further marginalize the Appalachian region by targeting welfare recipients. Molloy and Pierro (2020) understood the need to shift from an ecological framework, which focused on contextual factors that could hinder father involvement, to an intersectional framework that simultaneously takes multiple contextual factors in conjunction with how societies, institutions, and individuals interact with fathers' multiple identities. Since research provides evidence of geographical location,

structural factors, and inequalities impacting how fathers identify as such, Molloy and Pierro's (2020) study is one of few that contributes to the fathering literature through an intersectional lens. Combining intersectionality theory with symbolic interactionism, researchers conducted interviews with service providers who work alongside Appalachian families with infants to explore their viewpoints regarding engaging fathers in family strengthening programs that aid parents of infants within Appalachia and the social constructions of fathering, masculinities, and discrimination from the perspectives of service providers. Rooted in grounded theory, Molloy and Pierro (2020) produced a conceptual model showing an intersectional matrix of interactions with social institutions. These interactions illustrated how the delivery of targeted services to fathers was informed by the social constructions of masculinity and fathering, social locations of rural fathers, and knowledge and awareness of structures of power, illustrating the need to employ an intersectional matrix in work with fathers.

Shade et al. (2011) situated fatherhood within the intersecting identities of adolescence and incarcerated fathering. Justice-involved adolescent fathers are a social group who have been neglected in the fathering literature. Incarceration impacts identity development in adolescent males, primarily through the major influence of gender. Prisons and jails have been deemed hypermasculine spaces where beliefs and practices promote identity performances that uphold hegemonic masculine ideals. Shade et al. (2011) stated using an intersectional approach when exploring adolescent identity formation that can shed light on incarcerated youth who are fathers. In doing so, researchers are better able to describe the challenges incarcerated men face when examining the "fit of such identities with an identity as father" (Shade et al., 2011, p. 101). The purpose of their study was to illustrate how theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality and adolescent identity development can enhance the understanding of adolescent fatherhood and guide research and practice that focuses on the unique experiences of teenage fathering within the context of those who are justice-involved. With inter-

sectionality at the forefront, researchers developed a conceptual model of adolescent fatherhood in the context of involvement. Within this model, intersectionality and hegemonic masculinity undergird the process of adolescent identity development. Here, intersectionality acknowledges the multiple identities that adolescent fathers within the criminal justice system encompass and can account for the many incidents in which oppression can occur. Without framing through an intersectional lens, the multiple risks associated with the intersecting identities co-occurring with the criminal justice system and its influence on identity development as a father could have potentially been overlooked. Their conceptual model proposes that it is the intersection of multiple identities combined with other contextual factors in a young man's life that spill over into how, if at all, a teenage father takes on the identity and role of a father. Because of the particular identities that teenage fathers hold true, it helps navigate the teen towards making decisions best for their identities and their child's identity.

In alignment with mainstream fatherhood is the presumed heterosexual nature of fathers. Stratification within queer families has been silenced, thus restricting the theoretical advancement and understanding of queer families, particularly fathers. Shaking the table and resisting the obsolete hetero-normative narrative of fathering, Carroll (2018) utilized data from a larger study on gay fatherhood community formation to focus on the unique experiences that gay fathers on the margins face from both within and outside gay parenting communities. Gay fathers, including single, fathers of color, and gay fathers from heterosexual unions, noted their absence from mainstream images of gay fatherhood. Although fathers were resilient and were given many resources specific to their individualized needs (e.g., adoption, surrogacy services, coming out later in life after having children), this was not enough to rectify their marginality or challenges specific to their social positions. Rather than dispel their marginality, resources provided a pathway leading to greater strength and resilience, which then reinforced their well-being and that

of their families. Gay fathers of color noted their absence from public imagery altogether, which was not appreciated as they see themselves as pioneers, while single gay fathers felt that coupled gay fathers were used as the poster child of gay fatherhood, making them invisible. Gay fathers via heterosexual unions further stratified gay fatherhood, stating how they were viewed differently within their community due to their pathway to parenthood. This specific pathway to fatherhood shed light on the financial obstacles that led to their route to gay fatherhood, as surrogacy and adoption are costly and therefore inaccessible to individuals from certain social and economic statuses. Although not explicitly stated, Carroll's (2018) study allowed intersectionality to guide their work. In fact, the motivation for this study arose from the lack of research examining how race, class, and family structure restricted gay fathers' lives. Focusing on the different experiences that are faced by these men due to the intersection of their social categories promotes a more holistic view of how systems of inequalities are experienced across the matrix of intersectionality. This study highlighted the importance of an intersectional approach, recognizing that family types, such as parents of color, single parents, or queer families, are not isolated spheres but overlapping systems. As such, they should be studied within this capacity.

Heeney (2018) also paid homage to intersectionality in their study on fathers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). An intersectional analysis of how fathers of children with ASD was explored to refute binary understandings regarding these fathers. Here, gender and disability combined are not the only elements that contribute to this father–child dynamic. Henney (2018) stressed how gender essentialism perpetuates social inequalities by pitting fathers with children who have ASD against traditional family relationships and interactions. This case study of three fathers who have a child with ASD provided narratives filled with examples of the complexity of this nuanced father–child relationship, in addition to the tensions that arise for fathers, specifically. Fathers provided insight on how their fathering identity was uniquely shaped

by its interaction with having a child with ASD. Their situation allowed them to engage in parenting practices that have been withheld from other fathers. Fathers enjoyed the chance to go against the hegemonic masculine narratives by openly expressing intimacy, gentleness, sensitivity, and affection and not having to adhere to stereotypical expectations of how men should carry themselves.

On the other hand, some of these practices, such as bathing, toileting, and grooming their children, were noted as uncomfortable for fathers to engage in, as fathers had unconscious ideals about gendered and contextual nature of care. By avoiding these childcare tasks, fathers negotiate such tasks for more favorable ones or avoid them altogether. Heeney (2018) also noted that such restrictions did not result in higher levels of joy or satisfaction and did not improve their children's lives.

The fathering literature from the past decade has expanded the use of intersectionality by going beyond interpersonal and domestic locales. To further explain, the literature explores fathering using relational and locational intersectionality concurrently on a larger scale. Relational intersectionality focuses on how groups manage conflicts and inequalities grounded in cultural discourses and practices at the institutional level (Few-Demo, 2014). Locational intersectionality sheds light on social positions that are generated when multiple forms of oppression arise. Fatherhood researchers are exploring national-level gender inequalities based on intersecting axes of transactional, regional, and national issues and trajectories. Postmodern fathering literature analyzes fathers within their ascribed contexts, being conscientious of how migration, social policies, political instability, criminal justice systems, and economies, and other positionalities spill over into how they perceive fathering, do fathering, and experience paternal self-efficacy. González-Calvo (2020), Adamson and Smith (2020), and Prior and Farough (2021) are three examples in which these intersecting axes can be seen.

González-Calvo (2020) provided autobiographical narratives that allowed fathers to reflect

upon their own intersectional experiences during a health pandemic. A detailed logbook was maintained during the first 45 days of self-confinement, focusing on narratives related to intersectionalities of masculinity, fatherhood, and relationships with one's own body. Autobiographical narratives, such as these, are used to gain a greater understanding of lived experiences by pulling from aspects that one considers to be relevant, balancing between self-reflection and the social and cultural systems in which it is developed. In this way, we can come to understand how men as fathers intersect with the social location in which they are embedded. COVID-19 remains a national issue that has unintentionally politized our bodies, charging an environment of uncertainty and insecurity connected to global risks related to health and well-being. This global trend, leaving members of society to manage their own safety and health, contributes to members of society fearing the consequences of risk more than fearing the risk itself. For example, González-Calvo (2020) expressed greater concern with the *trickling effect* of his son catching COVID-19, rather than his son *actually* catching the virus.

González-Calvo's (2020) work sheds light on the privileged position that some fathers hold. In contrast, this study also confirms that privilege cannot shield one from the bodily reactions that transpired throughout the intersectional contexts of political instability and national issues stemming from the global pandemic. In other words, no fathers are exempt from marginalization and negative outcomes of some sort. These outcomes present themselves differently depending on fathers' positionality. González-Calvo (2020), and others with similar identities, were able to focus more on the silver lining of having more time to spend, as a family, and gained a greater appreciation for their wives as they were suddenly enmeshed into the realities of what domestic roles and the *second shift* truly entails. Second shift includes the unpaid labor caregivers take on in addition to their paid positions to keep the household functional (e.g., childcare, laundry, cooking, and cleaning; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). On the other hand, fathers felt fear from

the uncertainty, but their sense of masculinity resulted in them presenting themselves as strong and brave. Not wanting to create an environment of chaos or panic within the home, fathers internalized those feelings resulting in bodily reactions. The perceived risks still subconsciously elevated their stress levels, resulting in physical deterioration over time.

Although a transformative piece was not present, we cannot overlook the significance of self-reflection presented in this study. González-Calvo (2020)'s self-reflection revealed a truth that some struggle to admit: acknowledging that one only becomes concerned with *second-class bodies* when it directly impacts them. The economic instability related to this national crisis shifted older fathers into the category of second-class citizens, particularly when hospitals and first responders were instructed to preserve resources by refraining from treating COVID-positive older adults. This left older fathers in a unique position of marginalization, despite previously associated privileges.

Adamson and Smith (2020) accounted for migrant fathers' unique within-group intersectionality, noting that factors such as where they migrated from and their reason for migrating as well as social categories of identity and socioeconomic status are at the core of understanding this group, as well as the diversity of their caregiving decisions. To unpack the structural barriers that migrant fathers face and the influence on their mental health and well-being, Adamson and Smith (2020) elaborated on how these factors influence how migrant fathers decide whether to use parental leave and choices in caregiving. Barriers to accessing parental leave and flexibility within the workplace are exacerbated for migrants, as they are less likely to qualify for leave and may face discrimination at their jobs. Research shows that structural barriers at the organizational level and national policies have impacted the lives of migrant fathers. For example, Finland and Sweden provide fathers with a financial incentive when they take their full time allotted for leave (Adamson & Smith, 2020). This policy counters the barriers presented at an organizational level, which led to an increase in

migrant fathers taking leave. Even still, they are less likely to utilize the full leave.

Adamson and Smith (2020) referenced two global initiatives, The *MenCare campaign* and *Helping Dads Research Project*, to show how interactions with social institutions can impact fathers by recognizing and supporting their intersectional needs. Specifically, the campaigns shed light on the importance of supporting migrant fathers in their role and parental leave's influence on their families (For more on fathering and paternity leave, see Johansson (2011)). These initiatives are two of many that illustrate the potential for programs to resist hegemonic masculinity that is deeply embedded throughout the world by recognizing the intersecting identities that fathers hold, allowing for programs to embrace fathers at their individual standpoints.

Initiatives abroad are making strides in advocating for policy and program changes to address the needs of migrant fathers better. However, there is still a significant gap pertaining to their decision-making and behaviors around caregiving. Although the limited research specifies migrant fathers are less likely to partake in caregiving and non-English speaking refugee fathers are more likely to report psychological distress, researchers have not explored the contextual processes that result in these outcomes. It is only by understanding the intersectional process that we can truly understand the unique needs of migrant fathers and enhance our ability to serve them beneficially. The knowledge gained can inform the way we engage with migrant fathers and contribute to cultural-sound programs, services, and policies.

Prior and Faroughs's (2021) qualitative inquiry on formerly incarcerated Black men provides insight into how criminal justice systems and policies spill over into Black fathers' perceptions of parenting. Data were collected from 30 formerly incarcerated Black fathers as part of a reentry program through semi-structured interviews, of which two key themes emerged. The first theme was *fatherhood as desistance narrative*. Desistance is the process of refraining from habitual patterns of offending. Fathers emphasized being present in their children's lives, stat-

ing the desire to be present to a greater degree, both financially and physically. Fathers also shared their concerns about their children getting caught in the same cycle as them and hoping to remain physically present so their children will see them as a role model. Since fathers had been incarcerated, being present also posed additional struggles that this group of fathers had to navigate. The second theme, *strain narratives*, provides greater context to how Black fathers are positioned within society and the criminal justice system. These strain narratives illustrate how Black fathers attempt to live up to the hegemonic masculinity of fathers as economic providers. These fathers' experiences were unique in that they have to navigate the systemic barriers that limit legitimate employment opportunities from which one can support a family. Additionally, there are many other social forces outside of their control (e.g., spatial education labor mismatch, Wilson, 1997; low wage employer discrimination, Pager, 2009) that attribute to the degree to which formerly incarcerated Black fathers can adhere to the provider conceptions of fatherhood (Prior & Farough, 2021).

Overall, intersectionality helps researchers, policymakers, and practitioners better understand the complexity of social and health issues across different cohorts of a population (Adamson & Smith, 2020). Over the past decade, strides have been made to adopt this approach to understand cultural identity and masculine norms among men. Yet, the use of intersectionality within the fathering literature remains scant. Even so, the past 10 years has contributed to our knowledge of intersectionality and fatherhood by expanding research to include younger cohorts of fathers (Johansson, 2011; Shade et al., 2011), fathers who are in the LGTBQ+ communities with variation of sexual orientation and gender diversity (Carroll, 2018), and fathers on the margins, such as formerly incarcerated Black fathers (Prior & Farough, 2021), rural Appalachian fathers (Molloy & Pierro, 2020), and fathers with children who have a disability (Henney, 2018). Although limited, the fathering literature is advancing to include fathers outside of the hemogenic masculinity context and taking historical

and political contexts in which fathers are embedded into account (i.e., fathering within a global pandemic and migrant fathers).

The qualitative methodology has mainly been used in research sensitized by intersectionality, employing interviews, observations, and literature reviews to inform conceptual models and autobiographical narratives. Here, we can also see the interdisciplinary nature of fathering, as the literature presented stems from family science, nursing, social work, and sociology disciplines. All have a common goal of refuting the hegemonic masculinity narrative. However, talk of how transformation can take place is greater than the transformation happening. Critical race scholars understand the moral, political, and passionate commitment that stems from creating new knowledge about how gender operates within relationships, identity, and larger social structures. As such, power and oppression are the foundation of which critical race scholars take root. The goal of feminist scholarship and activism is to shed light on the controversiality of privilege and oppression to ignite robust strategies to alter conditions of this empowerment. In other words, "the point is to change the world, not only to study" (Stanley, 1990, p.15). Thus, reflective practice, or utilizing a reflective and critical consciousness to ensure accountability and transparency in the way we analyze other people's lives, including our own, is a prominent component of intersectionality.

Applying Intersectionality

Intersectionality is both a critical theory and a critical praxis, informing one another (Cho et al., 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Considering intersectionality as a critical theory and praxis in family science is key as gender is an identity central to family roles and dynamics. To fully understand individuals' experiences with intersectionality, all aspects of identities must be considered within a system of domination (Collins, 1990). Gender ideologies are sensitive to life events such as parenthood and are dependent upon gender and other social categories (Vespa, 2009). Moreover,

gender as performance is socially constructed and reconstructed within a system of power relations, which is context-dependent. Applying an intersectional lens to fatherhood promotes the examination of the complexity of multiple intersecting identities amongst social structures of privilege and oppression (Few-Demo, 2014; McCall, 2005). Fathers are integrated into a system of hegemonic masculinity and the power associated with hegemonic systems of patriarchy. All men, including fathers on the margins, are situated within this hegemonic patriarchal system. Utilizing an intersectional lens can illuminate the complexities of fathering, specifically for fathers on the margins, concerning their identities as they are perceived, experienced, and performed. Practice with fathers must emphasize social inequalities and processes associated with societal isms (i.e., racism, sexism, colonialism, nationalism; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Grounded in the previous scholarly literature, we discuss current theory and praxis with a lens toward future research and practice in employing intersectionality with fathers.

Future Research

The use of intersectionality in fatherhood scholarship is nascent. Employing intersectionality in research can be complex, yet social science researchers have called on the need to employ intersectionality empirically (Grabe, 2020; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Debates on how future research should employ an intersectional lens have been discussed in multiple disciplines, including health, psychology, sociology, education, and family science (Abrams et al., 2020; Choo & Free, 2010; Curtis et al., 2020). Having an interdisciplinary focus is key to encouraging discussions across disciplines, integrating epistemologies and standpoints, and enhancing critical thought into the complexities of intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).

McCall (2005) drew attention to the methodological complexities of intersectionality, suggesting three methodological approaches to examine categories. An anti-categorical approach

emphasizes a critical deconstruction of social categories. Aligning with feminist theory in deconstructing categories, this approach recognizes that categories are artificially defined and fluid (Few-Demo, 2014). With an intra-categorical approach, within-group variation is emphasized. This approach aligns more closely with Black feminist thought in revealing the complexity and variations of intersecting social categories, underlining the reality of lived experiences (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Taking an inter-categorical lens focuses on the differing experiences between social categories. Quantitative research often takes an inter-categorical approach to look at the larger structures that create and sustain inequalities.

What is often missed in research on fatherhood is the analysis of the multifaceted interlocking identities that create a complex picture of inequalities situated within social structures (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Identities are multiple, inextricable, and contingent (Greenwood, 2008). According to symbolic interactionism, identities are socially constructed, recognizing the agency and meaning-making processes that exist within a matrix of domination (Stryker, 2008). This social construction of identity is rooted in historical and relational influences and is not fixed but continually reconstructed. Identity is a social structure located in a system of stratification within institutions. Finally, identities are created and understood within a system of power structures (Greenwood, 2008). Focusing on a single axis analysis (e.g., race, gender) renders complex systems of inequality invisible by focusing primarily on the differences between identities. Intersectionality is a critical theory, rendering it a challenge for researchers when focusing on identities. As a critical theory, research must go beyond the explanation of a phenomenon toward a more nuanced understanding of how the phenomenon is experienced by uncovering the dynamics of power and investigating how inequalities are created and reproduced. Critical theory reveals underlying structures and individual agency. Using quantitative methodologies can be challenging as critical analysis of social categories cannot be examined in an additive approach to understand experiences. Intersectionality can be used as a paradigm in quantitative research to explain and situate quantitative results (Carasthathis, 2014).

Qualitative research values construction over description, rendering it open to critical inquiry (Charmaz, 2017). In scholarly discussions of how to implement research with Black families, specifically Black women, Few et al. (2003) emphasized that participants are active agents in constructing their social world; therefore, researchers must center on individuals' unique experiences and realities through qualitative research. Interviews and narratives can illuminate the dynamics of identities and how they interact with structures of power to focus on the reality of the experience and not just the phenomenon itself. Keeping the participants' experiences central to the research process promotes the discovery of processes that may be hidden, of which individuals may not be aware (Charmaz, 2014). For example, privilege is a power hierarchy rooted in division and injustice within social systems, economic systems, and history (Collins & Bilge, 2016). As individuals may not be aware of the roots of power hierarchies, qualitative research that uses multiple methods (e.g., journals, creative arts, poetry, genograms) can uncover the critical dynamics of intersectionality (Few et al., 2003). Data collection and analysis methods must go deep into the dynamics of the matrix of intersectionality. Using multiple methods of reflexivity to monitor researcher subjectivity and rigor (i.e., multiple sources of data collection, sample richness) can produce rich data that reveals complex processes and social constructions of experiences (Few et al., 2003; Roy et al., 2015).

Future research that is grounded in intersectionality will advance knowledge of the lived experiences of men as fathers. Intersectional research, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods, can provide a more detailed understanding of fathers' interactions within systems, including the family system and social structures. As identity is shaped by social and political location, research sensitized by intersectionality can emphasize the individual

interpretations of social categories. Thus, employing an intersectional lens in empirical research is key to extending current understandings of fathers on the margins (Roy & Kwon, 2007). Intersectionality is a critical theory and not a complete final framework (Collins, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Future researchers should strive to implement intersectionality with a lens toward understanding the complexity of the intersection of identities, experiences, and behaviors grounded in structures of power and privilege to promote the understanding of marginalized individuals and groups as a tool for empowerment.

Implications for Practice

Intersectionality is a critical praxis that enhances accountability, equity, and social justice initiatives (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Practicing intersectionality means critiquing and challenging norms and power relations through critical thinking, asking critical questions, and promoting solutions for empowerment. Implementing intersectionality as critical praxis requires an awareness of the power that is associated with social identity. Hegemony is the dominant group's ideals and norms that maintain power through symbols, ideas, and images of a social group. For example, the idea that man is head of the household is hegemonic and has been sustained historically in multiple social structures, such as US economic systems. To address hegemony, practitioners and policymakers must challenge the social definition of social identity and become empowered to unpack this hegemony and reconstruct their own self-definition of their social identity (Carastathis, 2014, Collins, 2015). Hegemony also fosters comparing one group to another group that is considered the norm (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Viewing diversity as a difference assumes that privileged categories such as whiteness and heterosexuality are the norm (Choo & Feree, 2010). These perspectives can promote a deficit view of identities. Many identities have been silenced or kept in the margins (e.g., multiracial, disabled person, transgender, queer, migrant). By shifting the center, bringing fathers in the margin to the

forefront of practice with an intersectional lens can focus on their voices and self-definition of their social identity, promoting the reconstruction of identities and empowerment.

A majority of parenting intervention and prevention programs are centered around mothers, reinforcing mothers as primary caregivers. Additionally, many programs are not responsive to multiple social categories and the experiences associated with these categories, such as cultural sensitivity (Molloy & Pierro, 2020). Having a one size fits all program does not account for an intersectional perspective. In a study of a parenting program for divorced and separated parents, mothers who identified as Latino were more likely to drop out of the program, yet ethnicity was not a factor for fathers (Mauricio et al., 2018). Additionally, fathers who experienced more distress were more likely to stay in the program, and mothers who had more distress dropped out of the program. Finally, fathers who had limited contact with their child dropped out of the program early. These findings highlight the need to take an intersectional perspective to prevention and intervention programs to understand the differential needs of fathers due to gender and the intersection of other social categories.

Also, it is evident that the essential father discourse still yields significant influence on fatherhood policy and the social construction of fathering (Randles, 2018). By allowing the essential father discourse to permeate through fatherhood and family strengthening programming, fathers and the greater society receive the message that fathers are peripheral rather than fundamental. Thus, scholars and practitioners alike should collectively resist this discourse and reframe it accordingly to support parental self-efficacy: shifting our focus beyond financial means and contributions. In this way, we can challenge the financial definitions of what it means to be a *good* and *responsible* father, as it tends to further marginalize certain intersections of fathers (e.g., poor fathers of color, rural fathers). For example, placing greater emphasis on fathers as breadwinners can lead to fathers being at greater risk of being separated from their children (Randles, 2018). Fatherhood

programming can be a catalyst for collective healing, social activism, and personal agency (Randles, 2018; Roy & Dyson, 2010). *DADS*, a pseudonym for a federally funded fatherhood program in the USA, for example, provides a space where fathers can gain inspiration from one another to be the nurturant fathers they had or missed while simultaneously sharing lived experiences regarding barriers (e.g., structural and emotional) to involvement (Randles, 2018). By using an intersectionality approach, we can create new and enhance existing policies and programming and reevaluate societal views on fathers, particularly those on the margins, by incorporating them into the definition of good fathering. When we allow intersectionality to guide policymakers, programming and policies can be adapted to meet the needs of fathers with different cultural values and norms.

Identities and social categories cannot be separated as they all contribute to how a person experiences their reality. Intersectionality allows for counselors and therapists to understand how the multiple influences of diverse cultural groups can influence and or contribute to the complexity of identities that a person can hold (Ecklund, 2012). This allows for an understanding of the unique complexity each father has. How a person parents or how they behave as a father has a large part to do with their identities (Choo & Ferree, 2010). Using an intersectional lens as practitioners facilitate an awareness that each person holds their own unique set of identities and experiences as they interact with social structures. Implicit assumptions should not be made about a person regarding any of their identities and instead be explored to uncover multiple points of oppression that can be affected by systems and influence how a family functions and operates (Curtis et al., 2020).

In their practices, therapists must be aware of the social inequalities that hold true within not only the client but also in themselves and how this may affect the therapeutic relationship. There has been little attention to help describe how therapists communicate to clients about their own identities and experiences that are important to the counseling relationship. Some of these may include sexual orientation, race, religious affiliation, and/or gender identity (Bennett & Clark, 2021). For example, if a father or a child came out in the LGBTQIA+ community, speaking with a therapist in the community may be beneficial. The therapist may be able to relate to and help the family through exploration and insight. In addition to these positive responses, it is important to understand that some of the identities a therapist holds may also negatively affect the therapeutic relationship. If a therapist does not have children or identifies as a woman, a father may not feel like the therapist can relate to the fathers' experiences, which can create a disconnect and make it difficult to build trust. An intersectional perspective can assist therapists in a dialogue to explore individual perspectives of their identities and how they interact with systems and structures of power. Therapists should be more intentional with helping fathers navigate through their intersectional identities and guide them through conflicts with resources available for their individualized needs. Practitioners should also be mindful of how one may privilege mothers in prevention and intervention programs (Molloy & Pierro, 2020). Engaging in professional development that pushes practitioners to participate in reflectivity and gain greater knowledge regarding intersections associated with fathering, gender, and social locations (Sicouri et al., 2018; Molloy & Pierro, 2020) could yield better-informed programming for fathers. This practice could lead to a more comprehensive view of not only fathers but also of how fathers' positionalities within society shape the way they do fathering and see themselves as fathers.

Conclusion

Intersectionality is a critical theory and a critical praxis that allows for a more nuanced understanding of the multiple identities a father may hold and the interactions of these identities within society and relationships. By taking an intersectional approach to fatherhood, we can analyze the way in which fathers surmount systems of privilege, oppression, opportunity, conflict, and

change across time and geography (Few-Demo et al., 2014). Intersectionality also explores how individuals' location in society engages them in intersecting systems of power at the micro level and relational experiences. For example, age nor gender independently could explain the process of incarcerated adolescent fathers' identity development and shifts in their interactions with their children while doing time (Shade et al., 2011). A more critical approach is warranted here. Additionally, there is a need to expand fatherhood scholarship and practice to incorporate feminist and gender-sensitive approaches. Integrating intersectionality fatherhood scholarship makes space for scholars and practitioners who spearhead this work to be at the table. Specifically, this work can lead to empowerment and transformative work with fathers.

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The Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender: Applications to Asian American Fathers

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What does it mean to be a father and what challenges do fathers face? The answers to these questions are complex, particularly for fathers of color, who face the burden of racism in their personal lives, communicating information about race and ethnicity to their children, and navigating intergenerational cultural differences (Ide et al., 2018; Liu & Chang, 2007). We argue that the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity produce unique experiences for fathers of color that differ from those of White fathers and mothers of color. We focus, in particular, on one racially minoritized group—Asian American (AA) fathers. We begin with an overview of key characteristics of AAs in the USA. We then explain how the intersectionality framework

(Crenshaw, 1989; Liu & Wong, 2018) can contribute to a more encompassing understanding of the lives of men of color generally and, more specifically, those of AA fathers. Next, we discuss three salient challenges that AA fathers encounter. Finally, we round up this chapter with a discussion of policy and practical implications to address the needs of Asian American fathers.

Overview of Asian Americans in the United States

The term *Asian Americans* (AAs) encompass a broad range of people of East, Southeast, and South Asian descent residing in the USA and is currently the fastest growing racial group in the USA. (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021), constituting 6.5% of the US population in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Several unique features characterize the US AA population. For one thing, it is an ethnically diverse group with people who trace their ancestry to more than 20 Asian countries; no single ethnic group constitutes the majority of the AA population, although ethnicities from cultures influenced by Confucianism (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Americans) comprise about half the AA population (Budiman et al., 2019). Ethnic differences among AAs also reflect huge within-group disparities in income and education. While the overall poverty rate among AAs (12.1%) is lower than that of the

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national average (15.1%), certain AA ethnic groups, such as Burmese (35.0%) and Bhutanese (33.3%), suffer from substantially higher poverty rates. For another thing, although AAs have resided in the United States for centuries, most AAs (almost 6 in 10) are immigrants (Budiman et al., 2019). Finally, although AA history is replete with multiple instances of racism against this population, anti-Asian racism has gained prominence in light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic in which AAs reported a spike in anti-Asian racist acts and violence (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Cheng et al., 2021). As we will demonstrate later in this chapter, the nature of racism encountered by AAs is also gendered, such that AA women and men experience qualitatively different types of racism (Wong & McCullough, 2021). In the following section, we elucidate the intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1989), which helps unpack the gendered racism experienced by AAs.

The Intersectionality Framework

The term *intersectionality* was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to describe Black women's discriminatory experiences that were different from those of both Black men and White women. Intersectionality is conceptualized as the ways in which multiple social identities (e.g., race and gender) intersect, reflecting systems of power, privilege, and oppression (Bowleg, 2012). Although the intersectionality framework can be applied to many diverse social identities (e.g., sexual orientation and social class), we focus, in this chapter, on the intersection of race and gender as well as of ethnicity and gender, as applied to AA fathers. Within the intersectionality framework, several conceptual models and perspectives are particularly relevant to the lives of men of color, including AA fathers.

First, the Gendered Racism Model posits that the interface of race and gender engenders experiences of discrimination for men of color that are qualitatively different from those of women of color and men from other racial groups (Essed, 1990; Liang et al., 2010; Liu & Wong, 2018). For

instance, research has uncovered distinct gender-by-race stereotypes of Asian, Black, Latinx, and Middle Eastern Americans (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013). Although stereotypes of AA women and men overlap, they are also different in some respects—AA women are perceived as exotic and sexually alluring, whereas AA men are stereotyped as undesirable romantic and sexual partners (Lu & Wong, 2013). Likewise, AA men are stereotyped as unmasculine, which differs drastically from Black men who are perceived as hypermasculine (Wong et al., 2013).

Second, the Minority Masculinity Stress Theory integrates research and theorizing on stereotypes about men of color and masculine norms to explain why these stereotypes are experienced as stressful for men of color (Lu & Wong, 2013). Because gender is one of the most visible aspects of people's social identities, societal masculine norms are ubiquitous in people's day-to-day social lives, and they impact the way men think of themselves as men (Wong et al., 2020). Hence, when racial stereotypes of a particular group of men of color contradict masculine norms, they devalue men's self-concepts in ways that are profoundly stressful. This seems especially relevant to AA men, given that stereotypes of AA men as physically weak, sexually inadequate, and passive directly conflict with masculine norms that emphasize physical strength, sexual virility, and dominance (Chen, 1999; Liu & Wong, 2018). Given these concerns, it is unsurprising that stereotypes of AA men are experienced as stressful and that a poor body image is a salient concern for some AA men (Liao et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2018).

Third, the Racist-Gender Stress Model unpacks the interlocking nature of race and gender by proposing that for men of color, racism is experienced as a threat to their manhood, engendering masculinity-related stress (Liu & Wong, 2018). For instance, racism at the workplace might make it harder for AA men to fulfill their masculine role as breadwinners, thus representing a direct challenge to their masculine identity (Wong et al., 2014). Several studies highlight the link between racism and masculinity-related stress for men of color (Wong et al., 2017b).

Liang et al. (2011) found that, among Latino men, greater perceived racism combined with adherence to Latino masculinity ideologies were associated with indicators of gender role conflict. Similarly, perceived racism was positively linked to male Asian international students' subjective masculinity stress, but only when being a man was central to participants' self-concept (Wong et al., 2014). Another study found that Black men become more vigilant to masculinity threat cues after being randomly assigned to experience racial discrimination, although this effect did not occur among White men (Goff et al., 2012).

Fourth, the Intersectional Prototypicality Model spotlights the ways in which the nature of discrimination experienced by men of color is influenced by whether they are perceived as prototypical (representative) members of a social group or role, which is, in turn, rooted in the intersection of gender and racial stereotypes (Wong & McCullough, 2021). A subgroup is less prototypical of a larger social group when they experience incongruent gender and racial stereotypes. For instance, the stereotype of AA men as lacking in masculinity contradicts the masculine stereotype of men, whereas the stereotype of AA women as hypersexualized, passive, and gentle reinforces the feminine stereotype of women. Consequently, AA men are less prototypical than AA women of their gender group (men vs. women) and their racial category (AAs). Hypo-prototypicality (i.e., being less prototypical) generates unique forms of discrimination that center around marginalization—rather than being active targets of discrimination, men of color who experience marginalization are "more likely to be relegated to obscurity—unrecognized, unheard, and unappreciated" (Wong & McCullough, 2021, p. 4).

Fifth, the intersection of ethnicity and gender underscores the gendered nature of ethnic cultural values (Chappell & Kusch, 2007). For instance, many Asian cultures prescribe demarcated gender roles such that certain ethnic values are more applicable to one gender. Wong et al. (2012b) posited that there might be a stronger cultural prescription for AA men to adhere to the Asian cultural value of family recognition through achievement because of men's traditional role as breadwinners, but a greater expectation for AA women to conform to the Asian cultural value of humility because it is consistent with gender roles for women.

In sum, the Gendered Racism Model, Minority Masculinity Stress Theory, Racist-Gender Stress Model, Intersectional Prototypicality Model, and the gendered nature of ethnic culture unveil the ways in intersectionality can be used to conceptualize the lives of men of color, including AA men. What are the implications of these intersectionality perspectives for AA fathers? To address this question, we address three challenges that AA fathers experience—father–child relationships, paternal racial-ethnic socialization, and representations of AA fathers—and explain how several intersectionality perspectives can enhance our conceptualization of these concerns.

Challenges in Father–Child Relationships

For AA fathers, challenges are often associated with cultural orientation, which includes acculturation (adaptation to the dominant culture, i.e., European American culture) and enculturation (learning and maintaining one's indigenous culture; Kim, 2007). Indeed, it is common for AA fathers and children to experience discrepancies in their cultural orientations and conflicts stemming from such discrepancies (Chung, 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Park et al., 2010; Qin, 2006). Among many family issues in AA father–child relationships (Juang et al., 2012), we focus on gaps and conflicts linked to cultural and intergenerational issues.[1]

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[1]We define intergenerational gaps as psychosocial differences between the father and the child as well as intergenerational conflicts as conflicts in the father-child relationship resulted from those differences. Similarly, we understand cultural gaps as the cultural incongruence between the father and the child as well as cultural conflicts as conflicts stemming from such an incongruence (Lui, 2015).

Gaps and Conflicts Linked to Cultural and Intergenerational Issues

Research generally suggests that AA father–child cultural gaps are associated with cultural and intergenerational conflicts. The Acculturation Gap-Distress Hypothesis (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996) posits that acculturation gaps lead to conflicts in AA parent–child relationships, contributing to child distress. Similarly, the Theory of Acculturative Family Distancing (Hwang, 2006) theorizes that acculturation gaps in AA parent–child relationships pave the way for problematic distancing in cognition, emotion, and behavior (e.g., Hwang et al., 2010; Qin, 2006), resulting in family conflict. Cultural values gaps within AA parent–child relationships have been studied in the areas of academic achievement (Juang et al., 2012; Qin et al., 2012), career options (Chung, 2001), along with dating and marital relationships (Ahn et al., 2008; Chung, 2001).

Unfortunately, most studies on parent–child relationships in AA families do not disaggregate the data on fathers versus mothers (e.g., Bahrassa et al., 2011; Choi et al., 2008; Ying & Han, 2007). However, the few studies that did so uncovered several nuances in AA father–child relationships. Perceived father–child acculturation values gaps (e.g., parents perceiving their children as too Americanized) were found to be positively related to father–child conflict and negatively associated with father–child relationship satisfaction (Dinh & Nguyen, 2006). Also, lowly acculturated AA fathers were less engaged in parenting (Jain & Belsky, 1997), and highly enculturated AA fathers were perceived as more controlling and to have more father–child conflict (Kim et al., 2017). AA father–child perceived enculturation values gaps on education and/or career issues and respecting elders were positively linked to intergenerational cultural conflicts in AA father–child relationships (Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008). Among many conflict domains, one study showed that AA father–child enculturation values gap predicted conflicts related to dating and marriage (Ahn et al., 2008).

Impacts of AA Father–Child Relationships on Child Outcomes

How do AA father–child relationships impact children? Studies have demonstrated that cultural and intergenerational conflicts tend to be related to negative child outcomes. Positive associations between intergenerational acculturation conflicts with fathers and distress symptoms were documented in Hmong American college students (Bahrassa et al., 2013), Korean American adolescents (Kim & Cain, 2008; Nam, 2016) as well as foreign-born and US-born AA emerging adults (Cheng et al., 2015). By contrast, father–child closeness is conducive to positive child outcomes. Among AAs, father–child closeness was linked to children's lower risk of suicide ideation (Liu, 2005) as well as increased autonomy, an association stronger than that of mother–child closeness (Kiang & Bhattacharjee, 2019).

Future Research Directions

Despite the above theoretical and empirical advancement, several limitations should be tackled in future research. First, most studies only adopt a unilinear (i.e., focusing on either acculturation or enculturation) and unidimensional model (i.e., either cultural values or behaviors). However, Shin et al. (2016) suggested using a bilinear and bidimensional model. A bilinear model assesses one's acculturation and enculturation separately to quantify both high and low acculturation and enculturation levels (Kim, 2007; Miller, 2007). Likewise, a bidimensional model captures one's values (e.g., Asian vs. European American cultural values) and behavior (e.g., participation in cultural festivals, language) in the process of acculturation and enculturation (Kim & Abreu, 2001). Additionally, extant studies often have conflated cultural gaps with intergenerational conflicts (e.g., Choi et al., 2008) by using cultural gaps as proxy measures of intergenerational conflicts (Lui, 2015). Future research should distinguish between cultural gaps and conflicts as well as conflicts resulting

from cultural gaps and intergenerational gaps (Fuligni, 2012; Zhou et al., 2017).

Second, by applying insights on the intersection of race and gender, the Racist-Gender Stress Model (Liu & Wong, 2018) might illuminate how the links between racism and gender-related stress adversely impact AA father–child relationships. To the extent that racism is a threat to AA men's manhood, restrictions on their career options, rooted in structural racism, might challenge their manhood by thwarting their ability to perform their traditional breadwinner role. To reassert their manhood, some AA fathers might resort to projecting patriarchal power within their families by engaging in domestic violence, thus straining relationship with their children (Liu & Chang, 2007). Nonetheless, this hypothesized connection between AA fathers' experience of racism and the assertion of patriarchal power over their children has not yet been investigated by researchers, and we therefore encourage further research in this area.

Third, applying an intersectional lens, more studies that examine the intersection of ethnicity and gender-related variables—particularly the gendered nature of ethnic culture—are needed (Chappell & Kusch, 2007). For instance, immigrant AA fathers might socialize their sons to adhere to the Asian cultural value of family recognition through achievement more than they do with their daughters because of men's traditional role as breadwinners (Wong et al., 2012b). Moreover, among immigrant families, there is a greater parental expectation for daughters than for sons to be keepers of the families' indigenous culture, resulting in parents exerting stricter control over their daughters than their sons (Dion & Dion, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). The implications of these differences in cultural prescriptions, underscoring men's privileged status in Asian cultures, have yet to be fully explored in research on AA father–child relationships. For instance, it is possible that AA father–child gaps in the cultural value of family recognition through achievement might be associated with greater conflicts and stress for AA sons than for daughters if fathers place more emphasis on their sons' and their own academic and career achievements.

Indeed, one study found that male AA college students perceived their fathers as distant from them and were frustrated by what they saw as their fathers' exclusive focus on career issues (Ide et al., 2018). Ultimately, these differences in cultural prescriptions reflect diverse approaches to paternal ethnic socialization, a topic we turn to in the next section.

Paternal Racial-Ethnic Socialization

Paternal racial-ethnic socialization has been defined as the communication of information regarding race and ethnicity from parents to their children (Hughes et al., 2006). While there is overlap, scholars have highlighted differences between racial and ethnic socialization. Racial socialization involves educating children about their race (e.g., how their race is perceived in society and forms of discrimination/racism they might face). By contrast, ethnic socialization concerns the dissemination and preservation of one's cultural history, language, traditions, values, and practices (Hughes et al., 2006). Tran and Lee (2010) found that, among AA college students, the majority noted their parents participated in some aspects of racial-ethnic socialization: preparation for bias and appreciation of one's own cultural group as well as that of others. Additionally, AA young adults reported that their parents engaged in passing down their cultural heritage, an appreciation for other cultures, ideas of racial equality, and promotion of being American (Juang et al., 2016). Juang et al. (2018) examined how second-generation AA parents prepared their children for such instances of discrimination as well as empowered them to effectively confront them. In this way, these AA parents tended to socialize their children in a way that emphasizes both their ethnic identity and racial identity. Nonetheless, research also shows that AA emerging adults perceive that their parents emphasize passing on their cultural heritage more so than promoting an awareness of racism (Juang et al., 2016; Young et al., 2020). Racial socialization could be challenging for AA fathers, most of whom are immigrants who might not

have the lived experiences (e.g., encountering racism as a child in a US school) to help their children cope with racism.

Recent research underscores the notion that AA parents employ different types of racial-ethnic socialization, which may be linked to different outcomes for their children. In their research on profiles of AAs' parental racial-ethnic socialization messages and their associations with racial-ethnic identity and social connectedness outcomes, Atkin and Yoo (2021) found three profiles: guarded separation, passive integration, and active integration. Parents who engaged in guarded separation focused on socialization messages that included maintenance of heritage culture, avoidance of outgroups, awareness of discrimination, and minimization of race. Those employing passive integration socialization messages shared a low amount of message concerning awareness of discrimination and maintenance of heritage culture, minimization of race, outgroup avoidance, and cultural pluralism. Parents who participated in active integration highlighted messages regarding the endorsement of equality, becoming American, and cultural pluralism. These differing profiles were related to disparate racial-ethnic identity and social connectedness outcomes in their children. Compared to the other two profiles, children whose parents aligned with the active integration profile were found to have higher levels of affective pride and cognitive clarity concerning their racial-ethnic identity. Moreover, those with parents who employed a passive and active integration profile demonstrated significantly higher levels of social connectedness than those with parents who fit the guarded separation profile. In addition, Atkin et al. (2019) found that cultural socialization/pluralism and promotion of mistrust moderated the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological distress such that for AA adolescents who received low levels of cultural socialization/pluralism messages, discrimination was positively related to psychological distress. This suggests that cultural socialization/pluralism messages serve as a protective factor for AA adolescents. Taken together, these findings underscore how the specific types of racial-ethnic

socialization messages AA parents emphasize impact their children across a myriad of important outcomes. Unfortunately, these studies did not distinguish between the types of racial-ethnic socialization messages sent by AA fathers versus mothers. Hence, it is not clear whether AA fathers emphasize certain types of racial-ethnic socialization messages more so than AA mothers.

Research Implications and Future Work

There are several research implications and areas of study for AA fathers' racial-ethnic socialization. Arguably the most critical gap in the literature on paternal racial-ethnic socialization is the failure of many studies to disaggregate findings based on parents' gender and the lack of attention to AA fathers' role in racial-ethnic socialization. This could be because AA mothers are often used as informants in studies on parenting and AA fathers are underrepresented in such studies (Kim & Wong, 2002). Therefore, future research could attend to whether AA fathers and mothers emphasize different aspects of racial-ethnic socialization and, if so, why.

The aforementioned studies also underscore differences in how AA fathers practice racial-ethnic socialization. Far from being monolithic in their approach, AA fathers utilize a variety of methods (e.g., Confucianism, instilling cultural values, preparing for racism and other forms of discrimination; Juang et al., 2018), each of which could be differentially associated with mental health outcomes among children (Liu & Lau, 2013). Notably, the approach AA fathers take seems to be impacted by whether they are immigrants or US-born. For example, based on their own level of acculturation, second-generation AA fathers may place more emphasis on preparing their children for the discrimination they will likely face in society as well as empowering them to overcome these obstacles (Juang et al., 2018). These findings showcase the importance of testing within-group differences (including ethnic differences) in future research on AA fathers' racial-ethnic socialization practices.

Future qualitative research can further explore how AA fathers make decisions on how to racially socialize their children and prepare them to deal with racism and the history of race and AA identity. This may include the use of stories, personal examples, and various mediums (e.g., books and films). This is particularly important given the recent spike in violence and racism AAs have faced in the USA during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cheng et al., 2021). In this regard, AA fathers may be able to help their children resist stereotypes about AAs, such as the model minority and perpetual foreigner stereotypes (Wu, 2002; Yoo et al., 2010). Additionally, as proposed by the Gendered Racism Model, the intersection of gender and race engenders unique stereotypes about AA men (e.g., unmasculine, undesirable dating partners, asexual) that are qualitatively different from those of AA women (Liu & Wong, 2018). Encountering these unflattering stereotypes can be particularly stressful for AA men, and it constitutes a threat to their masculine identities, as explained in our foregoing discussion of the Minority Masculinity Stress Theory (Lu & Wong, 2013). Hence, AA fathers can play a vital role in socializing their sons to reject and resist, rather than internalize, these stereotypes. Future research could explicate how AA fathers socialize their sons to deal with gendered racist stereotypes. Additionally, future quantitative work could evaluate the effectiveness of a culturally informed racial-ethnic training for AA fathers in which they learn to prepare their children to face racism using culturally specific traditions and values.

Representations of AA Fathers

Having elucidated salient issues in AA father–child relationships and in paternal racial-ethnic socialization, we focus, in this section, on the representation of AA fathers. Specifically, we discuss how AA fathers are represented in the scholarly literature, in popular media, and by their children. Several scholars have observed, based on traditional Asian cultural gender roles, that AA fathers and mothers perform different roles. Fathers are strict disciplinarians and responsible for their children's education while remaining emotionally distant from them; by contrast, mothers provide for their children's daily upbringing and perform a more emotionally nurturing role (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Li & Lamb, 2015; Li, 2020). Although research on media representations of AA fathers is scarce, there is some preliminary evidence that representations of AA fathers in popular media appear to jibe with these scholarly observations. A humorous meme that went viral on social media in 2010 depicted AA fathers as being emotionally distant, unreasonably harsh, and obsessively focused on their children's academic and career achievements (Oscar, 2017). Known as *High Expectations Asian Father,* this meme depicted a picture of a stern-looking stereotypical Asian father communicating his expectations to his children. In one version of the meme, the stern-looking Asian father declared, "What is the difference between A– and A+? My love for you" (Meme Generator, n.d.). Importantly, Hang and Thanh (2018) argued that these cultural depictions of AA fathers serve to reinforce the model minority stereotype by providing a cultural explanation for AAs' socioeconomic success—presumably, AAs are successful because they have strict parents (especially fathers) who emphasize academic and career achievements.

In contrast to these scholarly and popular representations of AA fathers, research on AA fathers presents a more nuanced picture of AA fathers' parenting practices, particularly as perceived by their children. Several qualitative studies have addressed how AA fathers were perceived by their children. In Pyke's (2000) study, Korean and Vietnamese American emerging adults with immigrant parents lamented that their fathers were unaffectionate and emotionally distant, unlike the typical (White) American fathers they observed on American television shows, such as *The Brady Bunch,* whom they perceived to be more emotionally supportive of their children. Likewise, in another study, AA college students viewed their fathers (most of whom were immigrants) as emotionally disconnected, absentee fathers who were strongly focused on

their breadwinner role (Ide et al., 2018). By contrast, Wong et al. (2012a) found that AA emerging adults appreciated the strengths of their immigrant fathers, which included offering them practical help (e.g., helping with scholarship applications), spending time with them on family vacations, and encouraging them to think for themselves. Yet it is striking that in this study, AA participants noted that their parents (including their fathers) were different from typical AA parents, citing their perceptions of other AA parents who were a lot more controlling or who had conflictual relationships with their children. Hence, these AA children seem to be aware of how AA parents are represented in popular discourse.

Likewise, several quantitative studies provide a nuanced representation of AA fathers, as portrayed by their children, that differs from the strict, absentee father trope. In Kim and Rohner's (2002) study of Korean American adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting practices, only 5% of Korean American fathers (88% of whom were immigrants) could be classified as authoritarian (i.e., strict control paired with low levels of warmth); most fathers were perceived by their children as moderate in the permissiveness-strictness dimension of parenting, while 11% were viewed as authoritative (high levels of control and warmth), and another 11% were perceived as permissive (high warmth and low control). Moreover, Korean American adolescents in this study thought their fathers were less controlling than their mothers. In another study of Chinese American families (Kim et al., 2013), only 18.6% of fathers were perceived by their adolescent children (aged 12–15) as practicing "tiger" parenting (high on both positive parenting practices and negative parenting practices, such as shaming tactics), a lower percentage than that of mothers (27.8%). Instead, most Chinese American children in this study believed their fathers were supportive (high on positive parenting practices and low on negative parenting practices; 63.4%) or easygoing (low on both positive and negative parenting practices; 17.9%), although the percentage of fathers whom children perceived to practice "tiger" parenting increased over time.

In sum, representations of AA fathers in the scholarly literature and popular media paint the image of an emotionally distant, strict disciplinarian, although the empirical research is more nuanced. While many AA fathers do experience conflicts with their children that arise from father–child cultural gaps (as discussed in the previous section on father–child relationships), there is little empirical support for the notion that most AA fathers (regardless of immigration status) are perceived by their children as overly strict and demanding. Instead, research based on Chinese and Korean American families suggests that most adolescents view their fathers as engaged in supportive parenting practices or exerting moderate levels of control in their parenting practices (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Kim et al., 2013).

Directions for Future Research

Overall, research on the representation of AA Fathers remains scarce; therefore, in this section, we provide several recommendations for future research. First, guided by the Intersectional Prototypicality Model (Wong & McCullough, 2021), we encourage researchers to investigate the prototypicality (or lack thereof) of AA fathers. Similar to findings on the hypo-prototypicality of AA men within the larger social groups of men and AAs (Johnson et al., 2012; Schug et al., 2015), we hypothesize that AA fathers would be hypo-prototypical in both the social categories of AA parents and fathers, relative to AA mothers and White fathers, respectively. The relative hypo-prototypicality of AA fathers may be particularly striking, considering Amy Chua's (2011) controversial book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,* which thrust AA mothers into the spotlight in American popular discourse, but may have, ironically, reinforced the invisibility of AA fathers. Additionally, one consequence of hypo-prototypicality, according to the Intersectional Prototypicality Model (Wong & McCullough, 2021), is the absence of representation in mass media. Therefore, researchers could examine the extent to which AA fathers are

underrepresented in movies, advertisements, books, and magazines relative to fathers from other racial groups and AA mothers.

Second, we encourage research on the content of stereotypes about AA fathers. While previous research has documented the nature of stereotypes on AA men (e.g., Wong et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2018), much less empirical work has been conducted on stereotypes about AA fathers. We suspect that the content of stereotypes concerning AA fathers and mothers overlaps to some extent but might also include qualitatively distinct elements rooted in the intersection of gender and race, as predicted by the Gendered Racism Model (Liu & Wong, 2018). Within the USA, do people perceive AA fathers to be strict, emotionally distant fathers, as alluded to by earlier scholarship on AA fathers (e.g., Chao & Tseng, 2002) and common representations in popular media, or are such stereotypes more complex? Perceptions of AA fathers might also be shaped by the portrayals of AA fathers in recent US TV shows featuring AA families, such as *Fresh Off the Boat* and *Dr. Ken,* in which AA fathers are represented as culturally ambiguous and conforming to the model minority stereotype (Eguchi & Ding, 2017; Hang & Thanh, 2018). Relatedly, research can also address how an awareness of stereotypes impacts AA fathers. Previous research has shown that AA college students' awareness of certain negative stereotypes about AA men was linked to higher levels of depressive symptoms (Wong et al., 2012c). Likewise, it would be interesting to assess how AA fathers' awareness of people's stereotypes about them impacts their well-being and their strategies for managing such stereotypes. For instance, do AA fathers internalize, deny, or deflect negative stereotypes about them (cf. Chen, 1999)?

Third, most studies on the representation of AA fathers primarily focus on Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese American immigrant fathers, whereas there is considerably less research on US-born AA fathers and fathers from other AA ethnic groups, such as Filipino and South AA fathers. Regarding Filipino fathers, Medina (2001) observed that fathers tend to adopt a warm and supportive relationship with their children while maintaining the role of an authority figure, which appears to jibe with an authoritative parenting style (high on warmth and control). Therefore, perhaps future research could explore Filipinx American children's perceptions of their fathers' parenting styles.

Policy and Practical Implications

In this penultimate section, we delineate a few policy and practical implications of the foregoing discussion on AA fathers. Throughout this chapter, we have stressed the value of the intersectionality framework (Bowleg, 2012) in informing our understanding of AA fathers. In the same vein, we believe it is important for intersectionality perspectives to be interwoven into the curriculum of college courses on parenting and parent–child relations so that the experiences of fathers of color, including AA fathers, are adequately represented. Unfortunately, issues of race and ethnicity, including the experiences of fathers of color, such as AA fathers, are not commonly addressed in parenting and parent–child relations textbooks (e.g., Bigner & Gerhardt, 2019; Heath, 2018). We therefore call on parenting scholars to diversify their textbooks to foreground rather than marginalize the experiences of fathers of color.

Additionally, given that the media plays a vital role in shaping the representation of AA fathers in popular culture, it is important for practitioners to advocate for positive and diverse representations of AA fathers in movies, TV shows, books, and advertisements. For instance, children's books can provide culturally meaningful and positive representations of AA fathers. Heller et al. (2000) reviewed selected children's picture books that positively portrayed AA fathers. In one book highlighted by these authors, an AA father told the story of his own childhood to his son to help him cope with loneliness in school. AA fathers could read these stories with their children and, in so doing, foster a closer bond with their children as well as use these stories to communicate racial-ethnic socialization messages concerning AAs.

Because AA parents tend to underemphasize issues of race and racism in comparison with cultural heritage in their racial-ethnic socialization practices (Juang et al., 2018; Young et al., 2020), family educators could provide training to AA fathers about how to help their children cope with and resist racism. Educators could help AA immigrant fathers gain critical consciousness of historical and institutional forces that contribute to anti-Asian racism (French et al., 2020). A curriculum on paternal racial-ethnic socialization for AA immigrant fathers might include issues such as the history of institutionalized racism in the USA (e.g., the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882), how to help their children identify and resist stereotypes (e.g., the model minority, perpetual foreigner, and gendered racist stereotypes). AA fathers could be taught how to help their sons develop a healthy masculine identity that rejects negative gendered racist stereotypes about AA men but without conforming to White masculine norms (Wong et al., 2017a, b).

Family therapists and educators can also introduce cultural interventions to improve AA father–child relationships, such as helping immigrant fathers develop bicultural competency so that they can better relate to their children (Shin & Wong, 2013). Koh et al. (2009) described an activity in which AA youth interviewed their immigrant parents about their lives before and after immigration to the USA. Considering previous research showing that some AA children crave a more emotionally intimate relationship with their fathers (Ide et al., 2018), such an activity could be used as an intervention to promote greater self-disclosure from AA fathers and to help AA children better understand their fathers. Another example of a cultural intervention is the fishbowl group format in which AA fathers listen to a group of AA adolescents share stories about what they desire from their parents (e.g., wanting more verbal expressions of love from their parents) so that fathers can better understand their children's cultural perspectives (Wong et al., 2011).

Conclusions

In this chapter, we reviewed three challenges that AA fathers encounter: father–child relationships, paternal racial-ethnic socialization, and representations of AA fathers. We identified gaps in the literature and explained how the intersectionality framework can guide future work in these areas. Although we focused on AA fathers, the intersectionality conceptual models and perspectives we discussed in this chapter (e.g., Intersectionality Prototypicality Model; Wong & McCullough, 2021) are applicable to the experiences of other fathers of color and, more generally, to other men of color. We hope this chapter will contribute to more nuanced and less stereotypical representations of AA fathers (and other fathers of color) that affirm their full humanity and foreground their complex racial, ethnic, and gendered experiences.

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Cultural and Sociopolitical Influences on African American and Latinx Fathers

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Angelica Alonso and Rachel Ghosh are both third authors.Introduction

To understand contemporary fathering and fatherhood in the United States, it is necessary to place fathers in the broader context of community, culture, and country. The social expectations, norms, values, and behaviors of becoming and being a father are determined by a dynamic confluence of biological, personal, cultural, historical, and sociopolitical forces that impact individuals throughout the life span. As families have shifted in composition and structure from two-parent to more diverse and complex structures, so have fathers' role expectations. The contemporary view of what it means to be a father in the United States encompasses both "new" and "traditional" ideals: new, because it permits more flexibility in roles and it includes less-gendered expectations; traditional, because it still adheres to the view that first and foremost fathers must act as economic providers for their children. The resulting morphosis is most evident in the ways that low-income, ethnic minority fathers—particularly African Americans and Latinx—view themselves and are viewed by others. These fathers are mostly responsible (and are held accountable) for financially supporting their chil-

dren. The nurturing side of being a parent is hardly prioritized by government-level policies and programs.

Framed within ecological and family systems theories, mothers and fathers as part of the microsystem exert the most proximal influences on the child. As a subsystem of the family, parents influence their children's developmental trajectories via a network of relationships with family members and others in the microsystem, with the mother–child and father–child relationships being the most significant. Key influences on fathering behaviors and on the father–child relationship include proximal and distal factors at each level of the ecological system, including parents' background (*microsystem*; history, biology, extended family), socioeconomic status (SES), and social networks (*exosystem*), and cultural norms, values, and expectations (*macrosystem*), which reflect broader structures of power and race that assign value and determine opportunity based on skin color (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Cabrera et al., 2014; Cox & Paley, 1997). The ecological model posits that these levels of influence are interdependent over time, with each level influencing the others. For instance, cultural norms and values, which often marginalize and oppress people of color and privilege white people, are strong determinants of individuals' SES, which in turn, is a strong predictor of individuals' behaviors (Gold, 2004). This ecological framework is useful in helping us understand what fatherhood and fathering look like in the United States today and by highlight-

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ing commonalities as well as differences experienced by many fathers in the United States.

The goals of this chapter are to (1) provide a theoretical framework for the study of ethnic minority fathers in the United States; (2) describe the cultural and sociopolitical context for understanding fatherhood in ethnically diverse families; (3) highlight the experiences of Latinx fathers and African American fathers; and (4) provide recommendations for promoting the health and well-being of fathers and their families from a cultural perspective.

Theoretical Framework and Background

Theoretically, the field of research on fathering and fatherhood has moved forward in leaps and bounds over the past three decades, but there is still no unified theory of father involvement (Cabrera et al., 2014). Scholars interested in research on fathers have utilized multiple models and theoretical frameworks to examine their influences within the family, including attachment theory, ecological theories, family systems theory, parenting models, investment theory, family stress models, the expanded model of the ecology of father–child relationships, among others (Belsky, 1984; Cabrera et al., 2014; Cox & Paley, 1997; Palkovitz, 1997; Volling & Cabrera, 2019). These theoretical frameworks share the view that fathers are integral members of the family system, which is characterized by interconnected relationships between and among caregivers and children. As such, father–child relationships evolve through time and in particular social contexts (Cabrera et al., 2014, 2018). Fathers' behaviors and their relationships with their children are transactional and influenced by a host of individual-, family-, and community-level factors, including fathers' personal history (e.g., rearing history, cultural history, and biological history), personal characteristics (e.g., age, education, role identity, beliefs, and personality), family context (e.g., household composition, relationship with child's mother, and relationship with the child), social network,

employment, and social, political, and economic circumstances (Cabrera et al., 2014; Sameroff, 2010).

The Sociocultural Context of Fathers in the United States

Understanding fathers' roles in families necessitate an examination of the sociocultural context of fathering—that is, how cultural norms, values, beliefs, and expectations shape what men do or ought to do to rear their children. Research has demonstrated that the meaning and expression of fathers' roles within the family and society at large are deeply rooted in social and historical experiences and are thus situated within the prevailing cultural practices at the time (Cabrera et al., 2000). Scholars have noted that at the close of the twentieth century, children's sociocultural context changed in significant ways as marked by several social trends: women's increased labor force participation, increased absence of nonresidential fathers in the lives of their children, increased involvement of fathers in two-parent families, and increased cultural diversity (Cabrera et al., 2000). For instance, between 1975 and 2019, labor force participation of women with a young child increased from 47% to more than 72% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2019). During this same period, the increase in father caregiving increased slowly but consistently. The number of single-father households increased about ninefold since 1960, from fewer than 300,000 to more than 2.6 million in 2011 (Livingston, 2011). In examining these trends by race, African American children are more likely than others to live in single-parent households (Livingston, 2011). The trend for Latinx children is not quite as prominent, but it is increasing in the same direction, especially for children of second-generation Latinx fathers who are born in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a, b). Although the majority (73%) of Latinx children born in the United States live with their mothers and fathers, almost a quarter (23–27%) live in single-parent households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). These trends have

significantly altered how both parents invest time with their children and their relationships they have with them, in particular forfathers, with measured impact on children's and parents' developmental trajectories.

Twenty years into the twenty-first century, these prominent social trends—increased female employment, father absence, father involvement, and cultural diversity—have continued to demarcate and change the structure and function of the family in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b; Walsh, 2012). Today, children's living arrangements are complex and dynamic. There is a multitude of family structures (e.g., biological, same-sex, and nonbinary), and parents' specific roles within families are also different and dynamic from what they were just a few decades ago (Anderson et al., 2022; ChildStats.gov, 2017; Walsh, 2012). Children are also being reared in families with multiple caregivers that may change over time. While these types of households might be seen as "unstable" compared to the two-parent families of the 1950s, it can be argued that there may also be some benefits. Children might be more adaptable and resilient due to these household experiences, though the effects on children of multiple living arrangements and caregivers are yet to be known.

The fact that father's involvement and responsibility in the day-to-day care of their children has increased in the last 15 years from 53% to 74% has important implications for children (Jones & Mosher, 2013; National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse [NRFC], 2018). In resident households, the amount of time fathers spend with their children in activities such as reading has also increased from 29% to 51% (Jones & Mosher, 2013; NRFC, 2018). Increased father involvement is also observed in nonresident households, where over 40% of nonresident fathers report playing with or eating dinner with their child several times a week or more, even though they do not live with them (NRFC, 2018). These investments of time, especially in the early years, could cascade into several changes for children. First, more time spent with children means that fathers will be more committed to them across the life span, even after the dissolu-

tion of the romantic relationship with their partners (Cabrera et al., 2008; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2009). Second, being involved in their children's lives even when they do not live with them on a daily basis increases the chances of having a harmonious relationship with their partner, which could increase fathers' motivation to support their children financially (Nepomnyaschy, 2007; NRFC, 2018). Third, mothers' role as *gatekeepers* (i.e., maternal behaviors and attitudes that may support or limit father involvement in child-rearing) is likely to diminish, and the view of parenting that is shaping the collective consciousness is much more inclusive of instrumental and emotional roles for both parents (Pew Research, 2013; Zvara et al., 2013).

In summary, contemporary fathers in the United States are expected to participate equally in all aspects of child-rearing from conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and each of the subsequent developmental stages. The traditional family model, where fathers' primary role is to be the economic provider and mothers' helpers, and mothers' primary role is to be nurturant and her economic contribution to the household is minimized, is no longer the way families organize themselves. Yet, policies and programs often continue to see fathers' role as mostly that of the provider. Scholars argue that there is a "new ideal" of fathering that is replacing the old ideal. The "new ideal" includes sharing all aspects of parenting life and acknowledging that mothers and fathers play multiple and overlapping roles, with the focus being on a strong co-parenting relationship (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2021).

Latinx Fathers

Over 40 million people in the United States self-identify as Latinx,[1] making them the largest and fastest-growing ethnic and racial US minority

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[1]Latinx is a gender-neutral term used in the United States to refer to Latino/Hispanic individuals of Latin American and Caribbean heritage from more than 20 countries and territories, several languages, and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). Latinx show great heterogeneity across a variety of dimensions, including citizenship, education, SES, generational status, legal status, acculturation, migration history, English proficiency, and cultural beliefs and practices (Landale et al., 2006). Due to economic marginality, many Latinx families are exposed to multiple risk factors such as school dropout, crime, victimization, and teenage pregnancy (Coltrane et al., 2004; Lichter et al., 2015).

Although, as a group, Latinx are diverse in education level, history of immigration, language, race, ethnicity, and religion, they also share a common set of values and language (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Paéz, 2002). Research on Latinx fathers has mostly treated them as a homogenous group and has done so from two general perspectives. First, the "cultural" view posits that Latinx fathers are emotionally distant and that their behaviors are characterized by *machismo*. This view embodies a strong sense of masculine pride and exaggerated masculinity and is typically associated with a man's responsibility to provide for, protect, and defend his family (Parke et al., 2004; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993). Among other shortcomings, the "cultural" view confounds socioeconomic status (SES) and culture and has been used to ascertain universality to behaviors that might be more diverse. Second, a deficit orientation holds that behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that deviate from the mainstream norms (mainly western and White fathers) are considered maladaptive (Taylor & Behnke, 2005). This deficit-based model assumes homogeneity among Latinx fathers, obscuring or neglecting differences by SES, and discards strengths, such as family ideals and bilingualism (Taylor & Behnke, 2005).

In this section, we first briefly describe historical and demographic changes that have shaped Latinx fathers' parenting and discuss the roles and expectations of these fathers. Also, we review the historical and contemporary sociocultural and economic factors (e.g., discrimination, immigration, and acculturation) that have impacted Latinx fathers' parenting experiences.

Latinx Families and Fathering

Latinx are increasingly diverse and the largest and fastest ethnic group in the United States. Scholars attribute these trends to three waves of migration: from Puerto Rico after World War II, the exodus from Cuba after the 1959 revolution, and the surge of immigration from Mexico and Latin America since 1970 (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). In the last decade, fertility has surpassed immigration as the driver of Latinx population growth in the United States (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). By 2050, Latinxs are projected to comprise about one-fourth of the US population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a).

Despite the tremendous heterogeneity, Latinxs share important commonalities. First, Latinx men are likely to become first-time fathers at a young age (i.e., in the early twenties) and have more children (2.4 times) than Caucasian American fathers (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Second, although the rate has decreased from 76% to 62% since 2006, the majority of Latinx children live in two-parent households, and the majority of Latinx fathers live with all of their biological children (Lopez & Velasco, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). This is true regardless of whether the father is an immigrant or US-born (Karberg et al., 2017). Nonresident Latinx fathers often co-parent or continue to remain active in their child's lives (Cabrera et al., 2011). Third, although the majority of Latinx children are born in the United States, their parents are not; most of them are foreign-born. More than half of Latinx fathers (64%) are immigrants. However, immigrant fathers are more likely to have a mix of resident and nonresident children than their US-born peers. Finally, even though Latinx immigrant fathers have lived, on average, nearly 14 years in the United States, for half of them, Spanish is still their dominant language.

Latinx Father Involvement

Latinx fathers' involvement practices manifest themselves in many culturally specific ways (Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016; Sotomayor-Peterson

et al., 2013). Despite the view that "traditional" Latinx values such as *machismo* might lead to less father involvement with children, several studies have shown that Latinx fathers are highly involved in their children's lives and that this involvement begins before their child is born (Shannon et al., 2009; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2009). This prenatal involvement sets the stage for later involvement; Latinx fathers have been found to spend more time taking care of their children and exhibit more responsibility for child-rearing than White fathers (Hofferth, 2003; Yeung et al., 2001). In a study using a nationally representative sample of babies and their parents, Cabrera et al. (2011) found that Latinx fathers were more involved with their toddlers than White fathers. In terms of father–child interaction, several studies have shown that Latinx fathers show more warmth to their infants and less control over their behavior than non-Latinx fathers (Hofferth, 2003). Coltrane et al. (2004), in their study of low-income Mexican-American fathers, found that when compared to White American men, Mexican-American fathers were more involved in both masculine activities (e.g., hobbies, games, and spectator events) and feminine activities (e.g., shopping, cooking, and reading) with their children. Latinx fathers and mothers also show commitment to the academic needs of their children, and even when they do not feel equipped to help their children with specific schoolwork, they provide for their children's education in other ways, such as autonomy-granting, emotional support, and having role models outside the immediate family context (Ceballo, 2004). However, Latinx fathers are less likely to participate in school activities, especially if they are immigrants (Auerbach, 2006; Lopez, 2001; Terriquez, 2012).

Predictors of Latinx Father Involvement

As stipulated by theoretical models of fathering, the frequency and quality of father involvement are determined by a set of factors at all levels of the ecological system. Cultural values, beliefs, and norms are key determinants of behaviors (Fuller & García-Coll, 2010). There are a number of personal, familial, and cultural or contextual factors that impact fathers' involvement with their children and their motivation to parent. Cabrera et al. (2014)'s expanded model of the ecology of father–child relationships—explained at the beginning of this chapter—provides a comprehensive framework to look at the factors influencing Latinx father involvement. For the purpose of this discussion, we will focus on those factors considered most salient or unique to Latinx fathers' experiences. At the same time, several studies have highlighted associations between demographic factors and involvement among Latinx men; higher employment rates, income, and educational level have been shown to be positively associated with Latinx paternal involvement in their children's lives (Cabrera et al., 2008; Tamis-Lemonda et al., 2004).

Three cultural values are especially important for understanding fathering among Latinx families. First, *familism*, a set of beliefs that emphasize the importance of solidarity, obligation, reciprocity, and parental authority within the family, is the strongest form of social support (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Sue & Sue, 2003). According to Sue and Sue (2003), the importance of *familism* is that it connects one's heritage at the same time as it socializes individuals in a cultural context. Parents are central to this socialization process, which involves family interactions, cultural rituals, and values (Sue & Sue, 2003). The strong familial orientation results in a strong attachment to the idea of a family and provides a sense of cohesion, reinforcing the notion that the family is more important than the needs of the individual (Baca Zinn et al., 1993; Landale et al., 2006). Second, *respeto*, which emphasizes proper demeanor and respect for authorities and elders; and third, *educacion*, which does not necessarily refer to formal education but to a set of beliefs and practices that focuses on moral upbringing and being a good person (Reese et al., 1995). Although there are other cultural values, scholars have long argued that *familism, respeto, and educacion* constitute a system of cultural beliefs that influences moth-

ers' and fathers' strategies and socialization goals for children.

In addition to these cultural values, some Latinx families endorse masculine gender attitudes for men (*machismo*) and family-oriented, self-sacrificing attitudes for women (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Peart et al., 2006). These attitudes are thought to guide gendered arrangements at home where men are primarily responsible for the finances, and women for caregiving, child-rearing, and family affairs (e.g., Denner & Dunbar, 2004). However, shifts in men-controlled roles and expectations in Latinx families have also been observed and attributed to the migration process and adaptation to the cultural norms and values of the United States, especially in terms of women's employment and education (Smith, 2005).

Scholars have also argued that research has mostly focused on the negative aspect of *machism*o and less so on positive behaviors such as protection and providing for the family (Arciniega et al., 2008). Qualitative and correlational research shows that *machismo* may also be associated with nurturing fathering behaviors, emotional closeness, and family protection (Arciniega et al., 2008). Ethnographic studies have revealed that for many Mexicans and Mexican Americans, *machismo,* like *caballerismo,* encompasses notions of protection, providing for the family, respect for the family, and a heightened awareness of the need for formal education (Taylor & Behnke, 2005).

Other potentially significant predictors of father involvement include gender ideology, immigration influences (e.g., having high aspirations for their children, meeting financial responsibilities), and intergenerational influences (Taylor & Behnke, 2005). Small-scale studies conducted with low-income ethnic minority families found that fathers who reported having a good relationship with their own fathers also reported having a good relationship with their child (Shears et al., 2002; Shannon et al., 2009).

The *immigrant experience* is a key feature of Latinx fathers, with several stark differences found in the life experiences of Latinx fathers who are immigrants versus those who were born in the United States. Immigrant fathers might feel optimistic that the United States represents a possibility of being a better parent. However, the actual process of immigration to the United States may be associated with stressors, structural barriers, and reduced capital that undermine the quality and quantity of father involvement (Capps et al., 2010; Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2007; Lopez & Velasco, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2007; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). The experiences of U.S-born and foreign-born Latinx fathers differ in ways that may structure the extent to which fathers engage with their children. For instance, in contrast to immigrant families, US-born families' rates of employment, income, and education are higher, which may give them an advantage in the way they can interact and be involved with their children (Suárez-Orozco & Suáez-Orozco, 2007; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). The low levels of income and education are significant barriers for fathers: nearly two-thirds (63%) of Latinx fathers are low-income (i.e., live in households with income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line; Karberg et al., 2017).

There are stark nativity differences in fathers' barriers to labor force participation and, thus, in low-income status. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of immigrant Latinx fathers are low-income, compared with roughly a quarter (27%) of US-born Latinx fathers (Karberg et al., 2017). The same applies to education level, where educational attainment also differs by immigrant status. Almost half of the Latinx fathers have completed less than a high school education (46%), but of these fathers, more immigrant fathers have not completed a high school education (59%) compared to their US-born peers. Also, fewer immigrant fathers have completed some post-secondary education than their US-born peers (14 and 39%, respectively; Karberg et al., 2017).

Another significant cultural predictor of father involvement is *acculturation processes*, that is, the process of adaptation to American culture, including shifts in parenting beliefs and practices. Taylor and Behnke's (2005) study of Mexican fathers in Mexico and the United States considered the impact of immigration and accul-

turation on parenting. They found that in addition to gender ideology and intergenerational influences, immigration influences were one of the three dominant themes depicting determinants of Latinx father involvement. Ethnographic studies reveal that immigrant parents often emphasize a strong work ethic and achievement as a means for upward mobility in US society (Lopez, 2001). Given that Latinx parents vary in their level of acculturation and adherence to Latinx and mainstream values, the set of cultural values that guide their parenting behaviors is likely to vary. Thus, parents at different levels of acculturation may rely on somewhat different parenting behaviors. Although culture-general aspects of parenting are not expected to differ based on acculturation levels, culture-specific aspects of parenting behaviors are likely to differ.

Investigating the effects of Mexican cultural practices and father involvement, Coltrane et al. (2004) found that more Mexican-identified men (e.g., Spanish language use, Mexican ethnic identity), who presumably did not endorse American values although they did not measure it, reported a higher proportion of child supervision hours than their counterparts. But whether endorsing American values is related to better or worse family functioning is unclear. Some studies have shown that endorsing American cultural practices, specifically greater use of the English language, is related to more family conflict in Mexican-American families (Gonzales et al., 2006; Pasch et al., 2006), whereas others have shown that endorsing American cultural practices (e.g., English use) is more positive family dynamics than those who do not (Smokowski et al., 2008). Also, Cabrera et al. (2006) found that more acculturated Latinx fathers reported higher levels of engagement than less acculturated fathers.

Despite outdated cultural views of Latinx fathers, current evidence shows that Latinx fathers are highly involved in the lives of their children and contribute to their healthy development and well-being. Nevertheless, contextual factors such as nativity status, residential status, employment, and work hours shape the degree to which fathers are able to engage with their chil-

dren in meaningful ways. As Latinx children become the majority of the youth population in the United States, scholarly work on fatherhood among this population is crucial to inform practice, public policy, and effective interventions.

African American Fathers

African Americans in the United States are the third largest racial and ethnic group in the United States, comprising 12.1% of the total population (Jensen et al., 2021). Compared to Whites, African Americans have low marriage rates, and only about a third of African American children live with their biological mothers *and* fathers—compared to 70% of non-Hispanic White children and about 60% of Latinx children (Raley et al., 2015). These trends are partly explained by structural disadvantages such as high unemployment rates, low earnings, and shortened lifespan expectations because of death or incarceration, which have created a "deficit of marriageable men" in the eyes of African American women (Raley et al., 2015, p. 5).

As with Latinx fathers, the fathering experiences of African American fathers are also shaped by discrimination, poverty, and lower educational attainment. There are also distinct and unique sociopolitical, historical, and cultural forces that have structured fatherhood for this group. Most of the research on the historical antecedents of fathering is focused on the adversities and challenges rather than on the strengths, resulting in an unbalanced view of African American parenting behaviors that perpetuate negative stereotypes in popular culture (Julion et al., 2007; McAdoo & McAdoo, 1998; Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999; Smith et al., 2005). The stereotyped Black father is "seen—by those who are not of color—as a visitor to his family, underemployed, marginal to his family, inattentive to his children, rather violent, and plainly not in the family picture" (McAdoo & McAdoo, 1998, p.7).

The negative stereotype of African American fathers is particularly salient for fathers who do not live with their children. They are often viewed as not *wanting* their children or not *wanting to be*

involved in their lives (Cabrera et al., 2008, 2009; Smith et al., 2005). This perception is not supported by empirical evidence (Cabrera & Mitchell, 2009; Julion et al., 2007). In fact, residency does not seem to be a prerequisite for father involvement among African American families, as it is for White families. Nonresident African American fathers are more likely to be engaged in caregiving, literacy, and physical activities with their young children than nonresident White fathers (Cabrera et al., 2008). Across SES and residency status, African American fathers express a great desire to be involved with their children, show high levels of father-engagement, and make important and positive contributions to their children's development through nurturing and sensitive parenting (Black et al., 1999; Cabrera & Mitchell, 2009; Smith et al., 2005).

However, nonresident fathers in the United States face substantial barriers that prevent them from being involved as parents, even despite their best intentions. These barriers are largely rooted in racist historical and sociopolitical circumstances and experiences, which are often ignored or not well understood. In this section, we first describe the historical and demographic shifts that have shaped African American families and parenting. We then discuss how African American fathers' roles and expectations have changed over time. Next, we describe how fathers' backgrounds (e.g., family history, relationship with a partner) and contemporary sociocultural and economic factors (e.g., racism, discrimination, mass incarceration, and economic isolation) influence African American fathers' parenting experiences.

African American Families and Fathering

Family structure and patterns of partnering and parenting, including marriage, divorce, and childbearing of African Americans, are quite distinct from those of other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. African American fathers and mothers are far more likely to have children out

of wedlock and be nonresident/single mothers as compared to White or Latinx fathers and mothers. Among women who marry, African Americans also have higher divorce rates, indicating greater marriage instability. Although racial disparities in family structure have particularly increased in recent decades, they have existed for more than a century (Ruggles, 1994), and social scientists have long attributed these differences to historical influences such as slavery and the economic institutions that succeeded it (Bloome & Muller, 2015; Cohen, 2021).

The history of the formation of the African American family is instructive in understanding the meaning and formation of the contemporary African American family. Though enslaved African Americans often lived in families, slave marriage and parenthood were not legally recognized by the states, and there was always the looming threat of separation (Cohen, 2021). The economic institutions (e.g., tenant farming, sharecropping) that replaced slavery promoted early marriage among young, freed African Americans because White landowners preferred to contract with male-headed households. "Tenant" marriages were rooted in gender inequality, where women essentially became servants to their authoritarian husbands. In these marriages, African American women resented their subordinate status, thus contributing to increased union dissolution (Bloome & Muller, 2015).

During "The Great Migration" of African Americans from the Southern United States to the North in search of greater economic opportunities during and after World Wars I and II, there were notable changes in African American family structure. The longstanding assumption among social scientists has been that the South-to-North migrants brought with them a culture of family disorganization and disruption to northern cities, which was responsible for the increased fragility of African American families in Northern inner cities (Tolnay, 1997). Rather, as Tolnay (1997) found, Northern families with Southern roots actually showed more traditional family patterns (e.g., children living with two parents, fewer never-married mothers) than other fami-

lies. Other structural explanations for these distinct family patterns among African Americans (e.g., nonmarital childbearing, the Black woman's "retreat from marriage") included shrinking employment opportunities (e.g., unskilled manufacturing jobs) for African American males in inner cities, a decreasing supply of "marriageable black men" due to financial instability and low education, and increasing economic independence of African American women (Raley et al., 2015; Tolnay, 1997).

Today, one of the largest factors contributing to low marriage rates and father nonresidence is the mass incarceration of African American men. Post-incarceration, African American men have a difficult time regaining employment, thus perpetuating the cycle of economic and family strain (McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). Though African American men comprise only 6% of the population, they account for 34% of drug arrests and nearly 50% of the total prison population (Perry & Bright, 2012; Taylor et al., 2019). African American children are nine times more likely than White children to have an incarcerated parent—the largest factor contributing to father–child separation in Black families (Perry & Bright, 2012). Upon release from the criminal justice system, African American men have a difficult time regaining employment, thus perpetuating the cycle of economic and family strain (McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017).

African American Father Involvement

One of the most important roles of African American fathers and all fathers in the United States, in general, has historically been the economic provider or breadwinner for their children (Cabrera et al., 2008; Dubowitz et al., 2006; Julion et al., 2007; McAdoo, 1993; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). High rates of nonmarital childbirth, stereotypes of father absence and irresponsibility, and increased welfare uptake have prompted programs and policies to legislate child support laws to collect payment from men for their children. Child support laws, however, are problematic as they do not typically consider

whether fathers have the economic means to provide support for their children. Thus, many African American fathers fall in arrears, which leads to further dire economic conditions and marginalization from their children (Cabrera et al., 2008; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017).

The emphasis on fathers' provider role is problematic on several fronts, least of all that it devalues and disempowers fathers from being involved in their children's lives through providing love and support. With increasing research on the multiple ways, other than financial, that fathers make a difference in their children's lives, scholars have proposed that fathering, like mothering, is multifaceted, dynamic, and complex (Cabrera et al., 2000, 2014, 2018; Dubowitz et al., 2006; McAdoo, 1993). McAdoo (1993) conceptualized the major roles of African American fathers as being providers, decision-makers, child socializers, a supporter of child's mother, and nurturers of family values. Other researchers have found that African American fathers emphasize the importance of spending time with their children, disciplining, serving as a teacher and role models, and protecting or ensuring the general welfare of their children (Dubowitz et al., 2004, 2006). These conceptualizations reflect the multiple ways in which African American fathers support their children's development. For example, African American fathers commonly act as playmates for their children, and this is an important source of nurturance and stimulation that positively benefits child development (Black et al., 1999; Cabrera et al., 2017). African American fathers contribute to their families by providing childcare, assisting with household chores, and supporting the child's mother (Black et al., 1999; Cabrera et al., 2000). African American fathers are also important sources of racial socialization for their children and help shape their learning about their own race and relations among ethnic groups (Cooper et al., 2019; McHale et al., 2006). They communicate a variety of ethnic-racial socialization messages to their children, including racial pride, cultural history, and awareness of and coping strategies for racial discrimination—all of which help children to develop a secure sense of identity

and successfully navigate today's challenging world (Cooper et al., 2019).

Predictors of African American Father Involvement

African American fathers often face multiple barriers to parenting, including low levels of education. African American men have significantly lower educational attainment on average as compared to white men and are more likely to work in service jobs as compared to managerial or professional occupations (Julion et al., 2007). Such jobs provide less autonomy (e.g., work hours, scheduling) and lower wages, which limit opportunities for paternal involvement.

When fathers have a disharmonious or unstable relationship with their partners, they are less likely to see their children and parent more negatively (Cabrera et al., 2008; Cabrera & Mitchell, 2009). This is true when mothers engage in "gatekeeping" and prevent fathers from interacting with their children (Black et al., 1999; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). Maternal gatekeeping is more pronounced for fathers who fail to provide financial contributions or who have experienced incarceration and domestic violence (McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). The relationship with their children's mother can also deteriorate when mothers embark on relationships with new romantic partners. When mothers remarry, biological fathers are less likely to visit their children or provide child support payments. The mother–father relationship can also suffer when extended family impedes father involvement. Maternal grandmothers may view fathers as unreliable, especially when fathers do not pay child support, and thus prevent them from visiting (Cabrera et al., 2008).

Incarceration rates among African American men are the highest of any industrialized democracy and pose one of the biggest threats to the well-being of the African American family. Fathers who are incarcerated with a criminal record are unlikely to find employment and are thus at higher risks for further economic instability and hardship (e.g., employment discrimina-

tion, wage suppression; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017; Perry & Bright, 2012).

Other barriers to father involvement include racism and oppression, which are the least studied yet the gravest barriers, financial burdens, non-residency status, and the view that Black fathers are insignificant to their children's well-being (Dubowitz et al., 2006; Cabrera et al., 2008, 2014; Cabrera & Mitchell, 2009; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). All of these factors can make it significantly difficult for African American fathers to provide financially for their children and families, which also negatively impacts fathers' self-esteem and self-efficacy as parents (Julion et al., 2007; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). Despite these formidable barriers, many African American fathers today remain involved and committed to their children and take on a wide variety of roles within their families. They are actively engaged and are nurturing caretakers, role models, and providers, and their positive involvement benefits children both directly and indirectly.

Social Policies That Impact Father Involvement

In this section, we describe several initiatives, policies, and interventions that affect African American and Latinx fathers and children. We also present research that examines the relations between these factors and father involvement and child developmental outcomes.

Supporting Healthy Marriages

After the passing of the 1996 Welfare Reform Bill, the Administration for Children and Families funded and implemented the Healthy Marriage Initiative, which aimed to promote stable and healthy relationships by providing low-income married couples with access to marriage education services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2009). The core components of this initiative included promoting positive emotional connections between couples and teaching couples to

engage in relationship problem-solving and develop communication skills. Two additional federal initiatives were specifically created to target Latinx and African American couples through programs within these initiatives incorporating culturally competent strategies to address the unique needs and challenges of these ethnic groups (Scott et al., 2015). The African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) incorporated content related to the effects of racial discrimination on couple and family relationships, the supportive role of churches, and the high levels of African American male incarceration (Ooms, 2007). In the Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative (HHMI), programs adapted content to acknowledge the influence that extended families have and to address the effects of discrimination and documentation status on marital and family relationships (Ooms, 2007). However, these cultural modifications were not empirically tested, making it difficult to conclude whether the programs effectively engaged families and particularly fathers.

In 2003, the Administration for Children and Families funded the Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM) Project, a multisite evaluation of the impact of providing 1 year of skills-based marriage education for low-income married couples who either had children or were expecting a child. The aim of the project was to promote well-being in families by increasing the stability and quality of marital relationships and preventing relationship dissolution. SHM families received curricula-based workshops and family support services (e.g., assistance with finding childcare), while control families were given a list of resources and services that they could access in their communities (Wood et al., 2010). Participation rates, defined as attending at least one SHM activity, were very similar for African American and Latinx couples. Both African American and Latinx couples attended fewer hours of SHM activities compared to White couples (Miller Gaubert et al., 2012).

An evaluation of the program's effectiveness at the 12-month follow-up suggested that SHM benefitted Latinx couples more than other ethnic groups (Hsueh et al., 2012). Latinx couples reported slightly more relationship happiness compared to African American and White couples. However, there were no ethnic group differences by 30 months (Hsueh et al., 2012). Couples in the treatment group reported more happiness in their relationships, more warmth and support towards each other, lower levels of marital distress, more engagement in positive communication, and fathers reported higher levels of cooperative co-parenting (Lundquist et al., 2014). Contrary to expectations, intervention couples were not any more likely to stay together compared to couples in the control group at the 30-month follow-up (Lundquist et al., 2014).

Some scholars attribute the lack of success in improving parenting practices and child outcomes and preventing relationship dissolution among low-income families to the curricula used in SHM, which were originally designed and validated with White middle-class couples. For example, these curricula did not address contextual stressors (e.g., financial hardship) that are relevant to low-income couples, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds (Karney et al., 2018). Future iterations of these programs should aim to create and validate curricula that reflect the strengths that African American and Latinx couples possess while also addressing the unique challenges that can compromise their relationships and family well-being.

Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Funded by the Administration for Children and Families since 2006, Responsible Fatherhood (RF) programs aim to increase fathers' involvement with their children by targeting their parenting and co-parenting behaviors. RF programs foster fathers' roles as caregivers and financial providers by teaching evidence-based positive parenting practices and encouraging nonresident fathers to provide child support. These programs also aim to increase fathers' economic stability by fostering their employment skills and providing them with job training and education services. One important caveat of these programs is that their content is more relevant for nonresident fathers such as African Americans than for resi-

dent fathers such as Latinx; thus, their effectiveness on resident fathers' involvement may be limited (Scott et al., 2015).

Findings on the impact of RF programs on fathers have been mixed. In one evaluation of four RF programs, fathers reported engaging in more nurturing behaviors (e.g., encouraging children to talk about their feelings) and activities with their children (e.g., reading, playing, and feeding) 1 year after enrollment (Avellar et al., 2018). However, RF programs had no significant effect on the co-parenting relationship (e.g., working together as a team), economic support, or the frequency of contact with their children. There were also no significant effects on fathers' earnings at the end of the intervention, although they were more likely to be employed for longer durations (Avellar et al., 2018). One meta-analysis found that RF programs were effective in increasing father-reported positive parenting and involvement and cooperative co-parenting among unmarried, low-income, nonresiding fathers (Holmes et al., 2020). However, there were no significant impacts on fathers' child support or employment. These mixed findings are difficult to explain. Qualitative data show that although fathers chose to enroll in RF programs because they were motivated to be better fathers for their children and to find employment (Holcomb et al., 2015), they also reported high levels of co-parenting conflict and mothers' gatekeeping behaviors that made it difficult to develop positive father–child relationships (Randles, 2020). Overall, Black and Latinx participating fathers found that the program content was useful. They described gaining knowledge about supporting their children, both financially and emotionally as well as skills and resources to fulfill various responsibilities related to their fathering role (Randles, 2020).

In-Hospital Paternity Establishment

According to a 2022 National Vital Statistics Report based on 2020 data, 70% of Black infants and 53% of Latinx infants are born to unmarried parents (Osterman et al., 2022). Unlike fathers who are legally married to the mother of their child, fathers who are either not romantically involved with the mother of their child or who are in a cohabiting union are not automatically granted legal rights over their children. Instead, they must establish paternity in the hospital shortly after the birth to have their name appear on their child's birth certificate. Descriptive analyses with ethnically diverse samples of fathers find that compared to White fathers, Black and Latinx fathers are less likely to establish paternity (Guzzo, 2009). Another study found that compared to White fathers, Black fathers were more likely to be present for the child's birth but not establish paternity, whereas Latinx fathers were more likely to be present at birth and establish paternity (Osborne & Dillon, 2014).

Research on the establishment of paternity suggests that ethnic minority fathers experience administrative and procedural hurdles, which make it difficult to establish paternity (Osborne & Dillon, 2014). One qualitative study found that Black parents reported variability in the ease and clarity of the establishment process with some mothers and fathers stating that hospital staff only provided the paperwork necessary to complete the process but no further information (Rebman et al., 2018). Other challenges that ethnically diverse parents have noted about the paternity establishment process have to do with procedural issues, including a lack of identification (i.e., documentation) and scheduling issues (e.g., conflict with fathers' availability; Osborne & Dillon, 2014).

Despite the hurdles that fathers must overcome to establish paternity, there are several benefits to establishing paternity, both for fathers and their children. Paternity establishes a legal relationship between the father and his child, which is necessary for the child to obtain benefits; for example, many health insurance companies require proof of the relation (e.g., birth certificate) to add a child to an insurance plan. Establishing paternity is also necessary for children to receive formal child support and for fathers to be granted court-ordered visits. Other benefits, especially for nonresident fathers, include being more likely to visit their infants

and have overnight visits compared to nonresiding fathers who do not establish paternity (Mincy et al., 2005). Fathers who established paternity were also more likely to provide formal and informal child support compared to fathers who do not establish their paternity (Mincy et al., 2005). However, despite the high percentages of African American and Latinx children born to unmarried parents, the effects of establishing paternity on the quality of father-child relationships and child outcomes, particularly in the long term, is not well studied.

Child Support

Paying child support is one important component of nonresident fathers' responsibility to their children (Cabrera et al., 2000; Mincy et al., 2018). However, fathers' financial support can vary by fathers' level of cooperation: informal (voluntary) or formal (court-ordered) support. Regardless of the type of child support, there is large variability in the child support payments of nonresident fathers. A study of nonresident fathers participating in an RF program found that they showed an increase in their reported commitment to providing child support from pretest to posttest, controlling for employment status and the quality of the father–child relationship (Chan & Adler-Baeder, 2019). Fathers who reported more change in their hope for the future, role salience (e.g., devoting time and energy to raising children), and positive parenting skills (e.g., praising child) over the course of participation also reported more commitment to providing child support at posttest (Chan & Adler-Baeder, 2019). Child support payments are also related to the quality of the co-parenting relationship (e.g., respecting schedules and rules for the child) with the child's mother (Goldberg, 2015). In families with more positive co-parenting, nonresident fathers are more likely to provide larger amounts of monthly child support and less likely to require a court order to provide child support (Goldberg, 2015).

Nonresident fathers' financial support has a number of benefits for children. For some families, nonresident fathers' financial contributions may help to keep the child out of poverty (Hakovirta et al., 2019; Hakovirta & Jokela, 2019). Other studies have shown that fathers who provide more child support have children with higher scores on measures of receptive vocabulary and verbal ability at age 5 (Nepomnyaschy et al., 2012).

Parental Custody

Some fathers who are not romantically involved with the mother of their child nor living in the same household as their child opt to pursue a parental legal custody process. However, mothers are more likely to be granted full custody compared to fathers (Grall, 2020). A national study found that almost one-third of mothers who had custody of their children were Black, and almost one-quarter were Latinx. However, among custodial fathers, less than one-fifth were Black and Latinx; most custodial fathers are likely to be White (Grall, 2020). Although fathers are less likely to be granted primary custody, they are often granted rights to have contact with their children. In some custody cases, a judge may grant shared custody. Although there is currently no national data on custody arrangements by ethnicity, studies find that a little more than one-third of families have a joint-custody arrangement (Grall, 2020).

To date, only one study has examined how custody arrangements are associated with young children's outcomes among African American families. A study reported that at age one, more than half of children had contact with their nonresiding fathers but did not have overnight visits; 10% of children had no contact with their fathers; and 38% had overnight visits (Tornello et al., 2013). At age 3, more than one-third of children had contact with their nonresiding fathers but did not have overnight visits, and almost 40% had overnight visits; the percentage of children having no contact with their fathers increased to almost one-third. Controlling for race, education,

poverty status, parent conflict, co-parenting quality, and father parenting quality, children who had frequent overnight stays (i.e., 128–256 days over the last 2 years) at age 3 engaged in more mother-reported prosocial behaviors at age 5 compared to children who rarely or never had overnight stays.

Currently, our knowledge of parent custody arrangements among Latinx and African American families is limited. Reviews of studies (e.g., Bauserman, 2002) show that controlling for parent conflict, joint custody arrangement (as opposed to sole-custody arrangements) is associated with a host of better child outcomes, including better father–child relationships (e.g., feelings of closeness), fewer health problems, fewer behavioral problems (e.g., aggression) and fewer socioemotional problems (e.g., anxiety). However, it is unclear how ethnically diverse the samples were in these studies. Future research should focus on examining whether joint-custody arrangements have similar benefits for children of Latinx and African American backgrounds.

Parental Leave

Another important policy that affects father involvement is parental leave, which consists of taking time off from work following the birth, adoption, or placement of a foster child. Parental leave can be either paid (e.g., parents receive a portion of their salary) or unpaid. At the time of publication, the United States is one of the only countries that does not guarantee paid leave at the national level (Livingston & Thomas, 2019). In US states with a paid family leave policy, there is much variability in how generous these policies are. According to a 2020 analysis of states' implementation of paid family leave, only four states (i.e., New York, New Jersey, California, and Washington) and the District of Columbia provide parents with a minimum of 6 weeks (Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, 2020).

Given the lack of a nationwide implementation of paid family leave, only state-level statistics are available regarding the use of leave by African American and Latinx fathers. Research

has documented ethnic disparities in both fathers' access to and use of paid family leave, with Black and Latinx fathers being 40% less likely to take time off compared to White fathers (Nepomnyaschy & Waldfogel, 2007). There also appears to be significant mother–father differences in the amount of time taken. For example, when paid family leave was first offered in California, mothers took 2–3 additional weeks of leave, whereas fathers only took an additional week off (Baum & Ruhm, 2016). Prior to the implementation of paid family leave, mothers were taking an average of 2.4 weeks, while fathers were taking 4.7 days off. Gender differences in taking leave may be, in part, attributed to gender-related norms; fathers are often viewed as the primary financial providers, so taking time off may be perceived as a failure to fulfill their financial obligations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

The variability in fathers taking time off is important, given that parental leave has been shown to have a number of benefits for both parents and children. However, most research on the benefits of paid parental leave on families has been conducted with mothers (Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, 2020). Among the few existing studies examining fathers' use of parental leave, there do seem to be positive effects on paternal involvement with their children. In one study with data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) and controlling for paternal education and ethnicity, when fathers took two or more weeks of leave (compared to no leave), fathers were 59% more likely to engage in caregiving activities, such as preparing meals or putting the child to bed (Huerta et al., 2014). Fathers were also more likely to engage in cognitively stimulating activities (e.g., reading) with their children at least three times per week compared to fathers who did not take any leave. Another study found positive effects on the quality of father–child relationships after controlling for a number of factors, including parents' educational attainment and race/ethnicity (Petts & Knoester, 2019). When fathers took either 1 week of leave or 2 or more weeks of leave following the birth of their child,

their children reported more father–child closeness at age 9 compared to children whose fathers did not take any leave.

The benefits of taking parental leave also seem to extend beyond the father–child relationship, having positive effects on the marital relationship. In a study that controlled for baseline marital quality, income, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment, researchers found that when fathers took between less than a week to a month of leave, couples were more likely to still be married when their child was 5 years old compared to couples in which the father did not take any parental leave (Petts et al., 2020). The authors hypothesized that fathers who take time off may have more egalitarian views surrounding parenting, which translates into specific behaviors such as taking paternity leave and being involved in caregiving practices. These behaviors, in turn, may positively affect spouses' satisfaction with the division of labor and thus, reduce the likelihood of union dissolution.

Differences in parental leave have also been observed to vary by fathers' resident status. In one study, researchers found that fathers who lived outside of the home were less likely to take time off compared to fathers who lived with their child's mother, controlling for income, education, and race/ethnicity; specifically, nonresident fathers, on average, took 0.27 fewer weeks of leave (Pragg & Knoester, 2017). In another study, regardless of the residential status, Black fathers were less likely to take paternity leave compared to White fathers. However, for both residing and nonresiding fathers, those who took paternal leave reported more father involvement (e.g., reading stories) with their infants. When nonresiding fathers took leave, the mother of their child was more likely to report more cooperative co-parenting (e.g., respecting rules established for the child) and more shared responsibility (e.g., taking the infant to appointments; Pilkauskas & Schneider, 2020).

A limitation across many of these studies is that race and ethnicity were used as covariates, making it unclear whether the benefits of paternal leave vary as a function of ethnicity. Clearly, more research is needed on Latinx and African American fathers' access and use of paid family leave. Research on access and use of leave is critical for informing the creation of paid family leave policies, particularly in identifying ways to support fathers in taking parental leave.

Interventions with Families

Family-level interventions that have included fathers often have two primary goals: (1) increase father involvement and (2) improve the relationship between mothers and fathers. However, there are relatively few intervention programs that include fathers in their samples. Notably, even when fathers are included in family interventions, researchers have typically not examined the effects of these interventions by parent gender, making it unclear whether fathers benefit in the same way as mothers do (Panter-Brick et al., 2014). Below, we describe findings from evaluations of some family-level interventions that have recruited fathers.

One such preventive intervention is the *Supporting Father Involvement (SFI) Study*, a randomized evaluation of an intervention taking a family systems approach to target parents' psychological well-being, three-generation patterns of adaptation and dysfunction, quality of couple relationship, quality of parent–child relationships, life stress, and social support (Cowan et al., 2009). Among a sample of White, Latinx, and African American couples with children between ages 0 and 11, SFI mothers and fathers reported more father involvement in daily childcare (e.g., feeding) at the 18-month follow-up compared to control families (Cowan et al., 2014). In addition, both SFI mothers and fathers reported less endorsement of authoritarian parenting statements (e.g., harsh and low-warmth parenting) as well as lower levels of parenting stress and violent problem-solving (e.g., yelling) compared to control couples. Relationship satisfaction, as reported by mothers and fathers, remained stable between pretest and the 18-month follow-up.

Another couple-level intervention is the *Fatherhood, Relationship, and Marriage*

Education (FRAME) intervention, which teaches low-income couples skills for managing stress, reducing couple conflict, and improving the co--parenting relationship. In one randomized controlled trial with an ethnically diverse sample of 112 cohabiting couples with a child between 0 and 18 years of age, three intervention conditions and one control condition were compared: fathers-only group (i.e., fathers only attended sessions), mothers-only group, couples group, and a control group. After controlling for child age, income, and ethnicity, fathers experienced changes in involvement from pre to posttest (i.e., 2 weeks after completion of workshops). Specifically, men in the couples and father-only conditions reported higher levels of involvement (e.g., spending time with child doing things they like to do) at posttest compared to men in the control and mothers-only groups (Rienks et al., 2011). Moreover, increases in father-perceived parental alliance (e.g., cooperation) between pre and posttest were positively associated with higher levels of father-reported involvement for fathers in the couples and father-only groups (Rienks et al., 2011). These findings are encouraging and suggest that contrary to other evaluations of FRAME, there do seem to be benefits of fathers' participation in family interventions.

Recommendations for Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Fathers and Their Families from a Cultural Perspective

Fathers' involvement in their children's lives is associated with positive child development outcomes, parental well-being, and family cohesion (Cabrera et al., 2017; Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). Initiatives to support fatherhood can help fathers to develop skills and confidence to engage more actively with their children and increase fathers' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with family life. However, engaging fathers in programs is challenging; low-income ethnic minority men face disproportionately multiple barriers that are likely to increase disparities (Lloyd et al., 2021; Padilla & Thomson, 2021).

Several studies have shown that because a major barrier to program delivery is the fathers' reluctance to participate in parenting services, they have focused their programmatic efforts on addressing the barriers to fathers' engagement and have identified best practices for supporting fathers (Bayley et al., 2009; Cryer-Coupet et al., 2021).

To be successful, initiatives aimed at supporting fathers of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in their roles as fathers must address these barriers and the specific challenges that these fathers experience when designing and implementing the programs and services.

Fathers often are not aware of the existing services and programs aimed to support them or how these services/programs can benefit them. Program staff also know that advertising services to fathers are more difficult because regular venues for promoting services, such schools, primary health care centers, are less frequently attended by men (Sicouri et al., 2018). Best practices suggest that advertisements targeted at fathers include both the nature of alternatives available and the value of participating in the study and being clear and explicit about the benefits to both fathers and children (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013; Frank et al., 2015). Advertising methods should incorporate vocabulary and images that reflect inclusivity towards fathers in their advertising materials and be designed for fathers who are hard-to-reach, nonresident fathers, and fathers from diverse ethnic or cultural backgrounds (Gavazzi & Schock, 2004; Glynn & Dale, 2015). For example, Sicouri et al. (2018) suggest the following strategies: make information available via the internet; use respected peer advocates to engage other fathers; and direct invitations to fathers by emails, texts, or telephone; target alternative places where fathers spend time (e.g., job centers, workplaces, and sports venues; Bayley et al., 2009).

According to Scourfield et al. (2014), it is very challenging to engage fathers because of their competing work demands, shift work, atypical working hours, and pressure to fulfill their financial obligation to their families. Other logistic issues that decrease participation include the

hour and day (weekends vs. evenings) services offered and inflexible location. Others recommend that providers should consider alternative locations (e.g., sports venues) or alternative support mechanisms, such as providing educational materials, telephone numbers for support, or online interventions (Bayley et al., 2009).

Fathers also tend to perceive parent support initiatives as more appropriate for mothers. This may be, in part, due to the language and types of images used on advertising materials. Also, when fathers do engage in parenting programs, they may experience difficulties fitting into established female-dominated groups (Burgess, 2009). Fathers may be concerned that these parenting initiatives aim to dictate how they should parent and consequently be reluctant to engage (Bayley et al., 2009). They may also believe that their language and literacy skills are inadequate to attend. Providers must consider the cultural, religious, and gender appropriateness, along with literacy and language requirements, of their programs and services. In addition, organizations such as health centers, schools, and community centers, do not have a policy on father involvement, and there is little information on how to best engage and provide ongoing support for fathers (Bayley et al., 2009). Staffs' beliefs and expectations about which parent should be involved, why fathers should be involved, and why reach out to fathers when mothers can do so are also important barriers that programs need to address (Burgess, 2009).

Culturally-sensitive initiatives must create a welcoming environment for fathers that clearly signal that they are welcome and that they are an important part of these programs. Direct communication with fathers (rather than with mothers) and participation of fathers in the process of planning and designing these initiatives can help them feel central to the organization and provide staff with valuable feedback on what fathers want and need (Sandstrom et al., 2015). Training should provide staff with the skills and reinforcement of attitudes and expectations required to work effectively with fathers at the same time as challenging the negative attitudes they may have and provide them continuous professional development support (Sandstrom et al., 2015).

Achieving greater engagement of fathers in parenting support programs requires a greater understanding of the perspectives of fathers, their needs, their strengths, and the barriers they face. A father-inclusive culture that addresses the specific needs and challenges of Black and Latinx fathers must be fostered as early in development as possible (ideally prenatally). This change should be motivated by clear organizational and social policies and strategies that acknowledge that fathers are an integral part of families and a key driver of child development.

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Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Fatherhood

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Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Fatherhood: An Introduction

Gay, bisexual, and queer (GBQ)[1] fathers are increasingly visible in the literature on sexual minority parenting. In a recent review, Carneiro et al. (2017) identified 63 studies (1979–2016) of GB fathers, most of which were conducted in the United States. The authors documented several key themes in the research on GB fathers, including pathways to and motivations for fatherhood; parenting experiences and childrearing; family life and relationship quality; gender and father identities; social climate; and fathers' and children's psychosocial adjustment. We draw from these major themes as a loose framework for organizing this chapter and incorporate several other themes that we see as increasingly relevant or dominant in the field.

We begin by presenting our overarching theoretical perspective. We then review the literature on GBQ fatherhood alongside debates and challenges within the field. We end by discussing research implications and future directions. Although this chapter is about GBQ fathers, few studies distinguish the experiences of BQ fathers from gay fathers or include other identities beyond gay-identified men. In turn, the unique experiences of BQ fathers are likely not fully captured. Thus, while we refer to "male couples" or "GBQ fathers" throughout to acknowledge the diversity in sexual orientation among sexual minority fathers, this chapter is primarily grounded in research on the experiences of gay-identified men. Finally, although this chapter primarily focuses on cisgender GBQ men and fatherhood, we also highlight trans fathers—a group whose experiences have been the focus of limited research.

Overarching Theoretical Perspective

We draw from ecological, minority stress, and intersectionality perspectives in framing this

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[1]Sexual minority men use a variety of terms to describe their sexual orientation, including gay, bisexual, and queer. Queer has been considered a more expansive term for men attracted to many different genders and is used more frequently by younger men (S. K. Goldberg, Rothblum, et al., 2020).

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chapter. An ecological approach to human development recognizes that individuals exist within, are influenced by, and interact with, multiple intersecting contexts, including families, neighborhoods, communities, and workplaces, as well as broader societal institutions, ideologies, and discourses (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Such interactions shift throughout the life cycle as individuals develop, establish relationships, and create families and communities. This approach is particularly useful in the study of GBQ people, whose lives, relationships, and families are increasingly visible in society, but who continue to encounter discrimination in a range of contexts (A. E. Goldberg, 2010). Continual and pervasive exposure to stigma and lack of access to equal rights within the broader systems with which they interact (e.g., schools, health, and legal) may lead GBQ men and their families to experience minority stress, placing them at risk for adverse mental health outcomes (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2011; Meyer, 2003). The experiences, resiliencies, and needs of GBQ fathers are further shaped not only by their sexual identity but other intersecting identities, including their gender, race, and social class (Crenshaw, 1989; Veenstra, 2011)—a reality that practitioners, including therapists, should be attuned to (Peters, 2018). In turn, this chapter attends not only to the situational and contextual forces that impact GBQ men's experiences as they move through the life course but also to the intersections of men's identities and how these shape parenthood.

Pathways and Barriers to Parenthood

Early research on GBQ parenthood (i.e., 1980s–1990s) focused almost exclusively on cisgender men who became parents in the context of heterosexual relationships and then came out as GBQ amidst the dissolution of these relationships (Bigner, 1996; Bigner & Bozett, 1990). This research, which has been reviewed extensively elsewhere (see Tasker & Lavender-Stott, 2020), focused a great deal on men's coming out

experiences amidst a fairly homophobic social climate, navigating relationships with ex-spouses, and forming gay stepfamilies: indeed, in a recent example of this strand of research, Bermea et al. (2020) found that gay stepfamily formation can be fraught with heteronormative and homophobic interactions. Research on GBQ men who became parents via former heterosexual relationships has provided insight into barriers to openness about one's sexual identity (e.g., societal stigma, interference by former spouses and extended family) as well as the benefits of clear, honest communication with children regarding one's sexual identity (Power et al., 2017; Tasker & Lavender-Stott, 2020). In one study of GBQ fathers in Italy—where there are major barriers to surrogacy or adoption by GBQ men, who thus become parents mainly in the context of prior heterosexual unions—most men came out to at least one child and reported a positive reaction to their coming out (Giunti & Fioravanti, 2017). A study of adults raised by gay fathers found that when parental disclosure of sexual identity occurred earlier in the adult child's life, participants felt closer to fathers in adulthood, and those with closer relationships reported greater well-being (Tornello & Patterson, 2018).

Recent research has focused on GBQ men who become parents via adoption and surrogacy, as opposed to heterosexual relationships. This work has documented the barriers that GBQ men encounter in trying to become parents. Contrary to popular belief, national survey data shows that most GB and heterosexual men desire fatherhood, although GB men are less likely than heterosexual men to be bothered by the possibility of future childlessness (Jeffries et al., 2020). Unfortunately, GBQ men face negative attitudes related to their sexual orientation and gender and may encounter even greater scrutiny than LBQ women regarding their fitness and deservingness to become parents (Goldberg, 2012; Webb et al., 2017). GBQ men are viewed as violating traditional gender roles and not providing the "essential" qualities of womanhood, thus denying their children a mother (A. E. Goldberg, 2012). Such attitudes manifest in a variety of ways, including laws that allow adoption agencies to discriminate

against GBQ adopters (A. E. Goldberg, Tornello, et al., 2020). Such attitudes may also be internalized by GBQ men in ways that thwart their parenting desires or motivation.

In fact, internalized heterosexism or homophobia is often cited by GBQ men as a reason for delaying or not pursuing parenthood (A. E. Goldberg, 2012; A. E. Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012; Robinson & Brewster, 2014). GBQ men may believe that they cannot be good fathers or parents (e.g., because they are gay, cannot provide their children with a "mother," and will expose their children to harm, such as teasing), thus undermining their parental confidence and motivation (A. E. Goldberg, 2012). Robinson and Brewster (2014) found that internalized heterosexism and gender role conflict were negatively correlated with GB men's perceived ability to parent. One study of GB men found that those who were most recently partnered with men were less likely than other groups (heterosexual men, bisexual men most recently partnered with women) to express a desire to be a parent; and, when they did, were less likely than other groups to intend to fulfill those desires (Riskind & Tornello, 2017). Perhaps men most recently partnered with men experience more gender role conflict (e.g., awareness of the ways that they violate dominant masculine or heterosexual norms) or less self-efficacy (e.g., related to biological forms of family building) when considering parenthood than their female-partnered counterparts.

In addition to internalized heterosexism, sexual identity, and relationship structure, other characteristics have been linked to greater self-efficacy and confidence in pursuing parenthood among GBQ men. GBQ men who are younger believe that children with GBQ parents enjoy positive outcomes and live in more favorable social climates (e.g., more queer-affirming communities) report greater self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to achieve parenthood (Riskind et al., 2013). Where men live—their broader political, legal, and social environment—has implications not only for GBQ men's parenting aspirations but also for how those aspirations relate to their well-being. If GBQ men desire children and live in affirming environments (e.g., states with anti-discriminatory policies), they experience less depression and higher self-esteem, while the opposite is true for men who live in less affirming areas (Bauermeister, 2014). Thus, GBQ men are often forced to confront heterosexist attitudes and gender role conflicts on their path to parenthood, which may impact perceived parenting ability and parenting self-efficacy.

Parenthood pathways may also be shaped by the intersection between men's sexual minority and racial/ethnic identities. Among men of color, cultural norms that place an emphasis on having children may promote the pursuit of parenthood through sexual relationships with women (Williams et al., 2004). This path to parenthood may also be selected more often by men of color due to intersectional prejudice that limits their access to other avenues to pursue parenthood. For example, research suggests that restrictive adoption policies disproportionately affect Black GBQ individuals (Cahill et al., 2003). GBQ men of color also face other barriers to pursuing parenthood. Black GBQ prospective fathers may, for example, confront stereotypes of Black men as absent fathers or as hypersexual beings, which have their roots in white supremacy (Coles & Green, 2010). Such stereotypes may impact how adoption social workers approach and evaluate these men as potential parents. Moreover, trans prospective fathers face unique challenges in pursuing parenthood, including discrimination by adoption agencies and internalized transphobia (A. E. Goldberg, Tornello, et al., 2020), which will be discussed further below.

Parenthood Route

GBQ men's route to parenthood is shaped by many factors. Men who want to be biogenetically connected to their child, have significant financial resources, and who live in a state where surrogacy is legal are more likely to pursue

surrogacy[2] (Berkowitz, 2020; A. E. Goldberg, 2012). In some cases, male couples decide ahead of time which partner will provide the sperm, while in others, men decide to mix their sperm and let fate decide who will be the biological father (Blake et al., 2016). Once paternity is established, men do not necessarily share with outsiders which father has a biogenetic connection with the child (Murphy, 2013). Such nondisclosure can be seen as resistance to the primacy of biogenetic ties in society, wherein the genetically-related partner is treated as the "real" parent and an assertion of an alternative social definition of family relationships.

Men who choose to become adoptive parents tend to value biogenetic connections less intensely and often demonstrate altruistic motivations (i.e., they want to parent a child who otherwise would not have a parent; A. E. Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012). Some, however, arrive at adoption because surrogacy is not legal where they live or is not financially feasible (Downing et al., 2009; A. E. Goldberg, 2012). Among men who choose adoption, men with fewer resources and a willingness to adopt an older child and/or a child with special needs may be more oriented towards public domestic adoption (i.e., via the child welfare system), whereas men who wish to adopt a newborn may be drawn to private domestic adoption (Downing et al., 2009; A. E. Goldberg, 2012). GBQ men who desire a child of a race that is not well-represented in the pool of children available in the United States (e.g., an Asian child) may be more drawn to international adoption (Downing et al., 2009), a route that is increasingly unavailable to GBQ men (Levine, 2020). Thus, structural and indi-

vidual factors shape GBQ men's adoption pathways.

Becoming a parent for GBQ men is a process that is both classed and racialized. Many men do not have the financial resources to pursue surrogacy or private adoption and arrive at child welfare adoption by default. This may mean that GBQ men with fewer resources are parenting the children with the most challenges—such as a history of early adversity, multiple foster care placements, and medical, psychosocial, and developmental challenges (A. E. Goldberg, 2019). GBQ men who are very interested in surrogacy—and GBQ men who face legal barriers to adopting, leaving them few family-building options—may seek out transnational or overseas commercial surrogacy (hiring a surrogate abroad), which is less expensive (Berkowitz, 2020). Sometimes referred to as fertility tourism or reproductive outsourcing, transnational surrogacy is arguably problematic: hiring a woman from a less-developed country to carry one's baby raises ethical and moral issues related to gender, labor, exploitation, and inequality (Berkowitz, 2020). GBQ men pursuing transnational commercial surrogacy can be seen as participating in and reifying racialized and heteronormative systems of kinship—although some authors argue that they are "reworking" and creating new forms of kinship (Petersen, 2018).

In addition to surrogacy, adoption, and foster care, GBQ men become parents via heterosexual relationships (as discussed), co-parenting (e.g., semen donation), and step-parenting. In some countries (e.g., Italy, Portugal), surrogacy, adoption, and foster care are not options for same-sex couples or at least pose severe legal roadblocks, and thus the majority of GBQ men there become parents via heterosexual relationships (Baiocco et al., 2014; Messina & D'Amore, 2018). GBQ men may also become parents by donating their sperm to a woman or female couple (Dempsey, 2012). A male couple and a female couple might decide to become parents together and form a co-parenting unit of four or a single GBQ man might elect to conceive and raise children with a single woman (Erera &

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[2]There are several types of surrogacy: (i) genetic (or traditional) surrogacy, where the sperm of a prospective GBQ father is used to fertilize the surrogate's egg in an artificial insemination procedure; and (ii) gestational surrogacy, in which a woman's egg(s) is/are fertilized with the sperm of a prospective GBQ father by means of an in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedure in a laboratory, after which the embryo is transferred to the surrogate's womb. GBQ men who want to become parents through surrogacy usually opt for gestational surrogacy (Berkowitz, 2020; Blake et al., 2016).

Segal-Engelchin, 2014). Other GBQ men become parents in the context of step-parenting—i.e., by partnering with a man who already has children, often from a previous heterosexual relationship—a process that can involve unique issues, including boundary and role ambiguity in regards to the gay male step-parent's place in the family (Jenkins, 2013) and stigma directed at both parents and children (Robitaille & Saint-Jacques, 2009).

Trans men appear to be less likely than trans women to become parents, yet many trans men want to become parents (Riggs et al., 2016). Although the literature on parenthood routes among trans men is slim, it is clear that they confront unique psychological (e.g., gender dysphoria) and physical tensions in relation to parenthood, which can impact how they become parents. Biological parenthood, such as via sexual intercourse, is a common pathway to parenthood for trans people, especially among those who become parents before transitioning. It may be chosen because it represents a quicker and more affordable way to parenthood than adoption, or surrogacy, which has the potential to delay or interrupt gender-affirming treatment (Haines et al., 2014; Obedin-Maliver & Makadon, 2015; Tornello et al., 2019). However, biological parenthood may pose its own stresses, as the reproductive organs involved in conceiving a child are often incongruent with trans individuals' gender identity, which can give rise to discomfort and dysphoria (Tasker & Gato, 2020; Tornello & Bos, 2017). Indeed, while some trans men pursue gender-affirming surgery (e.g., chest reconstruction surgery; hysterectomy and oophorectomy [removal of the uterus and ovaries]); genital reconstruction surgery), many do not, and thus retain the reproductive organs necessary to conceive and carry a child (Light et al., 2014). For trans men who elect to pursue hormone treatment and/or surgeries and who also desire a genetically-related child in the future, oocyte cryopreservation is an increasingly used, albeit expensive, pathway to parenthood (Obedin-Maliver & Makadon, 2015).

Navigating the Gendered Nature of Parenthood

GBQ men who seek to become parents face scrutiny associated with their sexual orientation and gender. However, they also possess attributes that can be viewed as strengths or advantages in regard to fatherhood. First, they are generally highly motivated (Carneiro et al., 2017; A. E. Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012). Second, male couples may be less beholden to heteronormative ideals of "traditional" parenting and work arrangements—and may enact a more flexible and equitable division of labor, as well as create parenting roles that push and expand beyond the gendered boundaries of parenthood (A. E. Goldberg, 2013).

The Division of Labor

Evidence of egalitarianism among male couples and gay fathers specifically comes from a number of sources. Using national data, Prickett et al. (2015) found that men partnered with men spent more time in childrearing and parenting activities than men partnered with women. A study of male, female, and different-sex adoptive couples found that both male and female couples divided up paid and unpaid labor more equally than different-sex couples (A. E. Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012). Such egalitarianism may, in turn, promote positive family outcomes. Tornello et al. (2015) found that gay fathers generally reported desiring and having egalitarian divisions of labor, and smaller discrepancies between the actual and ideal division of labor were associated with greater parental well-being and couple functioning. The benefits of sharing may extend to children: Sumontha et al. (2016) observed that children of female and male couples reported more liberal or flexible gender attitudes when their parents equally divided child care as well as when parents reported having more liberal and flexible gender attitudes.

Of course, it is rare for couples, including male couples, to share paid and unpaid work exactly equally (A. E. Goldberg, 2013). Several

studies of gay fathers (Feugé et al., 2018; A. E. Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012) found that, on average, men reported a relatively egalitarian division of childcare tasks and high involvement in most child care domains, but, within couples, one partner was usually more involved than the other. Higher salary and work hours were associated with less involvement, such that the partner who earned more money and worked more hours did less child care. Higher family income also impacts couples' ability to enact equality, such that they can "buy out" certain forms of labor. Financially comfortable couples can rely on housecleaners, nannies, laundry services, and other forms of domestic labor, thus reducing the overall workload of the couple and making it easier to share (A. E. Goldberg, 2013; A. E. Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012). Significantly, though, equality is not necessarily always the goal: Some male couples may seek equity but not equality in labor distribution, such that one partner works, and one partner stays home (A. E. Goldberg, 2013).

Parenthood "Roles"

GBQ men often navigate parenthood with the awareness that they are parenting in a society that privileges a mother–father model, whereby women and men are assumed to possess distinctly different (and perhaps complimentary) sets of characteristics, skills, and deficiencies. In turn, male couples can be seen as, to varying degrees, challenging or accepting heterosexual family norms and the meaning and definition of "family." They both draw on and resist dominant ideas of motherhood, fatherhood, and parenthood.

Evidence of this dialectic is found in research on GBQ fathers across the life course. For example, in choosing what names their children will call them, GBQ fathers draw from dominant naming traditions (i.e., they seek derivatives of traditional parent names, such as Daddy or Papa) but also innovate naming practices by looking to diverse sources for inspiration (e.g.,

they may choose parent names rooted in their own cultural or ethnic background or that of their children, or draw from the emergent naming norms in queer communities; Frank et al., 2019). These different approaches can be seen as highlighting GBQ fathers' negotiation surrounding which aspects of traditional heteronormative parenting to adhere to or not, and may also reflect their assertion of their family system as legitimate, irrespective of its (non)conformity to the heteronormative model. Another example of this concerns GBQ men's relationship to birth mothers in open adoptions, which are characterized by some type of contact—before and/or after the adoption. Compared to LBQ and heterosexual adoptive mothers, GBQ adoptive fathers appear to more easily accept and embrace birth mothers as involved adults (e.g., extended family members; occupying an "aunt" type role) in their children's lives, perhaps in part because GBQ men do not experience themselves to be in "competition" with birth mothers in terms of parental title, identity, or role (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2011). Their openness and even reliance on birth mothers is an example of both embodying and resisting dominant ideas about parenthood: they embrace the notion that children need (birth) mothers; yet, open adoptions also arguably represent a unique and expansive kinship structure (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2011; A. E. Goldberg, 2019).

Even as they seek and embrace expansive parental roles and family identities, GBQ fathers are aware of the pressure to adhere to gender, sexuality, and parenthood norms. GBQ men who seek to be or are fathers balance the need to be seen as conforming "enough" (i.e., to norms about family, gender, and sexuality) so as to avoid scrutiny and marginalization with the desire to be authentically themselves. GBQ men who seek to adopt or foster children, for example, are pressured to present themselves in ways that downplay their sexuality or highlight their suitability in distinct ways, such as detailing how they can provide "gender role models" for children (Riggs, 2020). They often receive the message that they will only be successful in adopting if they characterize themselves as gender normative, monoga-

mous, non-political, middle class, and without "deficits" such as mental health or substance issues (Hicks, 2013).

The pressure placed on GBQ men to conform to traditional heteronormative standards once they are parents ultimately applies to their children as well. GBQ men possess a heightened awareness of gender accountability, such that they recognize societal pressures to accomplish their children's gender socialization, especially if they are raising girls (Berkowitz & Ryan, 2011). They may manage such gender accountability by seeking out gender role models for their children (e.g., female pediatricians; their own sisters, and mothers) to help deflect concerns that two men cannot successfully raise a child, especially a daughter (Berkowitz & Ryan, 2011; A. E. Goldberg, 2012). Alternatively, they may resist such pressures, emphasizing to themselves and others that more important to children's development than parent gender is parenting quality (A. E. Goldberg, 2012). Either way, GBQ fathers appear to prepare their children, to varying degrees, to enter a world that may question the validity of their family unit.

In recent years, attitudes toward LGBQ-parent families have become more accepting, but trans parenthood remains highly stigmatized and scrutinized, in part due to trans individuals' disruption of mainstream cisheteronormative values (Pyne et al., 2015; von Doussa et al., 2015). von Doussa et al. (2015) found that trans parents and prospective parents (including but not limited to trans men) varied in how they imagined their parenthood roles. Some desired roles that closely aligned with normative (i.e., gendered) parenthood practices because these roles often supported or affirmed their gender identity (e.g., trans women were desiring traditional motherhood roles and ideals), while others endorsed less traditional approaches, such as requesting that their children use non-gendered pronouns for them (as opposed to "mom" or "dad"). Amidst a lack of cultural scripts or models, trans parents navigate parenthood by adhering to gendered norms or by forging their own ideas of parenthood (Hines, 2006; von Doussa et al., 2015).

Parent Socialization Practices

Because of their visibility and apparent divergence from the heteronuclear family structure, GBQ parents and children may face scrutiny in society, including intrusive questions about their family's creation (Gianino et al., 2009). Limited work has addressed how GBQ fathers socialize their children around possible reactions to their two-father family (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2016; A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2016; Oakley et al., 2017). Existing work suggests that GBQ fathers balance a desire to foster in children a sense of family pride (e.g., through conversations about family diversity) with the recognition that they should also prepare their children to face and respond to heterosexism and sexual stigma (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2016; Oakley et al., 2017). Trans parents, too, have expressed the desire to live authentically in their embodied gender and engage in open dialogue about their gender with their children, amidst an awareness that such openness could negatively impact their child (e.g., via bullying), leading some to strategically conceal their identities in certain contexts (Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2019; Haines et al., 2014).

Parent and child characteristics may impact whether and how parents socialize with their children about potential bias associated with their family structure. One study of lesbian and gay parents of kindergarten-aged adopted children found that parents of older children tended to engage in more socialization around heterosexism than parents of younger children, parents of daughters tended to engage in more socialization around heterosexism than parents of sons, and parents who were more "out" about their sexual identity engaged in more socialization around heterosexism than those who were less out (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2016). About two-thirds of gay fathers reported an engaged, direct approach to socialization around the family structure (e.g., initiating conversations about family diversity with the goal of instilling pride; preparing children for bias; fostering connections to the LGBTQ community), while one-third were more cautious in their approach, preferring to

emphasize similarities between their family and other family types rather than highlighting the ways in which their family was unique (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2016).

GBQ fathers and their children may be highly visible in society for additional reasons, such as the multiracial nature of their families. Many GBQ people adopt transracially and/or transculturally. National survey data show that 17% of white same-sex couples are raising children of color, compared to 3% of different-sex couples (Gates, 2014). In turn, same-sex transracial adoptive households may face added challenges related to their multiple stigmatized and highly visible family structure, in that these families are vulnerable to the stresses associated with not only heterosexism but also racism. GBQ parents of children of color similarly seek to balance concern for promoting children's positive racial identity development with the need to prepare them for bias—which is made more complex when they themselves are white (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2016; A. E. Goldberg et al., 2016). Echoing the patterns regarding family-related socialization, slightly more than half of the gay fathers took an engaged approach to racial socialization (e.g., instilling racial pride through learning about history; promoting connections to communities of color; preparing for bias); one-third took a cautious approach (e.g., emphasizing similarities over differences); and the remainder took an avoidant approach, generally not talking about race (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2016), with gay men of color being more likely to engage in racial socialization than white men (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2016).

Child Outcomes

Beyond family socialization practices, outcomes of children raised by same-sex couples have often been the subject of research. For example, because children who grow up with GBQ fathers from birth typically lack a female live-in parent, much attention has been paid to whether these children show typical gender-typed behaviors (A. E. Goldberg, 2010).

Gender-Typed Play and Activities

Farr et al. (2018) examined the gender-typed play behavior of preschool-age adopted children in lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and heterosexual parent households and found no differences in gender-typed play behavior by family structure. However, another study of preschool-age adopted children found that the play behavior of children in lesbian-mother and gay-father families was less gender-stereotyped than that of children in heterosexual-parent families, according to parent reports (A. E. Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). LGBQ parents—perhaps because of their own gender flexibility and more liberal attitudes toward gender—may be more likely to facilitate their children's cross-gendered play by creating an environment where such behaviors are not punished and may be encouraged. Interestingly, Goldberg and Garcia (2016) found that children with lesbian parents engaged in less gender-stereotyped play than children in both gay father and heterosexual parent families; and, children in gay-father families did not differ from children in heterosexual-parent families in gender-typed play—which might reflect male couples' efforts at gender accountability, such that they encounter particular pressures to ensure that their children conform to societal gender expectations.

Psychological Adjustment

In addition to focusing on gender development, research on children of GBQ parents has focused on mental health (Carneiro et al., 2017). This work suggests that children raised in two-father families not appear to be disadvantaged, but they may in fact show especially positive social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment compared to children from other family structures. This positive adjustment may be a function of the higher levels of education and income that often characterize two-father families, as well as GBQ men's high motivation for parenthood and their personal resiliency amongst stigma and other minority stressors (Carneiro et al., 2017). Studies have documented fewer externalizing symptoms (e.g.,

hyperactivity) (e.g., Golombok et al., 2014) and fewer internalizing symptoms (e.g., depression) in children in two-father families than children in mother–father families (e.g., Carone et al., 2018; Golombok et al., 2018), with one study documenting this effect in girls with two-father families specifically (Green et al., 2019). Gay fathers also report less parenting stress and more positive parenting than heterosexual parents, which is associated with fewer externalizing problems in their children (Golombok et al., 2014). A recent study of trans-parent families documented positive psychological adjustment and few emotional/behavioral problems among school-aged children, which is notable amidst their development in a transphobic society (Imrie et al., 2020).

Family process variables (e.g., parenting style, parent–child interactions) have implications for child outcomes in GBQ-father families. Paternal sensitivity and responsiveness have been linked to child attachment security in two-father families created via adoption (Feugé et al., 2018) and surrogacy (Carone et al., 2020). Observational research on coparenting found that lesbian and gay male parents shared child care more equally than heterosexual parents; lesbians showed the most supportive and least undermining behavior, gay couples the least supportive behavior, and heterosexual couples the most undermining behavior; and, across all families, more supportive coparenting was associated with better child adjustment (Farr & Patterson, 2013).

In sum, that GBQ parents and their children show such positive outcomes in research conducted over the past several decades suggests remarkable resilience, given that they develop in a heterosexist society and are exposed to stigma in multiple intersecting, overlapping contexts (Goldberg, 2010)—although attitudes are generally becoming more favorable towards LGBTQ-parent families in the United States (Fetner, 2016). Such findings have implications for practitioners, who can harness clients' experiences of overcoming bias to enhance their personal strengths and support their resilience, which is linked to positive mental health (Srivastava, 2011).

School-Related Outcomes

Turning to school experiences, and school-based victimization specifically, research suggests that school-aged children with gay fathers seem to be well-adjusted in school when compared to children with heterosexual parents. However, along with children of trans parents, they may still encounter teasing, bullying, or marginalization related to their family structure—experiences that are challenging but can foster resilience (Farr, Crain, et al., 2016; Farr, Oakley, & Ollen, 2016; Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2019; Haines et al., 2014). Farr and colleagues (2016; Farr, Crain, et al., 2016) found that adopted children of gay fathers and lesbian mothers did endorse "feeling "different" and sometimes encountered microaggressions in the school context. However, these children also endorsed positive feelings and ideas about their families, dovetailing with other work showing that young adults cite various strengths associated with growing up with LGBTQ parents, including resilience, valuing of diversity, and compassion toward marginalized groups (Cody et al., 2017; A. E. Goldberg, 2007). At the same time, the negative impact of bullying should not be underestimated: Among children of gay fathers who do experience bullying, this tends to be associated with more parent- and teacher-reported behavior problems, underscoring the serious nature and consequences of bullying (Farr, Crain, et al., 2016; Farr, Oakley, & Ollen, 2016).

Parent Outcomes

Parent outcomes, including stress, perceived parenting efficacy, and changes in relationships with partners, family, and friends, have also been investigated among GBQ men and, to a limited extent, trans men.

Parenting Stress and Perceived Self-Efficacy

Studies have demonstrated that adoptive gay fathers' parenting stress levels are within the normal range and do not differ from those of adoptive lesbian or heterosexual parents (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2014b; Tornello et al., 2011). Similarly, research on gay fathers who became parents via surrogacy has indicated few differences in parenting stress, depression, and anxiety compared to lesbian and heterosexual couples who conceived using reproductive technologies (van Rijn-van Gelderen et al., 2018). A study of gay fathers who became parents via surrogacy documented low levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, which the authors attributed in part to parents' significant financial resources (van Rijn-van Gelderen et al., 2018). Interestingly, gay fathers' lower levels of stress have been supported by physiological data: Burke and Bribiescas (2018) found that gay fathers had lower cortisol levels than gay non-fathers, suggesting that stress may differ between the two groups, or the stress response in gay fathers is somehow mitigated.

Emerging research on trans parents suggests that their mental health and parenting stress may be somewhat poorer than cisgender GBQ men, perhaps in large part due to the heightened level of stigma and discrimination they face in society. A study of trans parents with school-aged children found that trans parents reported higher rates of depression compared to cisgender parents and parents in the general population (Imrie et al., 2020).

Some work has investigated predictors and correlates of parenting stress among gay fathers specifically. Lower social support (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2014b; Tornello et al., 2011), poorer relationship quality (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2014), less positive feelings about one's sexual identity (Tornello et al., 2011), child emotional and behavioral problems (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2014), and higher numbers of children (Tornello et al., 2011) are associated with higher levels of parenting stress among gay fathers. A study of trans parents found that non-affirmation of one's

gender identity was related to higher parenting stress (Imrie et al., 2020). Encouragingly, research has increasingly explored positive outcomes, too, among gay fathers. Research in Israel found that gay fathers reported greater life satisfaction and a stronger sense of purpose compared to childless gay men and heterosexual fathers (Shenkman & Shmotkin, 2014, 2016). Perhaps due to the hurdles they face in becoming fathers, gay men may feel a sense of high personal achievement and growth as compared to childless gay men and heterosexual fathers over time (Shenkman & Shmotkin, 2016).

Indeed, initially, GBQ men have been shown to feel less positively about their parenting skills than heterosexual men (Bos et al., 2018). However, their confidence likely grows over time. A study of male, female, and different-sex adoptive couples across the transition to parenthood found that all parents saw themselves as becoming more skilled at parenting over time, indicating that on-the-ground experience was central to enhancing their confidence (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2009). Male couples increased the most, suggesting that coparenting with another man, coupled with the experience of being both "mother" and "father" to children, may lead men to develop greater confidence in their parenting skills (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2009).

Relationships with Partners, Friends, and Family

Becoming a parent impacts not only GBQ men's mental health, parenting competence, and a sense of purpose—but also their relationships, particularly with their partners, as well as with extended family and friends. GBQ men frequently report shifts in their partner relationships once they become parents, including declines in their relationship quality and intimacy, which is consistent with a large body of research on heterosexual parents (Carneiro et al., 2017). A study of male, female, and different-sex couples found that all couples experienced declines in their relationship quality across the first year of parenthood (A. E.

Goldberg et al., 2010), due to a lack of time alone and switch in the couples' focus from the romantic relationship to the new child—although some participants reported that parenting had enhanced their relationship and brought them closer (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2014). Among gay male couples specifically, several studies have shown that sexual frequency and satisfaction decrease after men become parents (Bergman et al., 2010). Moreover, despite the importance that many men place on sexual satisfaction, gay fathers appear to maintain a healthy perspective on any dissatisfaction with their sexual intimacy, not allowing it to color their feelings about the relationship as a whole (Huebner et al., 2012).

Given the unique relational context of same-sex relationships (e.g., partners' shared gender socialization and status as stigmatized minorities), GBQ fathers may encounter certain unique intra- and interpersonal processes that impact conflict management and relationship quality. Internalized homophobia has been linked to higher levels of relationship conflict among male couples (Totenhagen et al., 2018) and poorer sexual functioning in gay fathers (Fioravanti et al., 2020). Discrepancies between preferred and actual levels of equality in the division of labor have also been linked to poorer relationship quality among gay fathers (Tornello et al., 2015). Moreover, similar to studies of heterosexual parents, poor mental health and low social support are related to poorer relationship quality in gay fathers (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2010; Tornello et al., 2011).

Partners within couples may also differ from one another in ways that may cause conflict. Racial/ethnic differences, for example, may create the potential for stress and misunderstanding. LGBQ people of color with white partners may experience alienation in their relationships if they feel their partners cannot empathize with the intersecting forces of sexism, heterosexism, and racism that they face on a daily basis (Balsam et al., 2011). White partners may feel guilty about internalized or institutional racism and attempt to compensate for their privilege, which may leave both partners feeling frustrated. Interracial same-sex couples may also be more identifiable than

two partners of the same race, eliciting homophobic and racist reactions from outsiders (Rostosky et al., 2008). Interracial same-sex couples may also face negativity from family and friends, which is linked to lower relationship quality (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015). However, despite the challenges that interracial same-sex couples face, they tend to maintain healthy, committed relationships, perhaps in part due to their engagement in resilience-building strategies (e.g., looking to each other for support; speaking out against discrimination; Rostosky et al., 2008).

Differences in sexual identity between partners may also be a source of conflict or difficulty. For example, nonmonosexual[3] individuals partnered with monosexual individuals may experience unique minority stressors, including perceptions of less acceptance of their sexual identity and lower levels of outness (Brown, 2019; Vencill et al., 2017), which may in turn affect relationship functioning (Goldberg, Garcia, & Manley, 2017).

Beyond relationship quality, another dimension of GBQ fathers' relationships is relationship stability. Longitudinal studies of same-sex adoptive families have found that male couples are less likely to separate than female couples (Farr & A. E. Goldberg, 2019; A. E. Goldberg & Garcia, 2015). Factors that may help to explain these differences include (a) a higher income among gay men, which protects against stress and relationship dissolution, (b) gay men are less likely to adopt children with special needs, which is associated with interpersonal stress, and (c) male couples experience fewer disagreements about parenting and the division of child care (Farr, 2017; Farr & A. E. Goldberg, 2019; A. E. Goldberg & Garcia, 2015).

GBQ men's relationships with family and friends may also be impacted by parenthood. GBQ men are vulnerable to a lack of support from their families of origin in general, but some work has found that GBQ men grow closer to

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[3]Nonmonosexual, or plurisexual, refers to nonexclusive sexual orientations (e.g., bisexual, queer), while monosexual refers to exclusive sexual orientations (lesbian/gay, heterosexual).

family (e.g., parents) once they become parents (A. E Goldberg, 2012). GBQ fathers of color may be especially vulnerable to rejection from their families and communities due to their sexual identity (Cahill et al., 2003; Frost et al., 2016), which, alongside the isolation that GBQ fathers of color often encounter in predominantly white gay parenting communities, may carry an emotional and social toll (Carroll, 2018). The breakdown in familial connections, in particular, carries a heavy burden for GBQ men of color, who benefit from family support amidst societal prejudice. GBQ men of color show notable resilience—yet the process by which such resilience is formed may leave individuals of color vulnerable to present and future health problems (Anderson, 2019). Trans parents may also face challenges in relation to their family of origin, such as rejection and stigma (Pyne et al., 2015).

Another shift that may accompany the transition to parenthood is a decline in socializing with non-parent GBQ friends and an increase in socializing with heterosexual parents (Bergman et al., 2010; A. E. Goldberg, 2012), perhaps reflecting their need for support from people who "get" the complexities of parenting. Indeed, queer spaces are often dominated by non-parents (Rootes, 2013). Due to these non-child-centered or child-inclusive spaces and the rejection and othering occurring when entering such spaces, GBQ fathers can face exclusion and lack of acceptance within the LGBTQ community—experiences that are in turn mediated by other identities (e.g., ethnic and racial).

Broader Community Contexts: Workplaces and Schools

GBQ fathers' relationships to their communities, workplaces, and children's schools are increasingly the research focus. GBQ fathers face heteronormativity in a variety of settings, including at work, in schools, at pediatrician's offices, and on playgrounds (Vinjamuri, 2015). Such heteronormativity manifests in a variety of ways, including criticism of their parenting, concerns about the well-being of their children, and confu-

sion about or misreading of family relationships (e.g., failing to see two men and children as "family"; A. E. Goldberg, 2012; Vinjamuri, 2015) which creates "emotional burdens" for fathers (Vinjamuri, 2015). Such heteronormativity intersects with systemic racism, such that white GBQ fathers are more readily accepted into spaces dominated by white people, both heterosexual and GBQ, while GBQ fathers of color face suspicion and exclusion in a variety of settings (Carroll, 2018).

Workplaces

Over the past few decades, some work has explored the workplace experiences of GBQ employees. This research indicates that GBQ employees report less positive workplace experiences than their heterosexual colleagues across many dimensions of employee treatment, workplace fairness, and job satisfaction (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). Only within the past 10 years has research focused on GBQ fathers' workplace experiences, finding, for example, that most male-partnered men shift their priorities with their child's arrival (Richardson et al., 2012). Work decreases in salience as men reconfigure their roles, responsibilities, and values (Bergman et al., 2010; Richardson et al., 2012). Upon becoming parents, many GBQ fathers also find that their sexual orientation and gender are more visible at work (Bergman et al., 2010; A. E. Goldberg, 2012). Despite the growing role of fathers in child care (Doucet, 2009), women are still stereotyped as the primary parents, while fathers are meant to be breadwinners first and caregivers second (Bear & Glick, 2017). In turn, GBQ fathers may be seen as less nurturing than women and less fit to a parent than heterosexual men, thus facing bias not only from coworkers when trying to balance work and family but also within their workplace policies (A. E. Goldberg, 2012). For example, while female couples and different-sex couples receive equal durations of paid parental leave in most countries, male couples often receive shorter leave times (Wong et al., 2019). In the United States, parental leave

is more generous but may exist only for biological mothers—a reality that disproportionately impacts male couples (Maxwell et al., 2018).

Workplace issues, including job conditions, workplace policies, and interpersonal interactions, may impact GBQ fathers' mental health in a variety of ways. For example, research has shown that among parents in same-sex couples who are working high-urgency jobs, which are already associated with poor health outcomes at baseline (Burgard & Lin, 2013), those working in LGBTQ-unfriendly workplaces experience more psychological distress (e.g., anxiety) than those working in LGBTQ-friendly workplaces (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2013). Lack of support from one's company (e.g., in the form of no paid paternity leave) is also associated with poorer mental health across the transition to parenthood for men and women in same-sex couples (Berrigan et al., 2020; A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

Research suggests that GBQ men are particularly vulnerable to gender role strain in the workplace. Because of the ways that they deviate from traditional masculine norms (e.g., due to their sexual orientation and relationship structure), they may experience themselves as under scrutiny, which creates stress (Levant & Richmond, 2016; Meyer, 2003). GBQ fathers may experience increased pressure or need to be out at work once they become parents (e.g., in the context of requesting or taking parental leave), which may lead to stress under certain circumstances. For example, a study of gay fathers who were out at work (either by choice or because they had to be because of their caregiving obligations) found that those with high levels of internalized homophobia experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety than those with low levels of internalized homophobia (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

Schools

As in workplaces, within schools, GBQ-father families are vulnerable to alienation and stigma, both from teachers and administrators (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2014a)—but also from other

parents (A. E. Goldberg, Allen, & Carroll, 2020). Gay fathers appear to be highly involved, on average, in their children's schools, in part to mitigate the potential for the negative treatment of their children and families (A. E. Goldberg, Black, et al., 2017). However, in and outside of schools, gay fathers experience varying degrees of marginalization based on their own and other families' social locations (Carroll, 2018; A. E. Goldberg, Allen, & Carroll, 2020). Gay fathers describe hierarchies within school communities based on gender, sexual orientation, class, and race (i.e., heterosexual white middle-class women are "in charge"); and, even in interactions with other gay fathers, class and race-based tensions can emerge (e.g., gay fathers of color and gay fathers with fewer resources may feel marginalized by other gay fathers; Carroll, 2018; A. E. Goldberg, Allen, & Carroll, 2020). When GBQ fathers perceive stigma and sexual orientation challenges within their children's schools (e.g., teacher inexperience with gay father families, alienation from other parents), this may impact school satisfaction and involvement. A study of gay adoptive fathers found that those who perceived more sexual orientation-related stigma at their children's schools were less satisfied and less involved with schools and had less positive relationships with teachers (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2014a).

Importantly, GBQ fathers of color endure an added layer of marginalization in the form of racial discrimination and oppression (Cahill et al., 2003). This manifests in various ways, including a lack of racial diversity in gay men's parenting groups and among families at their children's schools, rendering GBQ fathers of color invisible and unheard (Carroll, 2018). Such exclusion may intensify feelings of isolation and invalidation among GBQ fathers of color, who may already be struggling with internal conflict related to experiencing their sexual identity as being at odds with their cultural norms and ideals (Carroll, 2018; Merighi & Grimes, 2000).

Significantly, GBQ men's access to resources may impact their own and their children's experiences of stigma. Middle- and upper-middle-class GBQ parents, for example, may be better able to

protect their children from bullying in that social and financial resources allow them some choice in where they live, and they may favor areas and schools that are known to be more inclusive and progressive (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2014a; A. E. Goldberg et al., 2018).

Future Directions

The vast majority of men in study samples of gay fathers are white. As Carroll (2018), A. E. Goldberg et al. (2018), and others have pointed out, this deficiency leaves unexamined the ways that race and ethnicity intersect with sexual orientation and relational structure, as well as social class and geographic region, to shape parenting experiences and outcomes. GBQ racial/ethnic minorities may face multiple forms of marginalization and oppression in that they are vulnerable to racism in the LGBTQ community and may also be vulnerable to heterosexism and homophobia in their racial/ethnic communities and within their own families (Nadal & Corpus, 2013). Yet researchers rarely explore these themes or dynamics: that is, when GBQ fathers of color are included in studies, their unique experiences are not always discussed—and when they are, important aspects of their experiences emerge. For example, they typically seek to adopt a same-race child, meaning that, if they are partnered with a white man, it is their white partner who "looks different" and is sometimes misrecognized (i.e., as not a parent; A. E. Goldberg, 2012). They also may encounter alienation within gay father communities, which are dominated by white and often middle-class men (Carroll, 2018).

Also underexamined are the ways that economic and educational privilege can impact or shape GBQ men's path to parenthood (Berkowitz, 2011). Many samples of two-father families report an average annual income well above the median household income of $61,937 in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Little research exists on the experiences and barriers to parenthood among GBQ fathers who are disadvantaged with regard to educational attainment and/or income and how they engage in decision-making about potential routes to (or even the possibility of) parenthood.

Another notable limitation of existing research is the absence of focused work on bisexual and queer fathers. First, it is rare for studies of male-partnered fathers to acknowledge that their sample is made up of anything other than gay-identified men. Second, even in studies of "gay and bisexual and/or queer men," researchers rarely distinguish between bisexual, queer, and gay men in reporting their findings (often because the numbers of non-gay men are very small), with some specifically describing the results as "among gay men" or as only generalizable to gay men (e.g., Robinson & Brewster, 2014). Indeed, among the articles reviewed for this chapter, only three discussed results specific to bisexual fathers or by bisexual men considering fatherhood, and none discussed findings specific to queer men (Bauermeister, 2014; Gates et al., 2007; Riskind & Tornello, 2017). The lack of representation of BQ fathers is likely the result of several factors, including the reality of stigma directed towards bisexual men from both heterosexual and other sexual minority people, possibly leading some men to identify or present themselves as gay for ease of daily living (Smith et al., 2018). In addition, sexual minority fathers partnered with women are typically not the focus of sexual minority research, which instead tends to focus on the experiences of gay-identified men or men partnered with men (Coulter et al., 2014).

Studies have also rarely acknowledged that men partnered with other men, who are also fathers, may not be monogamous (Huebner et al., 2012). Research on LBQ mothers who engage in consensual nonmonogamy (CNM) reveals important dynamics associated with navigating CNM as parents. Women in one study were found to be highly selective in disclosing CNM because they were concerned about the repercussions of others knowing about their involvement in such a stigmatized form of relationship arrangement (Manley et al., 2018).

Gender identity and expression among GBQ fathers also represent an important area for further research. GBQ men who have less traditional gender expressions may be vulnerable to

particularly high levels of scrutiny and discrimination—during the process of family-building (e.g., trying to adopt), seeking out a pediatrician for their family, interacting with their children's teachers, and in many other settings (Farr & Goldberg, 2018). Moreover, research on trans fathers is scant and tends to focus on men who transitioned later in life after having had children.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Programs

Practitioners need to recognize the diversity among GBQ-father families and approach their work with an intersectional framework. Although much research on GBQ fathers has been conducted on white middle- to upper-middle class fathers, this is not in fact the "typical" GBQ-father family. GBQ fathers may live in poverty, be part of multiracial families, be people of color themselves, and/or be living in regions of the United States or other countries where they encounter explicit and implicit discrimination on a regular, if not daily, basis. Indeed, Gates (2015) showed that Black and Latinx GB couples more often report having children than their white counterparts. Hence, a discourse on GBQ-father families that centers on white fathers will be insufficient in capturing the experience of GBQ-father families as a whole and places GBQ fathers of color at risk of receiving ineffective and insensitive therapeutic support.

GBQ fathers are inevitably diverse in terms of dis/ability, nationality, language, and spiritual/religious beliefs, all of which impact parent identity and experiences. Practitioners are responsible for assuming an intersectional approach to GBQ fathers, recognizing the ways in which systems of oppression (e.g., racism, heterosexism, and classism) combine to shape GBQ fathers' experiences, resilience, and needs and those of their children (Peters, 2018). In turn, practitioners must be cautious not to focus on GBQ fathers' sexuality to the exclusion of all other identities and to recognize the ways in which other marginalized and/or privileged identities operate to mute

or amplify the challenges that men and their families face in various settings.

An intersectional framework in therapy would be beneficial in fostering open discussion and exploration of GBQ men's experiences and can be achieved by inviting GBQ fathers in therapy to reflect on and share their perspectives on their own identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, ability, race, class) (e.g., "What does it mean to you to be a gay father?") and how these identities have impacted their experiences (Addison & Coolhart, 2015). Practitioners should do this with a recognition of the diversity inherent among GBQ (and trans) fathers and remain open to ways in which fathers' experiences may diverge from what they have been conditioned to expect based on clinical experience or training (Addison & Coolhart, 2015), as well as the heteronormative, cis-centric married monogamous relational model of intimacy and parenthood (Martell & Prince, 2005). Similarly, practitioners should constantly monitor for their own personal and professional biases toward GBQ fathers (Adames et al., 2018). Practitioners should also ensure they are familiar with the cultural content related to their client's identities (e.g., queer media, texts on race and inequality, legislation on LGBTQ rights; Adames et al., 2018).

Finally, practitioners should consider incorporating a strengths-based positive psychology model. According to this model, individual-level strengths (e.g., character strengths) and community-level strengths (e.g., LGBTQ-affirming social institutions) can mitigate the impacts of minority stress, thus enhancing subjective resilience and stress-related growth (Herrick et al., 2014). Character strengths deemed particularly relevant to and available for development among LGBTQ people include creativity, integrity, love, fairness, gratitude, and spirituality—when linked to an LGBTQ-affirming religious organization (Lytle et al., 2014).

Schools, community centers, and other institutions and settings that serve families need to attend to the inclusivity of their policies, practices, and physical environment. School educators and administrators are encouraged to take steps to reduce the stigmatization of GBQ-father

families by actively creating a climate of acceptance and inclusion of these families within schools and classrooms (A. E. Goldberg & Smith, 2014a). Schools may choose to seek ongoing training and education about diverse families (e.g., via organizations such as GLSEN; www.glsen.org). Such training will support them in advocating for diverse families and fighting prejudice against children resulting from their parents' sexual orientations. In addition, it will equip them to ensure that GBQ fathers of various backgrounds feel encouraged to participate in the school community despite the common belief that only parents with specific identities (e.g., white heterosexual mothers) are welcome as participants (Carroll, 2018; A. E. Goldberg, Allen, & Carroll, 2020).

While recent legislation has made it unlawful for employers to fire employees due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia, 2020), GBQ fathers may continue to receive unequal treatment in the workplace. Compared to heterosexual fathers, GBQ fathers may be more likely to prioritize their role as a caregiver over that of an employee and may be penalized as such (Richardson et al., 2012). For example, they may face a lack of advancement, poor evaluations, and non-support from policies, coworkers, and supervisors (Ragins, 2004). Further, fathers with less social and cultural capital, such as GBQ fathers, feel less comfortable taking paid paternity leave (if it is offered), which could hinder their relationships with their children (Berrigan et al., 2020; Petts et al., 2020). Employers should be aware of such potential penalties for GBQ fathers and work with their human resource departments and managers to protect against unequal treatment. Support from coworkers and supervisors can enhance GBQ men's workplace satisfaction and may help them to feel comfortable prioritizing their relationships with children when necessary (Ragins et al., 2007).

State laws and policies that permit discrimination against GBQ men in the foster care and adoption systems are also unjust, denying children of loving parents and depriving prospective parents of having children. Such laws and poli-

cies perpetuate the overrepresentation of children of color, older children, and children with special needs in our child welfare system—children that many GBQ men are open to adopting. Indeed, in a large sample of 774 GBQ men, 34.2% were open to adopting a child older than 12, 37.3% were open to adopting a sibling group, and 60.7% of white participants were open to adopting a child of color—three groups of children that are disproportionately represented and deemed "hard to place" in the child welfare system (A. E. Goldberg, Tornello, et al., 2020).

Conclusion

GBQ fathers are an important component of the larger parent community, but one that is often ignored or stigmatized. Greater awareness of their unique strengths and challenges—the latter of which generally derive from lack of understanding and inclusion and discriminatory treatment in the larger society—in therapeutic, employment, school, policy, and other domains will promote family stability, health, and well-being. Although a growing body of research has examined cisgender GBQ fathers, very little is known about trans fatherhood. Given the increased visibility of trans fathers and their often distinct and separate experiences from GBQ men, more research is needed to understand their experiences and promote their families' well-being.

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Fatherhood and Social Justice: Centering Marginalized Stories

Corinne C. Datchi and Pascale Jean Simon

The twenty-first century has witnessed significant changes in the structure of families and the definition of fatherhood. In the United States, the majority of fathers (84%) live with their minor children (Karberg et al., 2019) and view parenting as a central dimension of their identity (Pew Research, 2019). Compared to the 1970s and 1980s, today's fathers are less likely to be the sole provider for their family (27% in 2016 compared to 47% in 1970; Pew Research, 2019). They spend more time in childcare activities, i.e., 8 hours on average or three times more than in 1965. They also are more likely to stay at home to take care of their children (17% in 2016 compared to 10% in 1989; Pew Research, 2019). The public's attitude about fatherhood has also shifted: Teaching values and providing emotional support have superseded the role of breadwinners and disciplinarians (Pew Research, 2013a).

Statistics about twenty-first-century families present an incomplete picture of the "new American dad." In particular, they do not reflect racial, ethnic, and economic differences in men's experiences of fatherhood. In this chapter, we consider the need for complex perspectives that locate and describe fathers' parenting behaviors and roles in their social and economic environments. Our goal is to define a contextual and social justice approach for the inclusion and representation of diverse forms of fatherhood in psychological research, education, and practice. First, we highlight demographic information about fathers in the US and articulate the rationale for a contextual and social justice framework. Next, we review contemporary theories of social justice in psychology, including theories of decolonization, define the core principles of the social justice movement, and discuss the relevance of social justice and decolonial principles to the psychology of fatherhood in the areas of research, practice, and advocacy. In particular, we examine how these theories may expand our understanding of incarcerated fathers' intersectional identities and the multiplicity and fluidity of how they perform their father roles in various contexts (e.g., the family, the community). We also explore how social justice and decolonial theories may be integrated into the conceptual models of fatherhood programs and how they may guide advocacy initiatives that aim to address social and economic disparities in fatherhood.

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Fatherhood in Social and Economic Contexts

Between 2006 and 2010, about half of non-Hispanic Black fathers (49%) lived with all their minor children compared to two-thirds of US-born Hispanic fathers (62%) and more than three-fourths of White fathers (80%; Karberg et al., 2019). Fathers with lower levels of education were less likely to reside with their minor children: A third of nonresident fathers (32%) had a high school diploma or less; a very small minority (4%) had a college degree or more (NRFC, 2018). In 2011, the percentage of single fathers living at or below the poverty line (24%) was three times higher than the rate of married fathers (8%; Pew Research, 2013b). These numbers show racial and economic disparities in fatherhood that may influence men's relationships with their children, parenting behaviors, and participation in day-to-day childcare.

What do we know about the effects of social and economic disadvantages on men's experiences of fatherhood? Recent research reviews have highlighted the need to advance our understanding of diversity factors and the need to explore the intersection of race, gender, and class in fathers' lives (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). While existing research on diversity is limited, it supports a contextualized approach to the study of paternal involvement. For example, it suggests that gender socialization is a major contextual factor that may explain fathers' low levels of self-efficacy in parenting, which in turn may account for their lower levels of participation in childcare compared to mothers (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016). The impact of gender on social interactions, both in the workplace and at home, may pressure fathers to assume traditional gender roles with children and co-parents. Studies have found cultural variations in fathers' use of physical play to engage with their children (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016) and racial differences in perceived paternal participation in family life (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). Specifically, Asian American male students were more likely than White and Black peers to describe their fathers as overly

focused on the role of breadwinner. Qualitative research has explored the interaction of race and class and its effects on father involvement. Black and White, poor, young fathers were found to emphasize the quality of the parent–child relationship (i.e., love and friendship) and to minimize everyday parenting tasks such as scheduling medical appointments (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). There is a curvilinear relation between socioeconomic status and paternal involvement: Both poverty and wealth are associated with lower levels of time spent with children (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016). Likewise, paternal race and financial resources were found to predict fathers' involvement with nonresident children: Black and White men were more likely to maintain contact and engage with their nonresident children than Hispanic fathers (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). The same was true for nonresident fathers with greater economic means. Future research is needed to determine how race and class contribute to differences in fathers' parenting, separately and in interaction. In particular, it will be important to examine the role of social privilege and disadvantage associated with fathers' racial and class identities independently from the role of class and cultural values. Understanding how race- and class-specific privileges and disadvantages shape paternal involvement is important to the development of effective and responsive fatherhood programs and advocacy.

In the United States, much of the research on diversity and fatherhood has looked at poor, unmarried, and non-White men, using concepts and measures from earlier studies of the White, middle class, married, and heterosexual fathers who lived with their children (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016). Specifically, the research has focused on fathers' absence, poverty, and children's well-being in racial and ethnic communities. There has been insufficient attention to married Black fathers with intact families and other subgroups such as fathers with disabilities, single fathers, teen fathers, gay fathers, stay-at-home fathers, divorced fathers, widowed fathers, and incarcerated fathers (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). The

focus and omissions of fatherhood research are problematic as they may support bias against non-White, nonmarried, nonresident fathers who do not meet the norms and expectations of dominant social groups (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016; Russell, 2019). They may also promote a deficit view that pathologizes diversity and that limits our ability to understand how various forms of fatherhood may facilitate family adaptation and resilience. In the following sections, we define social justice as a conceptual lens for exploring diversity in the psychology of fatherhood. We discuss how the principles of social justice help to illuminate the structural and economic constraints that bear on the practice of fatherhood in everyday life. We also examine how social justice principles can serve to promote a strength-based and inclusive approach to fatherhood in intervention, research, and education.

Social Justice and Psychology

Justice is a goal as well as a fundamental value of the psychology profession. It is also one of the general principles that define the highest ethical conduct in research, training, and clinical activities (APA, 2017). As a principle, it highlights psychologists' responsibility for verifying that the public has fair and equal access to the resources and benefits of psychological science, education, and practice. It also supports psychologists' commitment to reduce and eliminate bias and prejudice within and beyond the profession (Vasquez, 2012). As a goal, justice corresponds to psychology's concern for the public interest: It involves using science to promote the well-being of individuals and communities and advance human rights, diversity, and inclusion (APA, 2019). In sum, the principle of justice entails a focus on social issues and calls attention to the role of psychologists in promoting social justice.

Defining Social Justice

Social justice involves the equal distribution of resources and the opportunity for all individuals to shape the conditions of their well-being (Crethar & Winterowd, 2012; Diaz, 2014; Jost & Kay, 2014; Goodman et al., 2018; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Kozan & Blustein, 2018; Lee et al., 2013; Mallinckrodt et al., 2014; Olle, 2018; Raskin, 2014; Russell, 2019). It defines the characteristics of social systems that promote inclusion, self-determination, human growth, and self-actualization and that protect fundamental human rights such as the right to quality education and the right to life, liberty, and security (Jost & Kay, 2014; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014). Social justice refers to the processes and outcomes of empowerment, equity, equality, fairness, and transparency in decision-making; it is often discussed in contrast to social structures of oppression, exploitation, marginalization, prejudice, and privilege that produce human suffering (Crethar & Winterowd, 2012; Raskin, 2014; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Olle, 2018). Indeed, theories of social justice in psychology emphasize the need to eliminate social disparities and contextual barriers to optimal functioning, rather than specify what social justice is or should be. This is consistent with an ecological approach that understands individual behaviors in their sociocultural and historical environments and that recognizes the possibility for context-specific variations in social justice processes and outcomes.

Privilege, oppression, and empowerment are related concepts that participate in the definition of social justice. Privilege refers to unearned social advantages that are assigned based on individuals' social positions and identities, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and religion (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014). Privilege confers power and dominance and is often invisible to those who benefit from it (McIntosh, 2003). Oppression describes a system of social structures and barriers that restrict individuals' action and access to resources based on their social identities (Frye, 2003); it limits agency and self-determination, perpetuates discrimination and marginalization, and has negative effects on physical and mental health (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014). Empowerment in relation to social justice and psychology corresponds to the process by

which individuals become aware of, bypass, rise above, and/or challenge the barriers that limit their psychosocial development (Kozan & Blustein, 2018).

In summary, the definitions of social justice in psychology call attention to the link between individual functioning and the social, cultural, economic, and historical environments. They describe social justice as a necessary condition of human well-being and suggest that social justice requires systemic change at the level of social structures, institutions, and policies (Palmer & Parish, 2008; Speight & Vera, 2008). They also propose a set of values and principles for psychological science, education, and practice.

Social Justice Values

Psychologists who have a social justice orientation follow a set of core values (Crethar & Winterowd, 2012; Diaz, 2014; Lee et al., 2013; Raskin, 2014): equity, transparency in communication, collaboration, inclusion, openness to change, compassion, harmony, and self-transcendence. These values underlie the principles of social justice action in psychological research, education, and practice. In particular, they define the mechanisms that are theorized to create socially just conditions. Collaboration calls for power sharing. Inclusion depends on individuals' abilities to access information, knowledge, and resources as well as transparency in communication; it also requires that individuals have a say in decisions that affect them (Crethar & Winterowd, 2012). Harmony and self-transcendence emphasize the interdependence of individuals and communities and the need to think systemically about others' well-being in relation to one's own.

A social justice orientation requires attention to the values and assumptions embedded in psychological theories and practices (Jost & Kay, 2014; Palmer & Parish, 2008). For example, in counseling psychology, social justice has been the driving force for challenging and reforming personality theories that subscribe to a Western and individualistic view of human behaviors and

that emphasize intrapersonal factors in psychopathology (Lee et al., 2013; Ratts, 2009). This has led to new understandings of the role of privilege, oppression, and intersectional social identities in mental health (Mintert et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020). It has also led to new counseling practices that value individual strengths and create a space for clients to exercise agency and autonomy in treatment (Palmer & Parish, 2008).

Social Justice and the Decolonization of Psychology

The act of questioning psychological theories and practices is fundamental to the social justice orientation of psychology. It brings to light the persistence of colonial relations in psychology with regard to the primacy of Eurocentric ways of knowing and the valorization of Eurocentric narratives about the human mind and behaviors (Lee et al., 2013; Palmer & Parish, 2008; Singh et al., 2020). To decolonize psychology, feminist, critical, multicultural, and liberation psychologists have asked that we acknowledge the social positions of those who produce science and that we consider how research methodologies work to represent and validate the experience of those who have more power, while silencing "sub-others" (Adams et al., 2015; Bhatia, 2017). The decolonization of psychology requires new perspectives that reframe psychological theories as culturally specific narratives and that make space for the stories of those who experience discrimination, poverty, and other forms of disadvantage in everyday life (Adams et al., 2015; Bhatia, 2017; Sonn et al., 2017).

Decolonizing psychology depends on the cultivation of critical consciousness and praxis (Adams et al., 2015; Moane, 2014; Sonn et al., 2017). Critical consciousness describes the self-reflective act of examining oppression and privilege in everyday life. It is self-reflective to the extent that individuals contemplate how oppression and privilege define their own conditions. It is a form of awareness that questions the constraints placed on those who have less power and that serves as the base for transformative action.

Critical reflection, awareness, and action are interrelated and reciprocal processes of liberation and decolonization. These processes create opportunities for psychologists to work collaboratively with those who have been silenced and to participate in the coproduction of knowledge and interventions that focus on issues most relevant to disadvantaged communities.

Regarding the psychology of fatherhood, critical consciousness involves becoming aware of our family ideals (e.g., an intact, two-parent unit) and dominant beliefs about men's place and role in families (e.g., the belief that men's role is to model masculinity for their sons; Robbins et al., 2019). It also implies that we question the concepts of good fathering and responsible fatherhood (e.g., see the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, , n.d.) to understand how they may marginalize fathers from different cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds. For example, responsible fatherhood is defined as fathers' employment and financial stability, quality of parenting, and relationship skills. The question is whether the definition of responsible fatherhood is sensitive to social and economic disadvantages, whether these disadvantages are framed as individual deficits, and whether responsible fatherhood programs are supportive of fathers' agency or ability to influence the meanings and practices of responsible fatherhood in the context of their family lives (Osborne et al., 2016).

Social Justice Praxis

Psychologists who have a social justice orientation understand that client empowerment is linked to individual and contextual change and therefore requires sociopolitical as well as individual-level interventions (DeBlaere et al., 2019; Suzuki et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2020; Toporek et al., 2006). Existing frameworks for social justice action in psychology include professional guidelines (APA, 2017, 2019), graduate training models (Goodman et al., 2018; Kozan & Blustein, 2018; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2020), and lists of competencies related to clinical practice

(Singh et al., 2020). These frameworks offer operational definitions of social justice praxis in psychology and place a strong emphasis on advocacy.

Advocacy refers to actions taken by psychologists and other service providers on behalf of their clients; it also describes system-level interventions aimed at removing structural inequalities and barriers to well-being (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). Advocacy goes beyond helping clients to understand and overcome the effects of oppressive conditions (Kozan & Blustein, 2018); it is viewed as a mechanism to address the contextual factors of psychological distress (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014). It is also how psychologists perform the role of systemic change agent, foster the development of critical consciousness, and advance positive social change (DeBlaere et al., 2019; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Palmer & Parish, 2008; Suzuki et al., 2019).

Social justice advocacy is the third dimension of the scientist-practitioner-advocate (SPA) model of graduate training in psychology (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014). This model was developed by the University of Tennessee's Counseling Psychology Program and identifies learning objectives related to social justice and advocacy, which fall into three domains: (a) knowledge and self-awareness, (b) attitudes and values, and (c) skills. The learning objectives of the SPA model of training advance the operationalization of social justice advocacy by identifying specific behaviors and skills such as ongoing self-examination of one's own biases, public speaking, and difficult dialogue facilitation (Wilkins-Yel et al., 2020).

Social justice advocacy has also been integrated into the professional competencies of Counseling Psychology (CCPTP, n.d.) and the multicultural counseling competencies of the American Counseling Association (ACA; Mintert et al., 2020; Ratts et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2020). Specifically, social justice orientation is a foundational competency in counseling psychology and a defining characteristic of counseling psychologists' professional identity. At the behavioral level, it corresponds to the ability to "intervene with clients to promote action on

factors impacting development and functioning" (CCPTP, n.d.). Advocacy is a functional competency of counseling psychology that describes the ability to intervene to facilitate client empowerment and promote systemic change. Likewise, ACA's multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (MSJCC) are based on a socioecological view of mental health that prescribes a multilevel approach to prevention and treatment. Social justice advocacy expands the reach of counseling interventions that primarily focus on the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels of client functioning. It moves clients' and counselors' awareness of privilege and oppression into social action and targets factors that influence individual development in the institutional, community, public policy, and international domains. Examples of social justice advocacy include securing access to social services on behalf of a client; working with grassroots organizations to address contextual barriers to well-being; preparing and disseminating information about the effects of oppression on mental health; and lobbying legislators and policymakers (CSJ Ethics Committee, 2011; Goodman et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2013).

Social justice praxis is pertinent to training, research, practice, and advocacy in the psychology of fatherhood. It emphasizes specific competencies: (a) self-awareness of values and assumptions about parenting and family structure; (b) knowledge of the contextual factors that influence the lived experiences of fathers, such as economic resources and gender ideologies; (c) attitude toward cultural humility that includes respect, collaboration, and the capacity for critical self-examination (e.g., what are my social identities and how do they influence my interactions with this father?); and (d) advocacy for institutional policies that strengthen fatherhood in the legal system (e.g., child custody and child support policies) and in the workplace (e.g., paid paternal leave). Social justice praxis also calls for increased consideration of fathers' perspectives in fatherhood research; it encourages collaboration with diverse communities of fathers to determine the most important issues that have a

bearing on paternal involvement, parent–child relationships, and co-parenting.

Conclusion: Implications for the Psychology of Fatherhood

The social justice principles and frameworks discussed above raise important questions for the psychology of fatherhood. In particular, they draw attention to the sociopolitical conditions that shape the experience of fatherhood in racially and culturally diverse communities. These conditions may impose constraints on fathers' behaviors and family relationships; limit fathers' access to economic, social, and emotional resources; and thus, interfere with their psychological and relational well-being. They may also restrict individuals' capacity to exercise self-determination, to make choices about fatherhood, and to manage parental responsibilities. It is the responsibility of a social justice-oriented psychology to shed light on the sociopolitical factors that impact fatherhood and to advance our understanding of the structural barriers that constrain men's performance in family roles. This knowledge is critical to the development of effective fatherhood interventions and advocacy programs that promote the well-being of children, parents, and families.

To adopt a social justice orientation, it is necessary to evaluate the theories that describe and explain fathers' behaviors in relation to individual and relationship health; to ask which cultural narratives they valorize and which they silence; and to consider how psychological research can produce knowledge about fatherhood that represents diverse voices. It is also important for researchers to work collaboratively with fathers who experience marginalization in everyday life and to answer questions that are most relevant to their empowerment and optimal functioning. There are contemporary examples of how researchers can uncover and problematize the generalization of Eurocentric models of parenting (Kilkey & Clarke, 2010; Russell, 2019). Qualitative research methods, in particular, have proven useful; they have facilitated the in-depth analysis of cultural differences in parenting

processes and challenged the assumption that parental warmth and explicit verbal and physical affection were universal conditions of high-quality parent–adolescent relationships (Russell, 2019).

The sections that follow aim to illustrate how the social justice principles can be used to evaluate existing narratives of incarcerated fatherhood in psychology. We, the authors of this chapter, chose to focus on the psychology of incarcerated fatherhood for two reasons: Firstly, it is a major area of our practice and research, and secondly, incarcerated fathers are a population that experiences multiple forms of economic, social, and political marginalization and disenfranchisement. Rather our goal is to identify dominant themes that emerge from the recent literature and to answer the following questions: How does the literature discuss the sociopolitical factors that influence the experience of fatherhood? What theories of fatherhood are foregrounded? How do these theories compare to the stories of incarcerated fathers we have met in our clinical practice? We begin with the presentation of statistical information and examine how they describe the population of interest and what they emphasize. We then piece together recent empirical findings to examine the stories they tell about incarcerated fathers.

Narratives of Incarcerated Fatherhood

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010), fathers represent the vast majority (92%) of parents behind bars. More than half of fathers in state and federal prisons belong to a racial or ethnic community, identifying as Black or Hispanic. The majority of fathers behind bars did not live with their children prior to incarceration; however, the data suggest they maintained a substantial level of involvement with their children after returning to the community (Geller, 2013; Geller & Garfinkel, 2012). A small group (11%) participated in prison parenting programs designed to strengthen parenting skills and improve the quality of parent–child relationships

(Herman-Stahl et al., 2008). Their incarceration impacted a substantial number of minor children (about 1.6 million in 2007; Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). InsideOut Dad is an example of a fatherhood program for incarcerated fathers (National Fatherhood Initiative, n.d.). It consists of 12 weekly psychoeducation group sessions that focus on the father's knowledge of child development and discipline and that aim to develop skills for effective co-parenting, communication, and emotional regulation.

Father Involvement

Paternal residence and involvement with children are a major focus of the research on incarcerated fathers. Paternal involvement is a concept that highlights three dimensions of the father–child relationship (Doherty et al., 1998): engagement or fathers' direct interactions with their children (e.g., caregiving, play), accessibility (the amount of time that fathers are available to their children), and responsibility (the extent to which fathers attend to and provide for their children's needs). Studies have called attention to the adverse effects of paternal incarceration, father absence, and family separation on children's mental and physical health, caregiver (maternal) stress, the dissolution of couple relationships, and family instability (Adams, 2018). They also highlight specific aspects of fathers' experiences behind bars: The loss that results from environmental constraints imposed on their paternal role and identity; the psychological stress related to their inability to meet familial expectations; their total dependence on others to maintain contact with their children; and their fragile relationship with the mother(s) of their children (Charles et al., 2019; Dyer et al., 2018; Finzi-Dottan & Shraybom, 2019; Martin & Phaneuf, 2018; O'Keeffe, 2019). In particular, the research highlights the role of co-parental relationships in maintaining father involvement (Charles et al., 2019; Dyer et al., 2018; Dyer et al., 2012; O'Keeffe, 2019; Swanson et al., 2013). For example, having children with more than one mother is linked to lower levels of father–child contact (Fowler et al., 2017); it is also associated with fewer family visits and more phone

communication during incarceration (Dyer et al., 2018). Deliberately or not, mothers engage in gatekeeping behaviors that limit fathers' participation in their children's life from inside the prison. For example, they control how much and what information is shared with imprisoned fathers about their children's education (O'Keeffe, 2019). Combined with harsh visiting conditions and time-limited and expensive phone calls, maternal gatekeeping increases the constraints on father involvement.

The Sociopolitical Context

Environmental factors beyond the family and prison may limit fathers' ability to provide for their children. In particular, sociological research has looked at paternal involvement in the context of economic disadvantage, racial discrimination, and state policies that regulate employment and child welfare (Emory et al., 2020; Haney, 2018). The majority of fathers with a history of incarceration work in low-paying jobs and have difficulty meeting the legal obligation of child support. They often show economic responsibility for their children through informal rather than formal means: Rather than cash payments, they make nonmonetary contributions (e.g., clothes, diapers, and school supplies), while still accruing child support arrears. These are debts that exacerbate their economic disadvantage and increase their risk of reincarceration as well as their chronic entanglement with the criminal justice system.

US laws require that single mothers who apply for welfare benefits provide identifying information about the biological father(s) of their child(ren) (Rambert, 2021). States use this information to enforce child support payments and recover a portion of their welfare expenditures by withholding fathers' income and/or putting a lien on their property. The US child support policies do not differentiate between fathers that cannot pay and those that will not pay. They have created an excessive burden for nonresident low-income and unemployed fathers who face disproportionate child support amounts and severe penalties for unpaid child support such as jail time and suspension of driver and professional licenses neces-

sary to go to work. These punishments exacerbate fathers' economic disadvantages and further limit their ability to meet their financial obligations, participate in their children's lives, and find and maintain employment (Pratt, 2016). Businesses conduct a criminal background check to make hiring decisions, and imprisonment takes fathers out of the labor force. Child support and welfare laws have had a disproportionate impact on low-income, noncustodial Black fathers (Rodriguez, 2016). Compared to other racial groups, Black fathers have the lowest income and the highest rates of unemployment and child support enforcement including incarceration (Brinig, 2017). The strict implementation of child support laws through jail time has also contributed to the perpetuation of the absent Black father stereotype or the perception that Black fathers voluntarily neglect their parental responsibilities (Rambert, 2021).

Housing and employment policies interact with welfare and child support laws and intensify the challenges that incarcerated fathers experience when they return to their communities. There are many barriers to finding housing upon release (Mears & Cochran, 2015): exclusion of individuals with a criminal history from federally funded housing; lack of affordable rental units for low-income individuals and families; and parole conditions that restrict contact with criminal associates and thus prevent individuals from using former support networks as a resource for housing. Fathers with a felony conviction also face employment restrictions postincarceration. Laws regarding hiring decisions vary from state to state and provide some protection against employment discrimination based on past criminal convictions. However, convicted felons are barred from certain industries such as banking, health care, real estate, and other professions that require a license.

A Deficit-Based View of Incarcerated Fatherhood

The narrative that develops from the studies cited above gives prominence to the individual and interpersonal dimensions of incarcerated fatherhood. It describes the experience of incarcerated

fathers in terms of absence, loss, instability, stress and strain in couple and parental relationships before, during, and after confinement. Without a doubt, contact with the criminal justice system is an adverse event that restricts paternal involvement and has negative effects on individual family members and children in particular. It is critical to understand and address the individual and relational needs of these fathers to improve family reunification and reentry outcomes. However, the dominant narrative takes a deficit-based approach that magnifies fathers' helplessness and failure to fulfill their paternal responsibility with little regard for their competencies. It is only a partial description that supports the view of incarcerated fatherhood as inactive or dormant (Adams, 2018). From a social justice perspective, it is important to examine whether the theoretical lens of the studies—the concept of father involvement in particular—reduces our ability to discern how incarcerated fathers transcend the obstacles they meet in their performance of the father role and identity, and how they challenge dominant definitions of fatherhood.

Centering the Voices of Incarcerated Fathers

Qualitative research has begun to foreground the perspectives of fathers with a history of incarceration and to amplify their stories of parenting behind bars (Charles et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2017; Keefe et al., 2017; Kelly-Trombley et al., 2014; Welch et al., 2019). These stories highlight the intrapersonal and interpersonal resources that inmates who have minor children mobilize in the service of fatherhood.

Commitment to Fatherhood When interviewed, fathers indicate they maintain a strong sense of paternal identity as well as a high level of commitment to their parental role during detention. They share their visions of how they could support their children's education, monitor their academic performance, give praise, and help with homework (O'Keeffe, 2019). They express their desire to increase parental involvement and strengthen their relationships with their

children (Kelly-Trombley et al., 2014; Welch et al., 2019). They describe their ability to maintain phone contact or correspondence with their children and talk about their willingness to participate in programming for personal growth and greater parental competence (Charles et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2017; Kelly-Trombley et al., 2014; Muentner & Charles, 2019; Welch et al., 2019). For example, a father described his efforts to maintain communication with his young children during incarceration (Charles et al., 2019, p. 234): "[E]ven though my daughters couldn't like read and write and all of that, I told [my baby momma] I don't even care if you just let them sit there and scribble on a piece of paper, send that to me, because that's sentimental to me." Scribbling is a creative strategy to support the parent–child bond: It is how the father connects with his feelings for his daughters; it is also how his daughters write to him and thus continue to feel his presence in their life. Another father explained how he turned prison into an opportunity to pursue education (Welch et al., 2019, p. 511): "I took time in prison to educate myself to learn. […] I spoke to a lot of brothas who were, you know, very well educated. They showed me the errors in my ways. […] I realized where I went wrong so I can teach [my children]." For this father, education is linked to self-awareness, self-improvement, and parenting. In prison, he studied and learned so that he could in turn teach and guide his children when he returned to his community. Education, self-improvement, and parenting are seen as processes that help to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of problematic patterns, namely, crime and incarceration.

Agency The stories of incarcerated fathers highlight alternate ways of being involved with their children in contexts that limit their capacity to be accessible, engaged, and responsible for their children's well-being. They redefine paternal involvement in terms of decisions that fathers make during incarceration, for example, the decision to refuse visits to protect their children from harmful conditions and the decision to work on bettering themselves (Charles et al., 2019;

Kelly-Trombley et al., 2014). In making these decisions, fathers exercise agency or their ability to influence and change the dominant narrative of father involvement. They propose new markers of paternal responsibility during incarceration: self-improvement and paternal gatekeeping or efforts to limit interactions with their children to protect them from a stressful environment. In addition, fathers emphasize their ability to mobilize the resources of their kin and peer networks to maintain alternate forms of parental involvement, reinvent themselves, and pursue their vision of family life postincarceration (Charles et al., 2019; Dyer et al., 2012). For example, a father was able to maintain contact with his son thanks to his brother who put money on his prison phone account (Charles et al., 2019, p. 242): "I begged him … my son needs to hear my voice, I can feel it … and just feel my presence. Thank goodness to my brother, having to sacrifice a little money that he didn't have to put that money on the phone because he knows how much my son means to me." This father acknowledges the financial hardship of supporting a family member behind bars. He shows humility when he begs his brother to help him. He also communicates compassion and gratitude as well as the commitment to fatherhood. He highlights these paternal qualities as characteristics of his identity, at the same time as he backgrounds his prisoner identity.

Critical Consciousness In our clinical practice, the fathers we have met showed the capacity to examine how privilege and oppression shaped their everyday life. They were intensely aware of their economic disadvantage and how it constrained their experience of fatherhood in low-income neighborhoods. They questioned the narratives of fatherhood that made it harder for them to succeed as fathers compared to men in the middle and upper class. They recognized the link between the absence of fathers in poor communities and their marginalization in the workforce. One of them indicated: "My father was never at home. He used to work two jobs so we can have food to eat. He never had enough money. I thought he was just stingy." This quote illus-

trates how critical consciousness changed a man's perception of his father: When the son looks at his father in the context of wage disparities and financial hardship, he no longer sees a miser but a hardworking man whose absence at home enables him to be involved as the breadwinner and to provide for the basic needs of the family. Poverty and paternal responsibility create the unsolvable dilemma of fathers' absence: To support their children financially, some work long hours, and others leave the formal economy at the risk of getting caught in the criminal justice system.

The Family and the Street The fathers who participated in our InsideOut Dad group behind bars (see program description above) defined paternal absence as a transgenerational process they experienced in childhood and adolescence and reproduced in adulthood. However, their stories also highlighted the presence of uncles, brothers, grandfathers, who "played ball" with them; "taught them manners, how to do music, how to work out"; and showed them "how to pay bills, spend time with your kids, make your spouse feel secure." When asked to identify important adult figures, they listed their mothers and sisters who "taught them how to grow up as a man." They also described their relationships with drug dealers and gang members who looked after them in the neighborhood, fed them when they were hungry, and gave them gifts for the holidays. Their interactions with the street and their extended family constitute a relational space where they experienced both the absence of their biological fathers and the presence of social father figures. As one of them commented, they felt loved and cared for: "[My brothers] all used to smoke, drink, and sell drugs. We were only trying to have a good time by partying, having food to eat and clothes to wear. We love and care for each other. That is the closest relationship I had with male figures." Another father described how his uncle provided for him: "He used to take me with him everywhere, even to sell drugs. I don't think he knew what he was doing as a father, but that is how he cared for me." These stories raise

many questions about the influence of men's relationships with the street and social father figures on their understanding of father involvement and their development of parental competencies.

Stories of Self-Transformation The fathers who participated in our InsideOut Dad group talked about the anger that comes with the awareness of privilege and oppression—in particular, the awareness of growing up in the context of adversity, poverty, and trauma. They described the violence they lived through and the violence they perpetrated and acknowledged their callous behaviors towards others.

Adverse childhood experiences are common traumatic stressors reported by adults in the criminal justice system (Ford et al., 2013). They include child maltreatment, exposure to community violence (e.g., witnessing someone being shot, learning about the violent death of a relative), incarceration of a family member, and intimate partner violence (Vitopoulos et al., 2019; Dierkhising et al., 2013). Men in correctional facilities are five times more likely to report post-traumatic stress symptoms than the general population (Baranyi et al., 2018).

The fathers in our InsideOut Dad group perceived the birth of their children as a turning point and an opportunity to interrupt the cycle of violence in their lives. Becoming a father gave them the motivation to strive for self-transformation and self-improvement. In their own words, they compared their past and present selves and called attention to their capacity to change for the best interests of their children:

> I became a father at 18. My life before that was reckless. But since I got my kid, he is all I focus on in my life, so he won't make the same mistakes I did.
>
> [I became a father at] 15. I was very careless. I didn't care, I did drugs and partied. When I had kids I care more, I paid attention to my actions.
>
> I was 16 years old when I had my first child. I was running hard but when I had my first child it slowed me down.

Becoming a father is a precipitating event, not a sufficient condition to promote self-transformation. The statements above indicate changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors that stem from fathers' ability to engage in self-evaluation, exercise critical consciousness, and problematize the pressures and limits placed upon them. In our InsideOut Dad group, several men discussed and challenged the dominant narrative of fathers' financial responsibility in contexts of poverty:

> If I cannot provide for my children or my partner, then I am a failure. I failed my children as my parents failed me. I am viewed as a deadbeat father by many people in the neighborhood, by some females and hopefully not by my kids.
>
> My community told me that when I have money I can be a father, but that is not true. I need to be present and love them more than money.

The fathers' stories reframe fatherhood and constitute a narrative project of self-decolonization that supports the men's perceived competence as fathers. In telling their stories, the fathers examined and questioned dominant representations of fatherhood and formed new expectations about parenting behind bars. They defined father responsibility as the act of "keeping their children out of the street and on the right track and helping them to achieve greatness." They emphasized the fathers' capacity to offer support, to be a good listener, and to love their children. They also recognized the needs for services such as parent education and family therapy during and after confinement, to enhance positive communication between fathers, children, and mothers, to promote safety and connectedness in the parent–child relationships, and to help fathers resume their family roles postincarceration (Muentner & Charles, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter has discussed the values and principles of a social justice approach to the psychology of fatherhood. The concepts of privilege and oppression were presented to highlight the impact of sociopolitical contexts on fathers' experiences of parenthood. Critical consciousness, collaboration, and inclusion were defined as essential

mechanisms for promoting self-determination and empowerment in groups of fathers that face social and economic disadvantages. This chapter also described how the movement to decolonize knowledge reframes theories as cultural narratives. In the psychology of fatherhood, decolonizing knowledge involves problematizing theories of paternal involvement and examining how they may affirm the superiority of Eurocentric stories about fatherhood and how they may exclude the knowledge and ways of knowing disadvantaged communities of fathers.

To advance social justice, it is imperative to: (1) engage in acts of critical consciousness; (2) consider our position and participation in systems of privilege and oppression; (3) reflect on our role in the production of knowledge; and (4) make space for the stories of those who experience various forms of discrimination and marginalization. Regarding the psychology of fatherhood, it is necessary:

- To consider the cultural narratives that have influenced the conceptualization of fatherhood in US psychology as well as the design of father education programs, and to examine whether these narratives are based on Eurocentric models of individual development and family relationships.
- To valorize the stories of diverse fathers, residents, and nonresidents and to integrate their understanding of parenting and fatherhood in the development of theories and measures that capture the variety of family roles and structures in the twenty-first century.
- To study the unique parenting practices that fathers develop in contexts of social, political, and economic disadvantages and to understand how these unique practices relate to family resilience or the capacity of families to manage adverse events in ways that manage both individual and relational growth.
- To investigate the contextual barriers that restrict men's enactments of their role and identities as fathers, such as federal and state policies that regulate family life, directly and

indirectly (e.g., housing, employment policies, and health care policies).
- To design father education programs that increase fathers' critical consciousness and advocacy skills as well as their parenting competencies, nurturing behaviors, and knowledge of child development.

Advocacy is a critical dimension of social justice models in psychology: It refers to actions that aim to improve social conditions and promote the welfare of individuals and communities. Empowerment and systemic change are the primary goals of advocacy. In the psychology of fatherhood, advocacy may involve interventions with or on behalf of fathers to target and minimize environmental barriers to optimal father involvement and strong father–child relationships. It may also include interventions that encourage fathers and give them the leadership skills necessary to ask for and promote structural change on behalf of and with their families.

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Military-Connected Fathers

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Introduction

As of 2018, over 800,000 Service members had children under the age of 21 (or under 23 if a full-time student; Department of Defense [DoD], 2019). This includes almost 500,000 active duty Service members and over 300,000 members of the National Guard and Reserves (NG/R). Of the Service members with children, 79% are married to a civilian, 5% are married to another Service member, 10% are single fathers, and 5% are single mothers.

Although fathers who are connected to the military share common experiences, such as military training, deployments, and military culture, they may live these experiences very differently. Fathers who are Service members are either active duty, where their service is their full-time job, NG/R, where they typically work part-time for the military and have a full-time civilian job, or Active Guard Reserve, where they work full time within a National Guard or Reserve unit. Fathers may be officers (e.g., managers) or enlisted (e.g., technical or skill experts). They may join the military for a career or for a limited

time. Fathers who are connected to the military may be a Service member, the spouse of a Service member, a father sharing custody of a child whose other parent is a Service member, or a veteran. Military-connected fathers may be single or married. They vary with regard to ethnic identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-role beliefs (e.g., traditional vs. nontraditional), and socioeconomic status. Military-connected fathers may be biological fathers, adoptive fathers, step-fathers, or social fathers. In addition, fathers who are Service members may have joined the military for a wide variety of reasons, such as family tradition, patriotism, career advancement, the GI Bill, or a path to US citizenship.

For fathers who are Service members, their experiences within the military will vary widely. For example, some Service members may never deploy, and others may deploy many times. For Service members who do deploy, those deployment experiences will vary greatly. For example, Navy deployments tend to be shorter in duration but more frequent; Army deployments tend to be longer in duration but less frequent. Even for those who deploy to a combat zone (e.g., any deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom [OIF] or Operation Enduring Freedom [OEF]), fathers' individual experiences may vary significantly; one individual may be working at a desk in the "green zone," while another individual may be engaged in firefights. As such, while there will be commonalities and shared experi-

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ences, one cannot assume that all fathers who are connected to the military are the same—there is not one unifying experience of the military-connected father.

Military Father Frameworks

Although the literature on military-connected fathers has increased greatly in breadth and depth over the last two decades, it is still very young. What began as primarily deficit-based research that relied heavily on clinical case studies (Karre et al., 2018) is now moving towards a strengths-based approach. A strengths-based approach does not discount the struggles that fathers may be having but discusses the normative development of military families, highlights the successes that military fathers have, and uses that knowledge to help fathers who may be struggling.

In addition to the strengths-based approach, there is great value in examining military fathers through the lens of family systems (Paley et al., 2013; DeVoe & Ross, 2012) and ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) theories. Each individual in the family will experience military life and their own development within the context of their own individual characteristics (e.g., age, sex) and the external contexts in which they frequently engage (e.g., family, school, friends, work, and church), and these will, then, interact with each other (e.g., family relationships may be stronger due to frequent family moves required by work). More distal systems will also influence how one will experience military life and their own development (e.g., how the mass media covers the war, the individual's geographic location, and whether they live on installation or off installation). Furthermore, the ideologies of the larger culture (e.g., military culture, Service branch culture, American culture, and ethnic identity) and the sociohistorical context, both culturally and individually (e.g., living in the post-9/11 era, the amount of time that has passed since their last deployment), will affect their experiences and development.

These subsystems and contexts can influence each other in many different ways to affect well-being and development. For example, the parent–child relationship is bidirectional; the parent's well-being affects the child's well-being and vice versa (Snyder et al., 2016). Moreover, many aspects of military life impact parenting, the couple's relationship, and co-parenting (Paley et al., 2013). How one experiences deployment, for example, can be influenced by the individual's age, gender, the length and type of the deployment, how other family members experience deployment, social support, the historical and sociocultural context, and a family's embeddedness in a military community (Paley et al., 2013).

Fathers who are Service members often spend extended periods of time away from their children. Palkovitz's (1997) framework is a useful tool to help elucidate the variety of ways in which fathers can be involved with their children in this context. Palkovitz's model classifies involvement as consisting of cognitive (i.e., thinking and planning), affective (i.e., emotional), and behavioral (i.e., overtly observable) components. Palkovitz posits that many factors will determine the ways and extent to which a father is involved with his children. This may be particularly true for military-connected fathers as a father's involvement within the three domains may ebb and flow with the deployment cycle. The type and extent of involvement may also be influenced by whether the father is the deployed or at-home parent, his physical location if deployed, and his health and well-being during reintegration.

Current State of the Literature

As discussed by Cozza et al. (2005), most military families adjust well to the unique stressors of military life. However, certain challenges related to deployment, post-deployment, and mental health must be addressed. Contemporary researchers are typically mindful not to make broad assumptions about mental health and deployment. At the same time, this is where the vast majority of research related to military-connected fathers is focused, and this necessarily

skews the perception of the effects of the military on fathers and their families. Reflecting the state of the literature, deployment and post-deployment mental health concerns take up a disproportionate amount of space in this chapter. This is not because the majority of families have difficulties but because the literature on typically developing military-connected families (i.e., families who are not experiencing mental health challenges related to military service) lags behind that of nontypically developing families. However, we wish to emphasize the strengths of military fathers and families and encourage careful consideration of the research that still needs to occur in order to have a more complete understanding of military-connected fathers and their families.

Two additional features of the current literature should be noted as a preface to the following discussion. First, the typical frequent moves that occur with military families, known as a permanent change of station (PCS), are noticeably absent from this discussion. This is because there is a limited amount of research on the effects of frequent moves on military families, especially as it relates to fathering. Second, there is a dearth of research on families where the mother is the Service member and the father is the civilian parent. When Service member mothers and civilian fathers are included, many studies combine mother Service members and father Service members, or mother spouses and father spouses, in the sample, creating challenges for interpretation of the data.

Beyond the Deployment Cycle

Although the deployment cycle is frequently a subject of research related to military service, for many military families, deployment is not an all-consuming feature of life; many other aspects of military-family life may be equally or more important.

Benefits of Military Service
Contrary to outdated theories (e.g., Military Family Syndrome [Lagrone, 1978]), most military families thrive. Military couples are less

likely than civilian couples to get divorced (Karney et al., 2012), and military children do as well or better than civilian children on most measures of well-being (Cozza et al., 2005; Fairbank et al., 2018; Park, 2011; Williamson et al., 2018).

Several structural aspects of military-family life may benefit or serve as protective factors for military families. Due to the requirements for and the guaranteed benefits of military service, military families have certain promotive factors built into their experience: every family has at least one adult with at least a high school education, at least one adult in the family is employed with benefits, the family has low- or no-cost medical insurance, the family has access to formal support services (e.g., subsidized child care, family readiness groups, parenting education, financial planning, relationship education, and mental health services; MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2017), parental leave after the birth of a child is available for both Service member mothers and Service member fathers, and post-deployment leave is available to Service members. Informal community support and a sense of belonging within the military community may also act as protective factors (Johnson et al., 2018). In addition, military service can benefit fathers by helping them expose their children to different cultures, places, and experiences and helping them to raise their children with a strong emphasis on the importance of family (DeGraff et al., 2016; Willerton et al., 2011).

Father Development
Qualitative research studies have highlighted the hopes and desires that fathers have for their children and their perception of their role as a father. Military-connected fathers, like fathers not connected to the military, want to see their children have a better life than their own (Dayton et al., 2014), often comparing their own parenting skills to their father's parenting, either wanting to be similar to or different from their own father (Willerton et al., 2011). Men speak of their responsibilities as a father and what they believe to be characteristics of a good father (e.g., providing financially, being a role model, providing unconditional love, developing an emotional

connection) and being motivated to be a good father (Willerton et al., 2011). Fathers express a desire to seek information on parenting and an openness to learning new parenting skills (Lee et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2014); however, they may, at times, be uncomfortable asking for help (Lee et al., 2013).

Importantly, military-connected fathers express self-awareness and awareness of both the benefits and challenges of military life. Service-member fathers acknowledge the structural benefits of being in the military, but they also discuss feeling guilty about being separated from their families. Similarly, they are aware of the challenges of separations, but they also express that the military lifestyle promotes a strong sense of family (Willerton et al., 2011). Furthermore, fathers have acknowledged the contrast between the very structured routine in their military profession and the unpredictability of young children (Walsh et al., 2014).

To date, quantitative research has focused predominately on how fathers impact their children's functioning rather than father development itself. Headway is being made with regard to this limitation as several recent studies have included fathers' individual functioning as a primary outcome (Clark et al., 2018; Mallette et al., 2020). Collectively, these studies indicate that fathers' involvement in their children's lives is associated with greater positive personal reintegration experiences and psychosocial health.

Within the Deployment Cycle

The deployment cycle necessarily introduces changes to the family system due to such realities as removing a parent from the day-to-day aspects of family life, potentially placing a parent in harm's way, and renegotiating family life upon the parent's return (DeVoe & Ross, 2012). The way that families navigate these realities varies greatly.

Predeployment
In the months leading up to deployment, fathers often engage in a multitude of activities to help prepare themselves and their families for the separation (Louie & Cromer, 2014; Willerton et al., 2011). These activities include efforts to maintain attachment bonds during the separation (e.g., recording videos, taking/gathering pictures, preparing a dad-scented shirt, purchasing daddy dolls, purchasing computer equipment for communication, and developing a communication plan), to keep children informed about the separation (e.g., reading books or talking about the deployment, looking at maps of where the father will be), and to preemptively make up for lost time (e.g., engaging in fun activities, increasing caregiving duties, spending time with their children). In addition, although not yet articulated in the research, for at-home fathers, there will likely be tasks in which fathers engage to prepare themselves and their children for their spouse's deployment (e.g., financial, legal, social, and emotional).

Deployment
Fathers Several qualitative studies have examined fathers' perspectives on how deployment affects their relationships with their children. Fathers discuss needing to find creative ways to interact with their children, but when they are able to communicate, they provide advice, encouragement, and support to their children (Willerton et al., 2011). The most common way that fathers communicate with their families is via video chat, followed by phone, letters/packages, reading, pictures, and email (Louie & Cromer, 2014).

A consistent theme across these studies is the difficulty that fathers experience due to being absent from their children's lives (Dayton et al., 2014; Louie & Cromer, 2014; Walsh et al., 2014; Willerton et al., 2011). The challenges that are expressed by fathers depend, to some degree, on the child's developmental stage. For instance, fathers of very young children described feelings of sadness, frustration, and loss for missing important developmental milestones (e.g., first word, first steps). Fathers of school-age children and adolescents discussed feelings of uncertainty about how to provide appropriate support and

discipline remotely. These comments from fathers highlight the extent of their affective and cognitive involvement during a time when they are largely unable to be behaviorally involved.

Active communication with the family while deployed may serve as a protective factor for fathers and may help them to maintain familial connections and a healthy fathering identity (Schachman, 2010). However, for some fathers, communication may need to be limited as it could place them at risk for greater emotional distress and impair their ability to be mission-ready (Willerton et al., 2011). For example, a father could be distracted by a difficult conversation that he had with his family (e.g., an argument with his spouse, speaking with his distressed child, learning his spouse has been diagnosed with cancer). That distraction could cloud judgment or situational awareness resulting in injury or death to himself or multiple people in his unit. For these fathers, affective and behavioral withdrawal may help ensure they are able to return home safely.

Children Several broad factors may be related to the distress that children may experience during their father's deployment: the actual separation, including the experience of not having their father physically near them and the length and timing of the separation; concern about their father's safety; and the at-home parent's mental health. The majority of recent research related to the effects of deployment on children with military fathers focuses on the at-home mother's well-being; this section reflects that. It should be noted that although there may be challenges associated with deployment, for many families who do experience distress, this distress tends to be limited to the actual deployment period (Pfefferbaum et al., 2011).

Spouses' impact on children during fathers' deployment A consistent body of literature suggests that the at-home caregiver's mental health and well-being are important predictors of how well children adapt to deployment. The vast majority of that research has been on the female at-home caregiver. When viewing fatherhood from a family systems or an ecological systems approach, we must not overlook the role of the mother in the family system, which includes the impact that the father has on the mother and the subsequent impact that the mother has on the child. When fathers are deployed, mothers' poor mental health and well-being is associated with children's problematic behavior (Chandra et al., 2010; Flake et al., 2009) and depression (Lester et al., 2010). Furthermore, at the extreme end of mothers' poor well-being, there is an increased risk of child maltreatment during deployment, specifically neglect and physical abuse (Gibbs et al., 2007; McCarthy et al., 2015). At-home fathers do not demonstrate this increased risk for child maltreatment during their spouse's deployment (Gibbs et al., 2007; McCarthy et al., 2015).

Protective factors Social support and mental health treatment are important protective factors for at-home mothers and children during deployment. For example, mothers' overall feelings of support during deployment are associated with children's psychosocial functioning (Flake et al., 2009). This association was found regardless of whether that support comes from a church, a military organization or group, or a nonmilitary organization or group. Furthermore, there is a large civilian literature that links poor parent mental health to poor parenting practices (Pemberton et al., 2013), which suggests that mental health treatment among civilian, at-home mothers could improve child outcomes. To the extent that fathers can help encourage mothers to seek out social support or mental health treatment while deployed, this may help maternal functioning during deployment and, in turn, help children's functioning.

Post-deployment

Post-deployment is also a period in which many families thrive. Just over 80% of children adjust to their parent's return within one month (Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015), and the vast majority of Service members do *not* return with physical or mental health challenges (Department of Veterans

Affairs, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). For some families, specific factors pose a barrier to a smooth reintegration, including a reduced sense of parenting competence due to the separation, impairments in a returning parent's psychological health, reduced parental relationship quality, and a Service member's physical injury. These factors may impact both Service member fathers and at-home fathers, albeit in different ways.

Fathers' reintegration In qualitative research, fathers discuss an adjustment period in which they are getting to know their child again and witnessing how their child has grown and developed while they were away (Louie & Cromer, 2014; Walsh et al., 2014). During this period, fathers may purposely not discipline their child, not enforce routines, and take on the role of a secondary parent while readjusting to their father role (Louie & Cromer, 2014; Willerton et al., 2011).

Although some fathers thrive and ease back into the parenting role with little stress, other fathers experience difficulty adapting to how their child has changed while they were gone, regaining closeness with their children, and expressing affection (Walsh et al., 2014; Willerton et al., 2011). In the father's absence, the family adjusts and changes (Mallette et al., 2020; Pincus et al., 2001). While away, children may have developed new skills and abilities, such as playing an instrument or driving a car, and not all of the newly developed skills and abilities may align with the father's expectations. For example, prior to deployment, the father may have been teaching his daughter how to play softball, and upon his return, he learns that his daughter has given up softball for ballet. Relatedly, at-home mothers may also have learned to accomplish tasks the father would previously have done, such as making home or auto repairs. Thus, the family context that the father returns to may no longer be the same. Fathers describe challenges adjusting to the changed family system, such as having low parenting confidence (e.g., not knowing what their children need) and feeling isolated from the family (e.g., viewing themselves as visitors in the home).

How these reintegration challenges uniquely affect fathers' well-being in the short and long term is under-researched. However, there is consensus among family scholars that despite the stressors faced by military families, many are resilient and function well (Easterbrooks et al., 2013; Karney et al., 2012; Peterson et al., 2011; Pietrzak et al., 2009). Actions that fathers take before, during, and after deployment likely moderate fathers' resiliency. For example, preliminary evidence suggests that intentionally engaging in strategies that prepare children for the deployment (e.g., recording videos, viewing a map of where the father will be stationed, increasing time spent with the child in fun activities) reduces post-deployment parenting stress and negative family-related reintegration attitudes for fathers of young children (Louie & Cromer, 2014; Zanotti et al., 2016).

Psychological health The vast majority of Service members and veterans do not develop major depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of deployment. The Department of Veterans Affairs indicates that 10–13% of veterans have major depression (Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.-a), and 11–20% of veterans who served in OIF or OEF have PTSD in a given year (Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.-b). However, for those individuals who do have a mental health condition and for their families, this diagnosis can have a significant impact on their lives.

The impact of perceived or actual threat in theater can impact fathers' and their children's well-being in multiple ways. In a qualitative study of veteran fathers with a PTSD diagnosis, fathers discussed how they desired to be actively involved in their children's lives but avoided certain activities (e.g., athletic competitions) due to feelings of distress or anxiety and that they struggled with feelings of worthlessness, isolation, and numbness (Sherman et al., 2016). In some instances, fathers' PTSD may be triggered by their children's distress or crying (Dayton et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2014). Fathers' perceived inability to help their children process their nega-

tive emotions or the negative emotional reaction that fathers have in response to their children's negative emotions may then negatively affect the fathers' sense of parenting competence (Dayton et al., 2014). Fathers' PTSD symptoms can also impact parenting practices, which affects positive engagement (Brockman et al., 2016; Snyder et al., 2016), effective parenting (positive parenting, consistent discipline, supervision, and involvement; Gewirtz et al., 2010; Giff et al., 2019), sensitive parenting (Hajal et al., 2020), nonreactivity, which is negatively related to anger in parenting interactions (Zhang, Piehler, et al., 2020), coercive behavior (Snyder et al., 2016), distress avoidance (Brockman et al., 2016), and harsh parenting (Giff et al., 2019). These impacts on parenting practices can lead to negative child outcomes (Hajal et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2016). PTSD can also impact a father's relationship with his spouse (Gewirtz et al., 2010; Giff et al., 2019), which, in turn, can also impact parenting behaviors (Allen et al., 2010; Giff et al., 2019) and child outcomes (Gewirtz et al., 2010). Child outcomes related to paternal PTSD diagnosis or symptoms include child adjustment (Gewirtz et al., 2018), externalizing behaviors (Hajal et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2016), and internalizing behaviors (Chesmore, Piehler, & Gewirtz, 2018; Snyder et al., 2016). In addition to PTSD, perceived or actual threat in theater is associated with fathers' depression and subsequent parenting stress (Yablonsky et al., 2016). Paternal depression is, then, associated with children's difficulty during their father's reintegration (Knoblach et al., 2017).

The effect of mental health symptoms on military fathers' parenting is not entirely clear-cut. Some studies find no association between fathers' PTSD symptoms and parenting practices (Gewirtz et al., 2018), and other studies find that PTSD is not a significant predictor of fathers' inconsistent or harsh parenting when couple functioning variables (i.e., satisfaction and conflict) were included in the models (Giff et al., 2019). There are several possible explanations for these findings. Fathers may be compartmentalizing their PTSD symptoms in an effort to regain their parenting role after returning from deployment (Gewirtz et al., 2018). Likewise, fathers may be engaging in positive parenting behaviors to cope with their PTSD symptoms. Furthermore, parents' dyadic adjustment may be more important to how fathers interact with their children than the severity of PTSD symptoms. More research is needed to gain a fuller understanding of how fathers' mental health impacts their personal and their family's well-being. This work could broaden the scope beyond PTSD and should adopt a strengths-based perspective (Karre et al., 2018). Another potential avenue of study could investigate how post-traumatic growth influences fathers' development. To date, we are unaware of published research that focuses on that line of inquiry.

Physical health Physical health can encompass many domains (e.g., positive health behaviors, combat- and noncombat-related injuries, disease), but there is a dearth of research on this topic as a whole. The extant research focuses only on combat injury, and that research is also limited. Though more research is needed, a father's combat injury may be a source of stress for families. Fear of dismemberment or disability was a concern for fathers deployed during the birth of their first child (Schachman, 2010). These fears included a perceived disruption in their ability to interact and play with their children and concerns that they would become a burden on their family should they become disabled. However, the impact of actual paternal combat injury on children's distress may be more related to the post-injury disruption to the child's schedule or family's schedule, the impact on parental discipline practices, and the impact on time spent with the child post-injury (Cozza et al., 2010).

Cumulative risk Identification of risk factors is important; however, most families who experience these individual risk factors do well. There is growing evidence that, for children, cumulative risk, military-specific or normative, may be more important than individual risk factors and may impact depressive symptoms, academic performance, and persistence (Lucier-Greer et al.,

2015; MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2016). Promotive and protective factors may be increasingly important as risk level increases (MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2016). More research is needed, but protective factors for cumulative risk that have been identified for children include perceived family support and social connections outside the family (Lucier-Greer et al., 2015).

Protective factors Several factors may be protective during reintegration. Fathers' emotional reactivity (Gewirtz et al., 2019; Zhang, Piehler, et al., 2020), distress avoidance (Gewirtz et al., 2019), and poor inhibitory control (Monn et al., 2018) are associated with fathers' PTSD symptoms and child outcomes. These factors are malleable, and changes in these variables may be useful in the prevention or treatment of parenting-related difficulties related to PTSD (Gewirtz et al., 2019; Monn et al., 2018; Zhang, Piehler, et al., 2020). Moreover, when fathers prepare their child for deployment, fathers demonstrate less negative reintegration attitudes about their family, are less likely to meet the criteria for PTSD (Zanotti et al., 2016), and there is a better overall family adjustment to reintegration (Louie & Cromer, 2014). Lastly, hardiness, specifically feelings of dedication to tasks and meaning-making, is related to less parenting stress (Tomassetti-Long et al., 2015).

Programs for Military Fathers

Increased demands on military fathers and families since 9/11 (e.g., multiple deployments, increased operational tempo) underscore the value of programming that supports fathers in their various family roles. Military fathers want to be involved in family life (Dayton et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2014; Willerton et al., 2011) and have expressed interest in participating in programs that promote their healthy involvement (Walsh et al., 2014). The DoD is committed to supporting the health and functioning of military families (DoD, 2017), and the Department of

Veterans Affairs echoes this commitment by providing family-based services to veterans who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019).

Given these institutional supports and growing interest in strengthening military family resilience among prevention and intervention scientists, a multitude of programs, resources, and supports are available in person and online (Creech et al., 2014; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2019; Slomski, 2014). While having supports available to military fathers that address a variety of relevant needs (e.g., parenting, reintegration after deployment, couple relationship, mental health, and health promotion) is encouraging, the majority of programs have not been rigorously evaluated with military populations (Gewirtz, 2018; NASEM, 2019; Park, 2011). Thus, while there is no shortage of programs for military fathers, the effectiveness of these resources is not known.

Of the subset of family-based programs that have peer-reviewed studies using military samples, the evaluations commonly focus on feasibility outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, relevance), use single-group or case-study designs, have small sample sizes, and/or lack follow-up data. We identified 24 family-based programs that have published research using military samples (see Table 1), and all but one of these programs (i.e., After Deployment Adaptive Parenting Tools [ADAPT]; Gewirtz, 2018) had one or more of the aforementioned limitations.

ADAPT is a 14-week, group-based parent-training program for military families with a school-aged child (i.e., 5–12 years old) in which the Service member has returned from at least one combat deployment (Gewirtz, 2018). Results from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with 336 NG/R families, including 294 fathers, demonstrated positive short- and long-term program effects on both mothers' and fathers' parenting beliefs and behaviors, which were associated with improvements in child adjustment (Gewirtz et al., 2016; Zhang, Lee, et al., 2020). Notably, these researchers examined the mechanisms (e.g., emotion regulation) as well as the overall

Table 1 Family-based program with published research on military families

Program	Key reference	Study design	Child age	Fathers in study	Delivery format
ACT-Based Parenting Group	Casselman and Pemberton (2015)	SG P/P; no F/U	NS	Yes	I-P
ADAPT	Gewirtz et al. (2018)	RCT; 2y F/U	4 years–12 years	Yes	I-P; O
ArtStream's Allies in the Arts	Rollins and King (2015)	Qualitative	2 years–18 years	Yes	I-P
Bedtime Behavioral Intervention	Crawford et al. (2016)	Multiple-baseline; no F/U	18 months–7 years	Yes	D
Family Foundations	Feinberg et al. (2020)	RCT; no F/U	Prenatal–6 months	Yes	O
Filial Therapy	Myrick et al. (2018)	Case study	NS	No	I-P
FOCUS	I-P: Lester et al. (2016) O: Mogil et al. (2015)	I-P: SG P/P; 6 m F/U; O: Case study	I-P: 3 years–17 years; O: 3 years–5 years	Yes	I-P; O
Grow	I-P: Materia et al. (2020) O: Chesnut et al. (2019)	SG P/P; no F/U	I-P: 5 years–10 years; O: 5 years–10 years	Yes	I-P; O
Home Base Program (Three-Generation Model)	Ohye et al. (2015)	Case study	NS	Yes	I-P
Military Camp Out	McGillivray and Straub (2015)	Case study	4 years–12 years	Yes	I-P
Military-Extension Adventure Camps	Ashurst et al. (2014)	Qualitative	14 years–18 years	Yes	I-P
Multilevel Prevention Program for Improved Relationship Functioning	Heyman et al. (2015)	PT; Qualitative	NS	Yes	P; I-P
New Parent Support Program	Kelley et al. (2007)	PT	0 years–3 years/5 years	Yes	I-P
Online Parenting Pro-Tips	Riegler et al. (2020)	SG P/P; no F/U	3 years–9 years	Yes	O
Operation Building Resilience and Valuing Empowered Families	Smith et al. (2013)	Case study	NS	Yes	I-P
Passport Toward Success	Wilson et al. (2011)	SG P/P; no F/U	3 years–17 years	Yes	I-P
Sesame Street for Military Families: Transitions	Sherman et al. (2018)	RCT; no F/U	3 years–7 years	Yes	O
SHAPEDOWN	Canty (2003)	Case study	6 year–18 years	NS	I-P
Strong Families, Strong Forces	DeVoe et al. (2017)	RCT; no F/U	0 years–5 years	Yes	I-P
Strong Military Families Program	Julian et al. (2018)	Quasi; no F/U	0 years–7 years	Yes	I-P; P
Talk, Listen, Connect: Changes	Walker et al. (2014)	RCT; no F/U	2 years–8 years	NS	D; P; O
Talk, Listen, Connect: Multiple Deployments	Flittner O'Grady et al. (2016)	RCT; no F/U	2 years–5 years	Yes	D; P

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Program	Key reference	Study design	Child age	Fathers in study	Delivery format
Trauma-Focused CBT for Traumatic Grief	Cohen and Mannarino (2011)	Case study	3 years–17 years	NS	I-P
Youth Action Program	Perkins and Borden (2004)	SG P/P; no F/U; Qualitative	11 years–12 years	Yes	I-P

Note. All columns: *I-P* in person, *O* online, *P* print materials, *D* DVD, *m* months, *y* years, *NS* Not specified. Study design: *RCT* Randomized controlled trial, *Quasi* Quasi-experimental, *SG P/P* Single group pretest posttest, *PT* posttest only, *F/U* follow up

program effectiveness. However, the evidence to date on ADAPT comes from only one RCT with NG/R families. Replication is warranted and is currently in progress with a revised version of the program for active-duty families (Gewirtz, 2018).

In addition to ADAPT, several other programs have been evaluated with an RCT design; however, follow-up data are lacking. These programs include Strong Families Strong Forces (DeVoe et al., 2017); Family Foundations (Feinberg et al., 2020); Talk, Listen, Connect: Multiple Deployments (O'Grady et al., 2016); Sesame Street for Military Families: Transitions (Sherman et al., 2018); and Talk, Listen, Connect: Changes (Walker et al., 2014). The results of the RCTs for these programs indicate the programs have beneficial effects on parent, child, and family adjustment, at least in the short term. All of these programs focus on the parent–child relationship except for Family Foundations, which focuses on the co-parenting couple relationship. Further, all of these programs focus on military families with young children (<10 years old). Thus, there is a need for evidence-based family programming for military fathers of adolescents.

Despite the interest in and availability of programs, several barriers to successful implementation should be addressed. For example, there is no clear channel of communication within and across Service branches with respect to family-based programming (Cohen et al., 2009; NASEM, 2019). This leads to military fathers and their families often being unaware of the available programming supports. Further, in our own experience working with military populations, logistical challenges can impede program participation

(e.g., lack of childcare, program schedules conflicting with family schedules, cost [if implemented in a civilian setting]). Moreover, parents may experience stigma to help-seeking behavior (Michalopoulou et al., 2017). In fact, military parents seeking help for child behavior problems most often rely on community-based services instead of the services available on their installations (O'Grady et al., 2015). Given that most military families live off base, NG/R families live in civilian communities (often far removed from a military installation), and the number of families who are transitioning out of the military, trained providers who understand and family-based services that are sensitive to military culture are needed in civilian communities (O'Grady et al., 2015).

Disseminating programs through technological platforms (e.g., websites, mobile apps) may overcome some of the barriers associated with traditional program delivery. For instance, technology-based programming may be more accommodating to participants' schedules, could reduce stigma as participants are not seen by others engaging in family-based programming, and, given the mobility and geographical dispersion of military families, may be better able to reach a larger group of participants. Some existing family-based programs already incorporate technological features (e.g., ADAPT, Sesame Street for Military Families: Transitions), while others have adapted their programming for online delivery (e.g., Family Foundations). Moreover, new technology-based family programming is being developed (e.g., Online Parenting Pro-Tip [Riegler et al., 2020]; the Thrive Parenting

Initiative [www.thrive.psu.edu]). Unfortunately, the evidence that supports the effectiveness of technology-based programming for military fathers and their families has not kept pace with the innovative delivery systems.

The landscape of programming for military fathers is expansive and fluid and, for many professionals, is too cumbersome to navigate without assistance. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State's Continuum of Evidence (Karre et al., 2017) is a valuable resource for those who are interested in learning about available programming and the state of each program's evidence; it is available at https://www.continuum.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/search. This online program repository allows users to search over 1300 programs that have been vetted based on their available peer-reviewed research evidence. This resource can be useful for a quick overview of available programming in a particular area or for a particular population.

Implications

Current knowledge can be used to frame an understanding of military-connected fathers and to help fathers when needed. Understanding what is not known is also necessary for future research endeavors and to ensure that what is known is not overstated.

Avoiding a Deficit Perspective

Military-connected fathers experience stressors that are both common among all fathers and unique to military-connected fathers. Assuming that, by association with the military, fathers and their families are necessarily suffering is not based on empirical evidence. The majority of fathers and their children navigate the military lifestyle successfully. Association with the military provides fathers and their families benefits that are not guaranteed to all families (MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2017). As stated previously, military couples are less likely to get divorced;

children do well academically, socially, and emotionally; PTSD is not as common as some think; factors that may initially be thought of as risk factors could actually support resilience (e.g., PCS). Furthermore, military fathers are aware of the challenges associated with their service and frequently take proactive steps to prepare their children for those challenges, which, in turn, promote resilience among their children (Louie & Cromer, 2014). Moreover, with their association with the military, Service member fathers provide their children with exposure to diverse experiences and cultures within an environment where pride, values, connectedness, being part of something bigger, and purpose are highly valued.

Although the perspective from which we view military fathers and families has begun to improve (Karre et al., 2018), continuing to highlight the military-connected fathers' strengths and understanding what they are doing well is essential. Not only does this provide a more well-rounded and accurate understanding of military fathers, but it also provides more tools to help fathers when help is needed. Furthermore, with this more comprehensive knowledge, researchers, clinicians, and policymakers may be more approachable to military-connected fathers. That is, having and continuing to seek a well-rounded understanding of both the challenges and strengths of military-connected fathers may make fathers more likely to participate in research, more likely to seek help when it is indicated, and more likely to engage with policymakers to improve programs and policies for other military-connected fathers.

Systems Approach

Many aspects of the familial, social, cultural, and historical context within which a father lives will affect their fathering. As such, viewing military fathers through family systems and ecological systems perspectives provides a more well-rounded understanding of military-connected fathers and helps us avoid assumptions based solely on their being connected to the military (DeVoe & Ross, 2012). Given the diversity of

military-connected fathers, understanding fathers within their full context is necessary in order to have comprehensive knowledge, to offer effective support, and to promote their well-being. Moreover, fathers do not parent in a vacuum; the way in which a father's partner parents will affect his fathering and interactions that affect their children's outcomes.

Mental Health

As with civilian parents, the importance of mental health among military-connected parents cannot be overstated. It has been well established that maternal mental health plays an important role in child well-being. The research on military-connected fathers is an important step in demonstrating the role that fathers' mental health also plays in child well-being. While this chapter does not delve into mental health treatment, it should be acknowledged that there are effective treatments for mental health conditions that affect military-connected fathers (Reisman, 2016).

Spouse mental health and well-being appear to be important predictors of child outcomes during deployment. Regardless of whether the father is the spouse or the Service member, the father can help influence child outcomes through either his own well-being as the spouse or in his behavior that supports his spouse during deployment. When a father supports his spouse pre-deployment and encourages his spouse to find a supportive community (e.g., church, military organizations, and nonmilitary organizations; Flake et al., 2009) and engage in other activities that could support the spouse's mental health during the deployment period, this may have positive benefits for his spouse, his children, and himself. In addition, having difficult conversations about finances, legal matters (e.g., general power of attorney), and what to do should he not come home are important for family well-being and are encouraged by military leadership.

In light of the importance of mental health for military fathers and their families, it must be acknowledged that there is a stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment for Service members and their families. Service members may fear that being diagnosed with or receiving treatment for a mental health condition will affect their chance of promotion, PCS, or deployment. Whether perceived or actual, these threats can impact an individual's willingness to seek mental health treatment (Michalopoulou et al., 2017).

At the policy level, the DoD is taking steps to destigmatize and support the provision and use of mental health care. Receipt of mental health counseling is no longer, on its own, disqualifying for a security clearance (Office of Personnel Management, 2018). In addition, the Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6390.08 (DoD, 2011) specifies a policy of nondisclosure of mental health treatment to the individual's command unless certain conditions are met. Furthermore, DoDI 6490.15 (DoD, 2014) builds from the success of the Air Force-developed Behavioral Health Optimization Program (Landoll et al., 2017) and other similar Service-developed programs, which make mental health services available inside of primary care facilities. Renamed Primary Care Behavioral Health for convergence across the Services, one goal of this initiative is to include both physical and mental health as part of a holistic approach to wellness (Dubois, 2019). Moreover, in the event that an individual may be concerned about being seen walking into a mental health facility, housing physical and mental health in the same location provides an extra layer of confidentiality.

Programs for Military Fathers

Interest in and availability of programming is necessary but not sufficient for program uptake. One of the barriers listed above that may be the most difficult to overcome is the stigma of asking for help with parenting. One potential strategy for normalizing participation in parenting programs is to carefully consider where the program is located. Delivering parenting programs within the workplace setting has potential for reducing stigma and increasing uptake (Dittman, 2018); however, where in the workplace the service is offered matters. Delivering parenting programs

through a trusted agency whose services military fathers may already be utilizing (e.g., Child and Youth Programs; Morale, Welfare and Recreation [MWR]) could be an effective means for normalizing their participation in such programs. Another potential strategy is implementing a public-health approach to service delivery such that programming is available at multiple levels of prevention (i.e., universal, selective, and indicated), in multiple formats (i.e., workshops, group-based classes, individual sessions, and digital formats), and with various levels of intensity (e.g., brief, self-paced programs, and in-depth, clinician-led programs) (Sanders & Burke, 2018). However, implementing a public-health approach to parenting support within the military would require buy-in from multiple stakeholders at multiple ecological levels and would require coordinating services across multiple agencies (e.g., DoD, MWR, the Family Advocacy Program, medical).

A Challenging Population to Research

We would like to acknowledge the inherent difficulty of conducting research with this population. As discussed, this population is incredibly diverse. Although this diversity is necessary and beneficial to the military structure as a whole, it can present challenges when trying to understand the individuals within the structure. Researchers need to be aware that there will likely not be one unifying concept of the military-connected father when conducting research on military families.

In addition, this population can be difficult to access. Although military families are very interested in participating in research that may help other military families (Davis et al., 2017), there are institutional barriers to identifying and recruiting these families. Military leadership is protective of military families, and there are strict controls and approvals that must be obtained. When recruiting through the military structures themselves (e.g., distributing flyers to military units or in military medical facilities), approvals must be granted at multiple levels, which can take many months and possibly years, if they are

granted at all. In addition, the approvals process will vary by Service and by the organization within each Service. When working directly with the DoD or the Services to conduct the research, access to the potential participants may be easier, but there is a lengthy approval process that is similar to a university Institutional Review Board. This approval process can take a year or more to complete.

Future Directions

Opportunities for Practitioners

Understanding military families' experiences and perspectives is important for professionals who work with military fathers. There are many ways in which professionals can familiarize themselves with military culture and obtain resources that may help them work with military-connected fathers. There is a growing amount of literature that pertains to military families that caters to professionals who serve military families (e.g., Blaisure et al., 2016). In addition, many websites provide evidence-based training or information for professionals who work with military families, including the following:

- The Center for Deployment Psychology (www.deploymentpsych.org)
- The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu)
- Military Families Learning Network (www.militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org)
- The Military Family Research Institute (www.mfri.purdue.edu)
- Military Reach (www.militaryreach.auburn.edu)
- Rand (https://www.rand.org/topics/military-families.html)
- The US Department of Health and Human Services (www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/military/)
- Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org/parenting/military-and-veteran-families-support)

Future Research

Acknowledging the challenges presented in the implications section earlier, we have suggestions for future research that could help generate knowledge about military-connected fathers. At the research-design level, although the field has moved past the reliance on clinical case studies, many studies are cross-sectional; this limits the discussion of causality. Using temporal precedence in longitudinal studies where random assignment is not possible and using RCT designs in program evaluation efforts can help address this.

The studies of military father development have been heavily reliant on qualitative research. This research has provided a narrative on the ways in which fathers navigate parenthood in the military. There is ample room for additional qualitative and quantitative work to provide further insight into how fathers, themselves, develop in the military context, the strengths they possess and are able to pass down to their children, and the challenges that they face beyond deployment and reintegration. In addition, the research could examine veterans who are becoming fathers after they have completed their military service and could investigate the normative development for these fathers and the strengths and challenges they may have that are related to their military service.

Many studies examine nonmalleable or systemic predictors of fathers' and children's psychosocial functioning (e.g., child age, child gender, length of fathers' deployment, and number of fathers' deployments). This is very useful information for identifying families that are at risk and for informing DoD policy, which may or may not be malleable depending on the operational need for that policy. However, examining malleable, family-level variables can help identify where more proximal change can happen to improve family functioning and both father and child psychosocial outcomes.

Studies frequently group parents into the at-home parent or the military parent and do not consider gender differences. There is evidence that fathers and mothers differ in mental health outcomes related to deployment and in how those outcomes affect parenting and the couple relationship (Vogt et al., 2017). Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that changes in maltreatment during deployment are different for fathers and mothers (Gibbs et al., 2007; McCarthy et al., 2015). As such, the evidence that is available, albeit limited, does suggest that there may be important genders differences in military families related to parenting. When gender is not accounted for in analyses, fully understanding the experiences of the Service member father or the military spouse father may be difficult.

The number of female military spouses is certainly far greater than the number of male military spouses (i.e., 9% of active duty spouses are male, and 14% of NG/R spouses are male; DoD, 2019). Therefore, the male military spouse population is understandably difficult to recruit, and sub-sample sizes may be small and limit the potential analyses. However, the likelihood that men and women live this experience differently warrants a more concerted effort to obtain this data. For example, little is known about the support that military spouse fathers receive when their wives are deployed (e.g., military support from Family Readiness Groups, or community support from churches or community groups). Some efforts are being made to examine this understudied population. For example, the Family Study extension of the Millennium Cohort Study of Service members oversampled for married and female Service members in an attempt to obtain larger sample sizes of civilian male spouses (Crum-Cianflone et al., 2014).

Some studies find reporter differences based on parent or on mental health status. For example, reports of the frequency of deployed parent–child communication have only moderate correlations between parents (Clark et al., 2018), and parents with higher PTSD symptoms report greater child internalizing and externalizing behaviors compared to their spouse's report (Chesmore, He, et al., 2018). The nature of these

differences, however, is unclear. It could be that the deployed parent overstates the amount of communication he has with his child, or the at-home parent may not be aware of some of the communication. Similarly, due to PTSD, a parent's perception of his child's behavior could be inaccurate, or the child could actually behave differently around the parent with PTSD. These differences in reporting deserve further investigation.

We could not locate research on single military fathers that had been conducted in the last 20 years. Single fathers account for 10% of military fathers and are fundamentally different from other military-connected fathers. Interestingly, the number of Service members who are single fathers has changed drastically since 2000. The number of active duty Service member fathers who are single parents *decreased* 47% between 2000 and 2018, while the number of NG/R single parent fathers *increased* 55% (DoD, 2019). Neither of these trends has followed changes in the overall size of each component over the same time period (i.e., a 5% *decrease* in active duty Service members and an 8% *decrease* in NG/R Service members from 2000 to 2018; DoD, 2019). Similarly, there is a dearth of research on fathering in dual-military families. It is currently unclear how mothers', fathers', and children's experiences in dual-military families may differ from families that have one military parent.

Finally, military-connected fathers are very diverse. They may all share a common experience of being connected to the military, and that may have a common influence on certain aspects of their fatherhood. At the same time, their diversity extends to factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, father type, religion, association with the military, and why (i.e., philosophically) and how (i.e., structurally) they are connected to the military. All of these factors may play a role in their fathering behavior and attitudes. These factors should be included when examining military fathers. In addition, rather than controlling for these factors, the research could examine how individual characteristics shape how fathers parent within the context of the military.

Limitations

Due in part to the history of research on fathers in which small proportions of father respondents were combined with and/or viewed through a mother lens, we have taken a conservative approach to reviewing the literature by only including studies where the samples were either exclusively fathers or where analyses were done separately for fathers and mothers. Many studies that examine parenting in the military look at the Service member parent and the civilian parent separately but do not further separate them by gender. This may be sufficient for investigators who want to understand the impact of, for instance, deployment on children, without particular concern for whether it is the mother or the father who is deploying. However, examining mother and father Service members together may do both a disservice. The proportion is frequently approximately 15% female Service member parent and 85% male Service member parent and vice versa for the civilian parent (e.g., Clark et al., 2018; Flake et al., 2009). With these proportions, there are multiple scenarios that make the results less interpretable. The Service member father responses may be diluted by differing Service member mother responses, and civilian father responses may be overwhelmed by differing civilian mother responses. Furthermore, if the responses of the smaller group are drastically different from that of the larger group, the results may not be able to be accurately interpreted for either group or as a whole.

In addition, we only included studies on post-9/11 US Service members. We acknowledge that this omits a significant amount of valuable research. However, as discussed above, sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts matter. Previous wars were markedly different from current wars. World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War were not fought by an all-volunteer force. Furthermore, Vietnam War veterans' experiences in theater were different from Service members' experiences during OEF and OIF. For example, during OEF and OIF, the structured rest and relaxation programs provided in theater to help

Service members decompress may have been more effective than decompression activities engaged in during the Vietnam conflict. These structured experiences may have encouraged positive coping mechanisms, which may, then, have impacted how fathers interacted with their spouses and children when they returned home. In addition to experiences in theater, Vietnam veterans came home to a very different societal response to their service than current veterans experience. We were unable to locate any research that compares Service members from different war eras. Future research should examine how the experiences of veterans from different wars or conflicts are similar or different and how this might be related to fathering.

Similarly, military-connected fathers from different countries may also differ substantially. There will likely be similarities, however societal differences (e.g., gender roles) and differences in military service (e.g., all-volunteer vs. conscription, frequency and type of deployment, PCS vs. regional or local service, availability of family support programs, and value the Service puts on enlisted members) will likely influence parenting and, thus, warrant separate consideration. No studies were located that compared the experiences of Service members of different countries. Because our expertise is in the US military and because we were not comfortable making non-data-driven decisions on which countries were similar enough to the United States with regard to societal influences and military service, only studies of US Service members and their families were included in this discussion. We acknowledge that this is imperfect and excludes some important work.

Conclusion

Although they face challenges that are common to all families and specific to the military, military families generally thrive, and military-connected fathers play an important role in the well-being of their families. When fathers and families do need extra support, supports are available within the military community and the civil-

ian community. Resources are also available to civilian practitioners who work with military-connected fathers and families. Seeking to understand fathers and families within the military context, within their family system, and within the broader ecological system will provide a more comprehensive understanding of military-connected fathers.

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Parenting from Prison: Incarceration and Fatherhood

Amy A. Morgan, Kelsey Burt, and Alexa Comfort

I used to break out the Crayola markers, and I used to let them color in the tattoos and stuff. And [now] they're like, 'Daddy?'
'What?'
'When you get home, do we get to color in your tattoos?'
I'm like, 'Yeah. Daddy's got a lot more tattoos.'
'Well, we've got a lot more markers.'
(Excerpt from the Multi-Site Family Study; McKay et al., 2019, p. 2)

Mass Incarceration in the United States

The United States of America (USA) holds a global reputation for a broken carceral system (Garland, 2001; Morgan et al., 2021). Over the last 10 years, the USA has led the world in rates of incarceration (Al-Rousan et al., 2017; Western, 2006), incarcerating 25% of the world's inmates while only housing 5% of the world's population (Cullen, 2017). These trends are a result of "mass incarceration" (Garland, 2001), in which rates of incarceration increased by 500% beginning in the 1970s and peaked around 2009 despite an incommensurate rise in crime rates (Cullen, 2017). Incarceration does not impact everyone equally. Indeed, we cannot understand mass incarceration

and its effects on families and fathering without first situating it as a mechanism of institutional racism.

Mass incarceration is attributed to institutional racism inherent in the US criminal justice system (Toldson, 2020; Morgan et al., 2022), particularly racially biased sentencing policies introduced in the 1970s (Clear & Frost, 2013). For example, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1968 enacted mandatory minimum sentences that were far more severe than any preceding laws (Clear & Frost, 2013). "War on drugs" and "law and order" policies disproportionately targeted people of color, with much harsher sentences imposed for substances such as crack than powder cocaine (Clear & Frost, 2013). Racial and ethnic minorities quickly became significantly overrepresented in prisons (Clear & Frost, 2013; Guerino et al., 2011), resulting in mass incarceration (Garland, 2001). Today, one in three Black men and one in six Latino men born in 2001 have a lifetime chance of imprisonment in the USA, compared to one in 17 White men (Sentencing Project, 2021).

Racial disparities do not equitably represent differences in crime rates. For example, while Black men are six times more likely to be incarcerated for felony drug convictions than Whites, both groups report similar rates of substance use (NAACP, 2018). Finally, in 11 states, at least one in 20 Black people overall are incarcerated (Nellis, 2016). These incarceration demographics tend to be further exacerbated in disadvantaged

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and low socioeconomic status neighborhoods (Clear, 2007; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). These are just a few of many statistics that demonstrate the magnitude of racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

In recent years, legislators have begun addressing problematic policies contributing to mass incarceration. At the state level, California passed proposition 47 in 2014, which reclassified some felonies as misdemeanors. In 2009, New York reduced harsh mandatory minimum sentences for low-level drug offenses. At the federal level, Congress passed the Fair Sentencing Act in 2010, which addressed the racially biased sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine offenses (Sentencing Project, 2021). Most recently, the First Step Act, signed into law in 2018, will reform sentencing laws and federal prisons, decrease the overall inmate population, and provide financial support for recidivism efforts (Congressional Research Service, 2020). Recent legislative efforts to address mass incarceration are a promising approach to the incarceration crisis in the USA. However, mass incarceration has left behind a wake of devastated communities and families. It is imperative that researchers, clinicians, and policymakers alike understand the ripple effects of mass incarceration as many formerly incarcerated people find their way home to communities and families.

Incarceration and Families

Incarcerated people have historically experienced a disproportionate burden of social, health, and economic inequities. People who encounter the criminal justice system are overwhelmingly more likely to have experienced poverty (Ng, 2010), parental substance use, mental illness (Ritter et al., 2002), childhood trauma (Axelson et al., 2020), domestic violence (Murrell et al., 2007), and general family instability (Ritter et al., 2002). More than half (i.e., 52%) of people incarcerated in state prisons and nearly two-thirds (i.e., 63%) of federal inmates are parents to minor children (Glaze, 2010; Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Further, more than half of all incarcerated people

in the USA are fathers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). On average, incarcerated parents serve a sentence of 80–103 months, most frequently for violent offenses and nonviolent drug convictions (Mumola, 2000). Nearly three in four incarcerated parents have been convicted and/or imprisoned previously (Mumola, 2000). Further, for every incarcerated parent, there are approximately two children left behind (La Vigne et al., 2005; Mumola, 2000).

Incarceration does not happen in a vacuum; it has significant collateral consequences for children and families both during and after incarceration. Indeed, parental incarceration is officially classified as an adverse childhood experience (ACE) (Charles et al., 2021). Nearly 1 in 28 children in the USA will be impacted by parental incarceration at some point across their lifespan (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). Newer research indicates that more than five million children in the USA have had at least one parent incarcerated in prison settings at one point in their lives; a rate nearly three times higher than previous estimates examining the rates of children with a currently incarcerated parent (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). Paternal incarceration, in particular, is frequently a traumatizing experience that can disrupt or exacerbate economic circumstances, parent–child relationships, and lead to poor parenting and mental health outcomes for the other parent/caregiver (Turney, 2021).

Economic Hardship

Incarcerated persons are more likely to have experienced poverty and reside in low socioeconomic status neighborhoods (Ng, 2010; Ng et al., 2013). These individuals are also significantly more likely to encounter economic hardship as a direct result of low-wage positions (Noyes et al., 2018; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). These findings suggest that individuals, and by extension their families, are likely already struggling financially prior to incarceration. Financial hardship can be exacerbated by incarceration through loss of income, legal fees, and/or barriers to reentering

the labor market with a criminal record (Geller et al., 2011; Holzer, 2009; Noyes et al., 2018).

The negative trajectory of income commonly associated with carceral experiences is likely to have profound implications for children experiencing parental incarceration. Geller and colleagues (2011) report that children of incarcerated parents are significantly less likely to have financial support (e.g., child support and general financial assistance) than children who have not experienced parental incarceration. Further, when financial assistance is available, children of incarcerated parents tend to receive less assistance overall than children without incarcerated parents (Geller et al., 2010; Noyes et al., 2018).

A qualitative study that interviewed 14 children of incarcerated parents found that all but one of the families were financially struggling prior to incarceration (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). Further, the family that reported financial stability also reported generating income by illegal means (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). An additional important finding from this study was that the children from every family interviewed appeared (or reported) to be acutely aware of the family's financial struggles (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). Children with an incarcerated parent may experience the deleterious effects of economic hardship in multiple ways. First, a loss of income may significantly limit the family resources and introduce a higher level of distress for other family members, especially primary caregivers. This inherently limits parents' ability to invest in their children during incarceration.

In cases of an incarcerated parent who was providing child support, it is highly unlikely that financial assistance will continue and even more unlikely that the funds will be recouped following incarceration (Arditti, 2018; Muentner et al., 2018; Wildeman, 2014). In addition to financial losses, families may experience new costs associated with incarceration, such as legal fees, fines, or other costs associated with visiting the incarcerated person (Arditti, 2018; Wildeman & Wang, 2017). These financial burdens exacerbate economic hardship and further promote inequality across families involved in the criminal justice system (Arditti, 2018). These experiences are often the rule, not the exception, and help to explain how incarceration contributes to cycles of poverty and material hardship.

Children are commonly directly affected through loss of family financial resources as well as indirectly through the nonincarcerated parents' additional stress and role strain. Based on these economic hardship trends, it is not surprising that children who have experienced parental incarceration are also significantly more likely to live in severe poverty than children who have not experienced parental incarceration (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002; Noyes et al., 2018). Financial instability and general poverty are generally linked with poor childhood health and well-being outcomes (Noyes et al., 2018). These trends are pieces of the whole picture that make up material hardship, which position children with an incarcerated parent at a severe disadvantage and promote family inequality.

Akin to other domains of material hardship, homelessness for children intersects with other risk experiences including health issues, academic problems, food scarcity, and polyvictimization (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). Glaze and Maruschak (2010) report that in the year preceding arrest and subsequent incarceration, approximately 9% of individuals reported experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The empirical literature exploring the homelessness–incarceration link focuses largely on adult men, while few studies have examined the parental incarceration–child housing instability link (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). Preliminary research indicates that parental incarceration and material hardship are linked to housing instability, though the exact linkage is not clearly identified (Foster & Hagan, 2009; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). More recently, Wakefield and Wildeman (2014) conducted an analysis in this area using the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study (FFCWS) data. Results indicated that overall, children of recently incarcerated parents were more likely to experience homelessness and housing instability in the past 12 months than children of non-recently incarcerated parents (Wakefield & Wildeman,

2014). However, these results differed vastly by gender of the incarcerated parent. Paternal incarceration predicted a 95% increase in the chances of a child experiencing housing instability, while maternal incarceration only predicted an 18% chance of the same phenomenon (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). Further, results indicated that paternal incarceration "massively increased" African American children's odds of experiencing housing instability. This latter finding is consistent with the racial disparities observed in mass incarceration and may point to secondary consequences for parents of color experiencing incarceration at disproportionately higher rates than white parents. These results highlight the detrimental impact of having a father who is incarcerated, specifically for fathers of young children and fathers of color.

Social Support and Stigma

Not surprisingly, those involved in the criminal justice system often experience stigmatizing labels such as dishonest, untrustworthy, and disreputable (Burch, 2021). By extension, many families feel the stigmatizing effects of incarceration through reduced social support (Arditti, 2012; Morgan et al., 2021). Social support is a broad term that generally means receiving assistance in the form of a resource. This multidimensional concept may be experienced as financial, emotional, or instrumental support by friends, family, community members, or others in the position to provide help (Dumont & Provost, 1999). Regardless of the type of social support, or from whom it is received, it is generally believed that social support can act as a protective factor during times of stress.

For many families, incarceration may unexpectedly and suddenly create a single-parent household (Arditti, 2012; Lowenstein, 1986). For the parent at home, this may mean an abrupt increase in financial, household, and parenting responsibilities (Lowenstein, 1986). Other types of family loss resulting in sudden one-parent households (e.g., deployment, death) usually are accompanied by support and sympathy for the

involuntary nature of the structural family change (Arditti, 2012). Incarceration, however, does not tend to draw the same type of social support. As Arditti (2012) states, "*There are no casseroles brought to the house for the 'prison widow' and her children. There is no government assistance or formal recognition that a significant loss has occurred in the family that will bear heavily on children's welfare*" (p. 112). Beyond lack of social support, some families may perceive others as blaming or degrading (Arditti, 2012; Codd, 1998; Comfort, 2008). Family members may even experience being treated as if they are inmates by carceral staff during visits (Arditti et al., 2003; Codd, 2008; Richards & McWilliams, 1996). The majority of the literature on social support for families experiencing material hardship during incarceration suggests that those who are most likely to be burdened with providing additional support during parental incarceration are Black women, particularly mothers and grandmothers, both of whom tend to be heavily relied upon for caregiving responsibilities without substantial support, themselves (Christian & Thomas, 2009). From a family systems perspective, additional resources are needed in times of strain to promote family adaptation.

Arditti (2012) reports that the most common experience for suddenly single-parent families due to parental incarceration is a lack of social support. A qualitative study conducted by Arditti and colleagues (2003) lends voice to the experiences of these women with statements such as, "I'm struggling all by myself to handle this" and "no peace, no break, no patience, and no help" (p. 200). Feelings of isolation and role strain by the partner left behind are likely exacerbated by experiences of the stigma that reduce the overall social support immediately available to families facing parental incarceration (Wildeman & Wang, 2017).

The existing literature lends support to an overwhelming lack of social support for families experiencing parental incarceration. However, social support may be a key resilience process to helping families to navigate the additional strains consequent of material hardship exacerbated by parental incarceration. Scholars agree that social

support likely plays an important role in navigating the many consequences a family experiences during parental incarceration (Arditti, 2005; Besemer et al., 2018). Existing research supports the idea that social support may mitigate stress via a buffering effect that offsets the impact of stress on wellbeing (Dumont & Provost, 1999).

Incarceration and Fathering

Overall, the majority of incarcerated men are fathers to minor children (Mumola, 2000). Incarcerated fathers are more than their carceral sentence; they are parents, partners, and family members (Hairston, 1998). Separation from a parent is generally an adverse experience for children. Parental incarceration may yield more detrimental outcomes for children than other experiences of forced separation, such as divorce (Geller et al., 2012). Paternal incarceration, in particular, is associated with a number of risks to children and families. When a father is incarcerated, children generally experience significant disruptions to their father–child relationships, family economic strain, psychological distress, social stigma, and poorer academic outcomes (Geller et al., 2012). Below, we explore these associations from a family process perspective.

Paternal Incarceration: Risks to Children

Children who experience paternal incarceration are at risk for adverse outcomes across physical, social, psychological, and academic domains. The rates of parental incarceration are relatively similar across child age ranges. A 2004 survey completed by parents incarcerated in state prisons demonstrated that approximately 22% had a child(ren) aged 4 or younger, while 30% of affected children ranged between 5 and 9 years old (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010; Poehlmann-Tynan & Arditti, 2018). Further, 32% of children ranged between 10 and 14 years old, while the remainder (16%) ranged between 15 and 17 years old (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010; Poehlmann-Tynan & Arditti, 2018).

Children of incarcerated parents often face unique risk factors that their age-matched counterparts do not. Findings consistently demonstrate that children who experience parental incarceration will themselves encounter the criminal justice system, implying a systemic and intergenerational pattern of incarceration (Farrington, 2003; Murray & Farrington, 2005, 2008; Ng et al., 2013). Recent research from Turney (2022) found that adolescents who experienced paternal incarceration have a higher chance of developing higher rates of behavioral issues than a cohort who did not experience paternal incarceration. Further, paternal incarceration in early childhood was found to be most disadvantageous compared to middle childhood or early adolescence, creating "chains of adversity" that accumulate across the life course (Turney, 2022). Children with an incarcerated parent also tend to have higher rates of mental illness (Dallaire et al., 2015; Davis & Shlafer, 2017), trauma (Arditti & Savla, 2013), antisocial and aggressive behavior (Geller et al., 2012), social exclusion (Geller et al., 2011), academic challenges (Turney, 2014; Morgan et al., 2021), poor physical health (Lee et al., 2013), internalizing disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety), and externalizing disorders (e.g., delinquent conduct) (Kjellstrand et al., 2018; Porter & King, 2015). Research suggests that these effects vary by gender and age of the child as well as the type of crime associated with their parents' incarceration (Wildeman, 2010). For example, Turney (2021) found that paternal incarceration in early childhood resulted in worse adolescent behavior outcomes than if paternal incarceration was experienced in middle or late childhood. One potential explanation for Turney's (2021) findings is that the earlier a child is when they experience paternal incarceration, the longer they experience a cascading effect of the strain.

Children of incarcerated parents tend to perform more poorly in school than children of nonincarcerated parents. Using ADD Health data, Hagan and Foster (2012) conducted a longitudinal analysis on both the effects of parental

incarceration on individual academic performance as well as the influence of spillover effects in school catchment areas with high concentrations of incarcerated parents. Results indicated that children of an incarcerated parent had significantly lower grade point averages (GPAs; Hagan & Foster, 2012). College graduation rates were also significantly lower for children of incarcerated parents than children with never incarcerated parents (Hagan & Foster, 2012). Interestingly, the authors observed a school-level effect in which schools with higher than average rates of parental incarceration saw declines in graduation rates, even for children without an incarcerated parent, suggesting spillover effects by geographical area (Hagan & Foster, 2012). Cho (2011) conducted a large-scale quantitative analysis of academic dropout rates for youth. Findings indicated that youth are at a significantly higher risk for dropping out of school in the year that parental incarceration began (Cho, 2011). Further, consistent with Hagan and Foster's (2012) findings, youth with an incarcerated parent are neither more nor less likely to drop out of school when attending school in an area of high rates of parental incarceration. One potential explanation for this finding is that teachers may increase sympathy and lower expectations for youth experiencing parental incarceration more than other common reasons for poor academic performance (Cho, 2011). An experimental study by Dallaire and colleagues (2010) supports this hypothesis that teachers may have an awareness and higher empathy that coalesce into lowered expectations for students who may be struggling as a result of parental incarceration.

Further, internalizing and externalizing disorders are commonly diagnosed in children with ACEs. Children with an incarcerated parent are significantly more likely to receive such an internalizing and/or externalizing disorder diagnosis, likely due to higher patterns of existing risks such as material hardship, family instability, and general family-level stress (Miller & Barnes, 2015; Smyke et al., 2017). In particular, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), a childhood externalizing disorder, is diagnosed at

higher rates in families experiencing parental incarceration than in families who have not experienced parental incarceration (Phillips et al., 2002).

In addition to academics and psychological wellbeing, social functioning is a normative part of life for school-aged children. Children with an incarcerated parent may experience stigma and social exclusion in school via bullying or peer isolation. In one study, the majority of children interviewed discussed having strained social relationships at school, with many children reporting having only a few friends, if any at all (Bocknek et al., 2009). The children in these interviews attributed their negative social experiences at school to their parent's incarceration, in addition to personal attributes and frequency of changing schools (Bocknek et al., 2009). While explaining social withdrawal at school, one child described a fear of the school security guard and the associated reminders of incarcerated settings (Bocknek et al., 2009).

Children with an incarcerated parent have existing risk factors with material hardship, emotion regulation, and overall stability (Myers et al., 2013). When these risk factors intersect with the social stigma of poverty and incarceration in the school setting, it is not surprising that some children with an incarcerated parent may experience social exclusion. In a study examining experiences of bullying (as the victim) for children of incarcerated parents, it was found that these children are commonly the targets of peer social exclusion and that they often struggled to emotionally regulate (Myers et al., 2013). Further, Kahya and Ekinci (2018) found that at least half of the children in their study ($n = 6$; 50%) reported being stigmatized and excluded by peers as a result of parental incarceration and expressed reluctance to share their parent's incarceration with others out of fear of social exclusion.

It is important to note that not all children with an incarcerated father are impacted equally with respect to social, psychological, family, and academic outcomes. Johnson and Waldfogel (2002) report that, for children who had limited contact with their fathers prior to incarceration, adverse outcomes may be less common. Further, research

by Lundberg et al. (2007) demonstrates that sons may be more impacted than daughters when a father is incarcerated. Finally, although for many children the incarceration of a father is highly disruptive, there are instances in which it may be protective. For example, when fathers who perpetrate abuse, neglect, or other destabilizing behaviors in families are incarcerated, research indicates these children may benefit from their absence through enhanced safety and stabilization (Whitaker et al., 2006).

Still, paternal incarceration is frequently a destabilizing event in families. In some instances, paternal incarceration may directly impact a child's wellbeing (e.g., psychological distress). However, the impact of paternal incarceration is complex, and researchers have begun to identify a number of direct and indirect pathways in which the incarceration of a father can impact a child and families (Geller et al., 2012). Suggested pathways for these outcomes include an inability to fill role expectations, exacerbated economic insecurity, and limited contact and visiting experiences.

Inability to Fill Fathering Role Expectations

The vast majority of parents who are incarcerated are fathers (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). Incarceration inherently prevents individuals from fulfilling family roles such as parent and partner; it is also likely to exacerbate material hardship, as incarcerated parents are unlikely able to invest in their children financially (e.g., child support) or relationally (e.g., parent–child relationship; Foster & Hagan, 2015; Turanovic et al., 2012). These effects may pose risks to children both directly (e.g., loss of a parent, family instability) and indirectly (e.g., worsened economic hardship, poor parenting as a result of role strain). This is especially true in the common instance in which fathers are incarcerated at long distances from their families (Arditti, 2018; Arditti & Kennington, 2017).

While exact rates are not well documented, the high rate of parental incarceration has been linked to a subsequent increase in single-parent households (Western et al., 2004) and has profound implications for the caregivers left behind by the incarcerated parent (Arditti, 2012). The nonincarcerated parent may experience psychological and financial distress, role strain as a single parent, and overall family instability (Arditti, 2012; Geller et al., 2011; Wildeman, 2014). Researchers have hypothesized that when a parent is incarcerated, their partner who is now in a role akin to single parenthood may impede effective parenting skills as a result of economic strain and psychological distress (Turney, 2014). While not causal in nature, preliminary research has suggested that paternal incarceration is positively correlated with maternal authoritarian parenting practices and neglect (Turney, 2014). Further, these mothers tend to report increased experiences of economic hardship as well as family instability as a result of paternal incarceration (Turney, 2014). In a study using the FFWCS data, Turney (2014) found that for parents who were cohabitating prior to incarceration, child neglect and maternal physical aggression were positively associated with the paternal incarceration event. Further, it is suggested that some of these findings may be at least in part explained by parental mental health and material hardship (Turney, 2014). Subsequently, negative child and family outcomes may be a function of parent and family level processes during parental incarceration.

Parental incarceration scholars tend to agree that when a parent is incarcerated, the caregiving parent's ability to manage parenting duties alone is crucial to the child's wellbeing, assuming that the incarcerated parent was in residence and contributing to parenting responsibilities. It is logical that for parents who cohabitate prior to one's incarceration, the carceral event would likely place further stress (e.g., economic, psychological) on the caregiving parent at home. This is supported by research in which findings highlight associations between the caregiving parent's parenting and overall stability for children during parental incarceration (Arditti et al., 2003; Dallaire, 2007; Poehlmann et al., 2008; Poehlmann-Tynan & Arditti, 2018; Western & Smith, 2018).

When fathers are incarcerated, there appears to be a domino effect. Children are impacted directly, as well as indirectly through the experiences of their primary caregiver at home who may be navigating worsened economic conditions and psychological distress. In particular, the strain of economic hardship, especially during parental incarceration, may place spillover stress on family relationships and diminish the remaining parent's abilities to parent and function optimally (Conger et al., 2010). Finally, these effects may propagate further experiences of child and family social inequality with specific deleterious effects on child youth developmental outcomes during parental incarceration.

Fulfilling family roles while incarcerated may only slightly improve during family reentry as individuals may experience "invisible punishments" (Arditti, 2018, p. 2; Travis, 2002). Invisible punishments are postincarceration experiences in which individuals are precluded from opportunities and practices that may enhance parenting, such as employment opportunities and public resources (e.g., certain welfare benefits). These exclusionary practices not only continue to punish formerly incarcerated individuals after fulfilling their sentence but extends potentially deleterious consequences to the families of incarcerated persons (Arditti, 2018; Muentner et al., 2018; Turney, 2017).

Contact and Visiting Experiences

While many children with nonresident fathers (e.g., separation via divorce) still have regular contact with their fathers (Tach et al., 2010), research shows that less than one-third of incarcerated fathers interact with their children consistently (Hairston, 1998). Nearly one-quarter (i.e., 22%) of incarcerated fathers have not had any contact with their children during incarceration, and less than one-third (i.e., 30%) had weekly contact via letters (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Paternal incarceration may profoundly interrupt child wellbeing and development by limiting fathers' involvement and role fulfillment (Geller, 2013). If a father's incarceration generally fosters negative effects directly on children and indi-

rectly through family processes, contact and visiting experiences may buffer these risks by providing direct father–child interaction. Tasca (2016) refers to this as "the linkage between two key contexts: prison and home" (p. 740). Visitation is commonly fraught with dichotomous experiences: an opportunity to connect face-to-face, but usually in a context that can be scary or otherwise distressing to children and family members. Distressing visitation experiences are one example of "secondary prisonization," in which the dehumanizing experiences of prison (e.g., loss of autonomy, experiences of prejudice or judgment, strict rules on physical contact, and being physically searched) are extended to family members of the incarcerated person (Comfort, 2003).

Despite the challenges of visitation, regular contact with incarcerated parents may reduce harmful outcomes for children and families with an incarcerated father (Cochran et al., 2014; Poehlmann et al., 2010; Tasca, 2016). We do not yet have a full understanding of visitation in the context of paternal incarceration; however, research has documented that only half of the incarcerated parents experience visits with their children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Visitation can offer opportunities for incarcerated fathers to connect with their families in meaningful ways (Arditti, 2012), where families can come together and discuss difficult past events, maintain a presence in current circumstances and events, and make important plans for the future (Tasca, 2016). Despite the opportunities that visitation may afford families in maintaining family relationships, challenges remain. Nearly two-thirds (i.e., 62%) of families live more than 100 miles away from where the incarcerated father (Mumola, 2000), potentially limiting the frequency of visitation (Tasca, 2016). Not surprisingly, children and families whose fathers were incarcerated in settings within 50 miles of their homes had significantly more in-person visits than those who lived more than 50 miles away (Hairston, 2007). If families are able to visit, conditions are frequently less than ideal. For example, staff may be unwelcoming and subject families to invasive searches, physical contact may be prohibited, and visitation spaces them-

selves are frequently devoid of child-friendly items such as games and activities (Day et al., 2005; Tasca, 2016).

Custodial parents play a critical role in the ability of children to visit their incarcerated fathers (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Indeed, research by Arditti (2012) describes how mothers' influences can profoundly shape the degree and manner of men's fathering processes and identities during visitation. The important role that mothers play in incarcerated fathering may be due to the significant power shifts (i.e., from father to mother) that occur when fathers of heterosexual partnerships become incarcerated (Roy & Dyson, 2005). Scholars frequently refer to custodial mothers to children with an incarcerated father as "gatekeepers" (see Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Roy & Dyson, 2005; Tasca, 2016). Given the often negative (and potentially misogynistic) connotation of the word "gatekeeper" and historical "mother blaming" that has occurred in studying family distress (i.e., blaming mothers for their sons' psychopathology; Caplan & Hall-McCorquodale, 1985), we join other scholars in referring to "maternal mediation" as the process by which mothers facilitate, or inhibit, visitation with incarcerated fathers (Arditti et al., 2021).

Recently, Arditti and colleagues (2021) offered a model of maternal mediation in the context of fathers' incarceration and reentry. Based on findings from a grounded theory qualitative study, Arditti et al. (2021) describe the spectrum of motherwork when a father is incarcerated in four ways: facilitation, monitoring, constrain, and disengagement. In "facilitation," mothers seek to foster connection between their children and incarcerated fathers; "monitoring" involves a combination of facilitation with an additional component of caution and oversight; "constraint" seeks to protect children from their incarcerated fathers who may, according to the mothers, pose physical or psychological harm; and, finally, "disengagement" occurs when the mother cuts off contact between her children and their incarcerated father for survival purposes (Arditti et al., 2021). On one end of the motherwork spectrum is facilitation, which seeks to foster connection, while the other end of the spectrum, disengage-

ment, seeks to promote survival. In the middle are monitoring (closer to facilitation) and constraint (closer to disengagement), which prioritize protection (Arditti et al., 2021).

As this summarized research demonstrates, contact and visiting experiences are familial processes that involve: (1) fathering from prison, (2) maternal mediation, and (3) child outcomes. We cannot understand the full picture of incarcerated fathering without also considering the role of custodial parents and children's experiences of visitation. Based on the best available evidence, we can reasonably assume that contact and visiting experiences represent a critical avenue for incarcerated fathers to maintain fathering with their children. However, fathering within contact and visitation are likely mediated by both custodial mothers, implying a significant emotional burden on women with incarcerated partners, as well as the degree to which visitation is accessible and child friendly. Positive fathering experiences for children with an incarcerated parent, including contact and visiting experiences, likely has profound implications for parent–child engagement following release. At that time, fathers will be in a better position to resume other aspects of fathering, including direct parenting, providing economic stability, and physical presence at events and activities critical to child development and wellbeing (Arditti, 2005; Crandell-Williams & McEvoy, 2017).

Implications and Future Directions

Fathering from prison necessitates a systemic, family-level understanding. Paternal incarceration frequently interrupts fathering and child development, which may exacerbate economic stability, strains family relationships, and places an undue emotional, physical, and economic burden on mothers. From a larger systems perspective (e.g., the legal justice system and legislative policies), the degree to which one can father from prison may reduce the disruption to children and families and prime positive reentry scenarios (Crandell-Williams & McEvoy, 2017). Indeed, Dyer et al. (2012) state, "laws and policies cannot

meet overall goals of successful reentry if they are insensitive to the maintenance and/or creation of positive family relationships" (p. 42). If we as a society are to promote father–child relationships during incarceration, when appropriate, family-responsive programs, policies, and practices are needed.

One clear pathway for father–child relationships from prison is fostering better fathering continuity from behind bars through contact and visiting experiences. Doing so requires two main areas of improvement. First, barriers to contact and visiting must be addressed, including the distance some families must travel to visit their incarcerated loved ones as well as the secondary prisonization (Comfort, 2003) experiences that carceral visitors frequently encounter. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which contact and visiting in carceral settings was severely interrupted, scholars and policy advocates alike are calling for greater access to virtual visiting possibilities (Huebner, 2021). Prison video visits would simultaneously eliminate both distance and secondary prisonization barriers. Indeed, Huebner (2021) recommends that jails and prisons should offer weekly prison video visits and partner with community-based organizations to reduce costs.

The second primary area of intervention is supporting custodial caregivers, most often biological mothers, who frequently take on emotional burden while mediating contact between children and their incarcerated fathers. Research suggests these custodial mothers are often overwhelmed and under-resourced in the context of paternal incarceration (Morgan et al., 2021). Increased distress, intersected with economic instability, may lead to challenges with parenting, family management, and psychological well-being (Morgan et al., 2021). Providing sufficient support to custodial mothers in the context of paternal incarceration has the possibility of a multilevel effect. First, supporting custodial mothers will likely help them to support their children through stable parenting and wellbeing. Second, custodial mothers who have sufficient support may be more likely to have the capacity to facilitate contact and visiting experiences, thereby aiding in fathering continuity. Further

research is needed to better identify the exact programs, services, and supports that may support custodial mothers as they navigate paternal incarceration with their partners and children. Further areas of future research include studies that simultaneously bring together the many voices—incarcerated fathers, custodial mothers, and children—in understanding how to best foster fathering engagement and relationships during paternal incarceration and subsequent reentry (Arditti et al., 2021). Similarly, additional research is needed to better understand the nuances of visiting conditions. For instance, what considerations foster meaningful father–child interactions during the engagement? Similarly, which considerations preclude meaningful engagement, or even result in psychological distress? Further research should also examine how contact and visiting experiences and characteristics vary across jails and prisons, which differ with regard to frequency and duration of sentence length. With final regard to contact and visitation, additional research is needed to understand how family members of diverse cultural backgrounds vary in their visitation experiences and needs (Dyer et al., 2012).

As scholars work toward gaining a more comprehensive picture of fathering processes and challenges during paternal incarceration, community practitioners also play a critical role in family reentry. Not all families experience parental, or paternal, incarceration the same way. As such, interventions and supports must be holistic (i.e., systemic) and consider children's developmental needs (Arditti & Johnson, 2020). Given how families change structurally before, during, and after paternal incarceration, families may benefit from relational therapy that uses a structural family therapy approach (Tadros & Finney, 2018). Similarly, an attachment lens may be particularly helpful in supporting children and families that are impacted by paternal incarceration given the inherent disruptive, and often inconsistent, separation and reunification that happens between children and their incarcerated fathers. Exploring experiences of ambiguous loss (i.e., when someone is psychologically present but physically absent; Boss, 1999) may also help

children and families process complex experiences of grief, loss, anger, etc.

Given the propensity of children with incarcerated parents to be at higher risk for poor academic performance, psychological distress, social exclusion, and later delinquency, to name a few, families may benefit from psychoeducation. Clinicians may elect to normalize experiences, framing them as typical given the inherent stressors to paternal incarceration. Relatedly, given the many stressors that are frequently inherited in paternal incarceration scenarios, case management is often needed. Practitioners may help families by focusing on mitigating economic hardship, resources for housing and childcare, supported employment, food insecurity, and transportation resources for contact and visiting experiences. Case management may be best delivered in collaborative health-care settings where wraparound resources are available, such as mental health treatment, peer-support services, and physical health care.

Conclusion

Mass incarceration has yielded devastating unequal consequences across communities. Over the past few decades, we, as scholars, policymakers, and clinicians, have increasingly recognized families as bearing the harm associated with a parent's incarceration. Further research is needed to understand the whole picture of paternal incarceration and family reentry. As we work toward a better future for families involved in the legal justice system, clinicians and community practitioners are specially positioned to foster healing by focusing on family relationships, loss, and major transitions associated with paternal incarceration.

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Religion, Spirituality, and Fatherhood

Anthony Isacco and John Joseph Delany

Religion and spirituality (R/S) are popular topics in psychology. The psychological study of R/S is a subspeciality in the field with a designated division (Division 36, Psychological Study of Religion and Spirituality), membership, and associated professional journals such as *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* and *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*. Several books, training programs, and conferences have been developed to address the integration of R/S into psychotherapy (Plante, 2009; Sisemore & Knabb, 2020). The popularity within psychology is reflective of societal trends as well as the subjective experience of individuals. For example, the United States is undergoing dramatic demographic shifts in religious affiliation with more people identifying as "unaffiliated" and fewer people remaining affiliated with Christianity and organized religions (PEW Research Center, 2019). Yet, belief in the Sacred, a higher power, God, and spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, mindfulness, and reading sacred texts all remain a meaningful part of many people's lives. For example, at the time of this chapter's writing in 2021, Fr. Michael Schmitz's *Bible in the Year* is the top-ranked podcast in the United States by offering a daily reading and reflection from the Bible, with the goal to finish the entire Bible in 365 days.

Given such meaning for many people, social science researchers have examined associations between religiosity and spirituality with various health outcomes. A recent study from Harvard University's *Human Flourishing Project* found that those who regularly attended religious services were, on average, less likely to become depressed, smoke, or drink heavily and benefit from higher life satisfaction, purpose in life, and other indicators of flourishing among a nationally representative sample of thousands of participants (Chen et al., 2020). Research, of course, has reported mixed findings about the health benefits of religious attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors depending on the methodology, participants, variables, and outcomes. Religious/spiritual affiliations, beliefs, and behaviors can be a salient factor in people's health and well-being. Specifically for adult men, R/S have been identified as important but overlooked pathways to positive health outcomes such as enhanced coping, meaning in life, and social support (Garfield et al., 2013). The pathway to such outcomes may be altered by adherence to masculinity ideology as well as other contextual and cultural factors (Isacco & Wade, 2019). As a result, the intersections of religion and health among adult men may also be associated with negative health outcomes such as shame, vengeful feelings, and interpersonal

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discord. Although R/S have been studied based on gender and between sexes of adult men and women, scholarship with fathers has been scarce.

The American Psychological Association considers R/S as key variables and identities that are integrated into multicultural competence in working with diverse individuals, groups, families, and communities (APA, 2017). In this chapter, we focus on how R/S are salient factors to fathers and their families. We describe how R/S influence fathers and their parenting. We also highlight a specific connection between fathering, R/S, and parenting that fosters moral development among children. Such a connection appears to be a unique contribution to child development. The chapter concludes with practical implications for working with fathers and families from various psychological modalities. Overall, the chapter advances a needed multicultural perspective to the robust fatherhood scholarship and serves as a catalyst for future directions of research.

Religious and Spiritual Influences on Fatherhood

Religion and spirituality are often presented in unison because of conceptual overlap in social science research and the subjective experience of individuals and communities. For example, many people attend a religious service at a place of worship associated with an organized religion and would consider their attendance a part of their spirituality. Yet, it is important to understand the distinctiveness of the constructs and their unique definitions. We acknowledge that stating definitions of R/S has been historically difficult in the social sciences and that there are not any universally agreed upon definitions (Park et al., 2017). For the purposes of this chapter and given the lack of universal agreement, we do not adhere to singular definitions of religion or spirituality. Rather, we conceptualize religion as involving several common components across definitions: (a) organized faith community; (b) associated teachings, traditions, and rituals; (c) an emphasis on a moral code; and (d) individual expressions

of faith beliefs and practices (Dollahite, 1998; Worthington Jr. & Aten, 2009). The major world religions such as Christianity, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are examples of religion. Within the context of examining religion, psychology is also interested in studying religiousness or religiosity, which is the degree to which an individual adheres to attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of their religion. Spirituality is similarly conceptualized but with distinct features such as (a) more individualist or subjective, (b) a pursuit of meaning in life, (c) a sense of connectedness (d) wholeness, (e) awareness of transcendence, and (f) a sense of a higher, immaterial reality (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006). The components of both R/S also reflect some of the common subconstructs that are part of scholarly inquiry, which have associated definitions and measurement tools (see Table 2 for examples).

This section of the chapter reviews religious/spiritual constructs related to fatherhood. First, we present the only known national descriptive data on fathers' religious affiliations, practices, and beliefs. The data were gathered from the PEW Research Center Religious Landscape Survey with men and parents (2018) and fathers (2014, see Table 1 for full data). The PEW data are descriptive and, as a result, limited in terms of drawing more meaningful inferences. However, the data indicate that a slight majority of fathers are affiliated with a major religion, but most fathers do not have a certain belief in God, do not attend a regular religious service, and do not exhibit spiritual awareness on a regular basis either. The descriptive data from PEW are consistent with an overall narrative that men from western countries, such as the United States, are less religious than women (Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012). Lay beliefs may suggest that men tend to reengage with R/S at fatherhood because it can be a natural point of reengagement after a time of developmental individuation and existential searching. The PEW data present a counterpoint to that belief and are consistent with more current research that has found that individuals "check out" of organized religion earlier in their development (ages 13–25) and do not tend to return

Table 1 Religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices

Religious/spiritual variables	Men	Women	Parents of children under 18	Fathers[a] 2014
Religious affiliation	43%	57%	79%	52%
Unaffiliated "nones"	57%	43%	21%	48%
Certain belief in God	57%	69%	66%	44%
Religion is very important in life	47%	59%	57%	39%
Religious service attendance (once per week)	31%	40%	38%	40%
Individual prayer (daily–weekly)	62%	79%	75%	44%
Individual meditation (weekly)	37%	43%	39%	41%
R/S small group (weekly–monthly)	29%	37%	38%	41%
Feeling of peace and wellbeing (weekly)	53%	64%	59%	40%
Wonder of the universe (weekly)	46%	45%	43%	46%
R/S as primary source of right and wrong guidance	28%	38%	35%	39%
Read scripture (weekly)	30%	40%	38%	39%
Belief in Heaven	67%	76%	75%	41%
Belief in Hell	56%	59%	63%	43%

[a]Percentages from PEW Research Religious Landscape Study (2018 and 2014)

when compared to past generations (McCarty & Vitek, 2017).

While fathers may be less practicing of R/S, we considered how religious/spiritual beliefs, practices, and involvement might facilitate positive fathering. The salience of this discussion is likely focused on various diverse subgroups of fathers that place social and cultural importance on their R/S. Two specific constructs emerged in our literature review: parental sanctification and religious coping. Sanctification is defined as "a process through which aspects of life are perceived as having divine character and significance" (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005, p. 183). Parental sanctification is simply the view that the work of a parent is imbued with "divine character and significance." Religious coping refers to efforts to "understand and deal with life stressors in ways related to the sacred" (Pargament et al., 2011, p. 52). Researchers have found that specific religious factors such as the view of parenting as sanctified and positive religious coping strongly correlated with increased positive father involve-

ment (Dumas & Nissley-Tsiopinis, 2006; Lynn et al., 2016). Religious coping may help fathers overcome emotional barriers to enhance their engagement with their children as stress management, coping, and emotional stability are helpful to parenting. Viewing parenting as a sanctified role may facilitate father involvement by prompting men to attach a greater meaning and purpose to their fathering. Such an interpretation is congruent with the research on nonreligious worldviews, as greater nontheistic sanctification and higher levels of spiritual disclosure were significantly related to increased parent–child relationship quality (Brelsford, 2013). Thus, fathers who consider their parenting within a spiritual context and discuss that spirituality with their children will be deepening their fathering relationships. Brelsford's (2013) findings and the associated inference make sense as spirituality is considered a "deeper topic" that can facilitate intimacy in relationships, when discussed with openness, vulnerability, and mutual respect.

For fathers with theistic and nontheistic views of parenting, sanctification appears to fit well with the construct of generativity. Generativity is derived from Erikson's psychosocial stages of development and is defined as the task of caring for the next generation. Generative fathering is often associated with R/S because the focus is on a consistent pursuit of a good that is beyond the individual needs and desires of a father, that is, beyond the self. The good may be material and/or immaterial, practical, and/or aspirational. The generative father may be self-sacrificial, but generativity assumes that the father is caring for the next generation of children. Generative fatherhood is considered a core characteristic of positive masculinity, that is, healthy, prosocial expressions of traditional male gender socialization (Kiselica et al., 2016), and has direct implications of a narrative counseling approach that is described later in this chapter.

In addition, there are direct and indirect benefits of fathers being involved in a religious/spiritual community. For example, the Catholic Church dedicated the year 2021 to St. Joseph, the identified foster father of Jesus. Books, talks, workshops, courses, and prayer groups have all been offered this past year and have focused on spiritual fatherhood. Men, fathers, families, and children were exposed to a positive model of fatherhood on a large scale. Although no empirical studies have been published at this point, anecdotal evidence suggests that the benefits of such a focus on the spiritual fatherhood of St. Joseph have been clear in Catholic communities (Maro, 2021, personal communication). Basic social learning theory posits that individuals learn from role models; thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize that fathers exposed to the model of St. Joseph may learn some fathering behaviors such as humility, family presence, and spousal support (Hicks, 2021).

More generalizable to men of other religious and spiritual traditions, it is worth noting that engagement in a religious community can promote interpersonal support, friendships, and other socioemotional benefits for men (Isacco & Wade, 2019). Religious communities and congregations often have men's clubs and ministries, including specific outlets for fathers that promote positive family contributions. Thus, it is plausible to hypothesize that some fathers would enhance their involvement and parenting practices by participation in focused religious-spiritual activities. Often, a basic intervention is to assist fathers with enhancing their social support. Practitioners are well-positioned to explore with fathers how they may connect with religious sources of social support. The religious social support may help fathers to deepen relationships with like-minded men of similar values, foster accountability, and be further exposed to positive role models. Future research and clinical practice would benefit from more healthcare–religious community partnerships that serve as a catalyst for collaborative interventions and ongoing program evaluation efforts.

In addition to interpersonal factors, social science research has found that individuals construct cognitive schemas and mental representations of God (Isacco & Wade, 2019. These schemas and representations are referred to in several ways such as God concepts, God representations, and God Images and are often based on an individual's religious tradition, spirituality, and theological beliefs. For example, within a Judeo-Christian framework, a fundamental tenet is that God has revealed Himself to be a Father. In this context, men may have spent time and energy conjuring up many thoughts about God as a Father and wondered what type of father they should be based on those schemas, images, and representations. For example, fathers that view God as a distant, judging, removed father may act similarly with their own children, whereas fathers that think of God as a loving, caring, nurturing father may exhibit those characteristics. There are established benefits for both the father and children's health to the latter images and behaviors (Isacco & Wade, 2019).

Like many complex areas of social science inquiry, the extant literature in this area indicates that constructs of religiosity and spirituality are associated with both positive and negative health outcomes in adult samples in the United States and internationally (Koenig, 2009; Shattuck & Muehlenbein, 2020). The divergent and nuanced health pathways are reflective of the old adage, "one size does not fit all." The empirical findings

do not lead to an all-or-nothing conclusion such as R/S is all good for all fathers or all bad for all fathers. Rather, extreme scores and rigid (non-) adherence to certain R/S constructs seems to be associated with some negative outcomes, and the positive outcomes emerge within a balanced range or "middle ground" between extremes. Such a pattern recalls a poignant lesson learned in Ancient Greek Philosophy as Aristotle taught in Nicomachean Ethics that virtue is the mean in between extremes (Crisp, 2014). Clinically, we have worked with fathers that drew resilience and coping from their religious beliefs and practices, while we have also seen religious beliefs compound feelings of shame and contribute to scrupulosity. In a similar way, we expect that some fathers will be positively and negatively influenced by religious and spiritual factors. Complicating the picture but reflective of the realities of the lived experience, we anticipate that for some fathers, it is not a clear either/or situation, but that they have both positive and negative experiences stemming from R/S. Those experiences may shift over time and depending on various other mediating and moderating variables such as family, children, and parenting.

While a plethora of studies explore how R/S are connected to health outcomes for the general population, there is little research specifically with samples of fathers. The small extant literature provides some helpful insights into the impact of R/S on fathers and their families. For example, a meta-analytic review of 94 studies found that greater religiousness was positively related to marital functioning and more positive parenting practices among fathers (Mahoney et al., 2001). Marriage is often situated within a religious tradition and corresponding beliefs. Thus, one reasonable inference to draw is that religiosity may strengthen the marital bond for fathers, and in turn, a strong marital bond is associated with several familial outcomes such as positive communication, marital longevity, and role modeling for children. We also offer some speculation on the underlying mechanism(s) to the positive association between religiosity and marital bond. For example, most major world religions promote marriage as a valued vocation and life-long commitment; thus, fathers may internalize those beliefs in a manner that increases their family involvement. Another possible mechanism is that many religious teachings emphasize service to others and self-sacrifice, which may direct fathers away from impulsive decision-making, selfishness, and reinforce a greater responsibility to their family and the value of generative fatherhood. Those possible mechanisms as well as others are worthy of continued empirical exploration in diverse samples of fathers that practice various religious and spiritual traditions.

As described in other chapters of this handbook, the prevailing model of father involvement involves three primary domains: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility (Lamb et al., 1985). DeMaris, Mahoney, and Pargament et al. (2011) found that religiousness was associated with father involvement in baby care vis-a-vis engagement when coupled with other variables such as personality traits and marital quality. One explanation for such a finding is that some religions (e.g., Mainline Protestantism) promote egalitarianism in marriages, including equal involvement in childcare (Wilcox, 1998). In addition, scales have been developed to measure specific religious variables that promote positive parental engagement. These scales include the seven-item positive coping scale (turning to God for parental support) (Dumas & Nissley-Tsiopinis, 2006), Manifestation of God in Parenting Scale (Mahoney et al., 1999), and Sacred Qualities of Parenting Scale (Mahoney et al., 2003) (See Table 2). Specific descriptive data from the use of those scales are presented in Table 3 and provide a counter perspective to the PEW data, as higher percentages of fathers endorsed theistic and nontheistic spiritual beliefs about their parenting experiences. Yet, in a study of 169 couples in the United States, high scores in biblical conservatism were correlated with fewer hours of average daily infant care among fathers (DeMaris et al., 2011). Similarly, greater Christian conservatism was associated with the use of corporal punishment by fathers (Mahoney et al., 2001). Such findings infer that some aspects of religiosity/spirituality may negatively alter fathering. Simple directional associations in various studies are likely to produce mixed

results depending on the constructs, participants, and outcomes being examined. The use of new scales and posing more complex research questions suggests that recent research is evolving to better pinpoint the specific religious and spiritual variables in subgroups of fathers that might moderate or mediate father involvement and have direct or indirect effects on paternal and child health and wellness.

Table 2 Religious and spiritual assessment tools

Religious/spiritual domain	Assessment tool
Religious coping	The Brief RCope (Pargament et al., 2011)
Meaning in life	Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006) Meaning in Life Index (Francis & Hill, 2008)
Religious adherence	Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992)
Religious commitment	Religious Commitment Inventory (Worthington Jr. et al., 2003)
Relationship with God	Attitudes toward God Scale (Wood et al., 2010)
Religious experiences	Religious Experience Questionnaire (Edwards, 1976)
Prayer	Multidimensional Prayer Inventory (Laird et al., 2004)
Church involvement	Church Involvement Measure (Mattis et al., 2003)
Church community	How It Feels at Church Survey (Baard, 1994)
Religion and parenting	Manifestation of God in Parenting Scale (Mahoney et al., 1999) Sacred Qualities of Parenting Scale (Mahoney et al., 2003)

Indeed, father involvement is a construct that is positive in nature and was intended to measure a father's positive engagement, accessibility, and responsibility with their children (Pleck, 2007). Thus, it makes sense that most research has found positive correlations between father involvement and positive child development outcomes. This section of the chapter considers extending and specifying the impact of father involvement on child development by further factoring in R/S.

First, theories of fatherhood posit that the health of fathers and children have bidirectional pathways (Garfield et al., 2010). The first pathway is that father health influences child health. Within this pathway, we considered the robust scholarship that has identified the positive outcomes associated with religious and spiritual attitudes, beliefs, and practices in adult samples. For example, fathers that exhibit positive religious coping, tap into religious support, pray/meditate on a regular basis, and engage in a relationship with the Sacred are likely to experience positive mental health benefits (Isacco & Wade, 2019). In turn, following the established pathway, the benefits that fathers experience are likely to have a positive impact on child health. For example, a child may learn important religious coping skills to deal with challenges and expand their network of support through the religious community. Moreover, religious communities are likely to promote positive models of fatherhood (e.g., St. Joseph in Catholic-Christian denominations) and encourage fathers to be more active in their family life. The encouragement, support, and role models may prompt fathers to be more engaged,

Table 3 Religion, spirituality, and parenting[a]

Scale and items	Mother	Fathers
Sacred qualities of parent–infant relationship and parenting		
In my relationship with my baby, I experience a connection with something greater than myself.	88%	79%
Being the mother/father of my baby is sacred to me.	86%	81%
Manifestation of god of parent–infant relationship and parenting		
Being a mother/father is a reflection of God's will for me.	82%	75%
I sense God's presence in my relationship with my baby.	82%	75%

[a]Data taken from https://www.bgsu.edu/arts-and-sciences/psychology/graduate-program/clinical/the-psychology-of-spirituality-and-family/research-findings/parenting/sanctification-of-parenting.html

accessible, and responsible, which further contributes to the positive development among children (Dollahite et al., 2002; Dienhart & Daly, 1997; Doherty et al., 1998; Gerson, 1997). Enhanced religious coping and support are beneficial in their own right and are known to contribute to other indicators of health such as less stress, anxiety, and depressive feelings (Garfield et al., 2013). It is reasonable to infer that fathers in good mental health are likely to positively impact their children.

The second pathway is that children influence father's health. For example, the transition to fatherhood is often considered "a jolt" for fathers and a catalyst for positive lifestyle changes such as increased exercise and improved diet (Garfield et al., 2010). Within this line of research, having children has been shown to increase religious and spiritual attitudes and behaviors among men (Palkovitz & Palm, 1998). The underlying assumption of that data is that the increase in religious/spiritual attitudes and behaviors is part of a pathway to other health outcomes for fathers, as influenced by the transition to fatherhood, that is, the presence of children.

In addition, the psychological study of R/S has evolved to include more constructs and more specific constructs (e.g., biblical conservatism). From this bidirectional model of fatherhood, an interesting follow-up study could explore how fathers translate religious and spiritual beliefs into parenting practices with their children. Do fathers become more empathetic, responsible, and/or emotionally attuned to their children because of the influence of their religious community? Relatedly, do fathers experience advances in their moral, spiritual, and emotional development because of any changes to their parenting attributable to religious/spiritual factors? The extant literature would benefit from studies that aim to answer some of these research questions. Further research is needed to examine these complex health pathways between fathers and children, specifically within a religious/spiritual context.

Second, how do parents influence the practice of R/S by their children? We hear competing narratives in our clinical practice with adults, as some clients discuss how they practice the religion of their parents while other clients discuss their individuation from the religious/spiritual practices of their parents. When the question is focused solely on fathers, a study from Sweden is commonly cited. Haug and Wanner (2000) found that the religious practice of fathers was the most significant predictor of church attendance among their children, even when controlling for various other family and maternal variables. In the Swedish study, the regular religious practice of the father led to between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children becoming churchgoers to some degree. In a study of two-parent African American families in the United States, a strong correlation was reported between the father's religious practices (e.g., prayer, attending services) and the practices of their children during adolescence (Halgunseth et al., 2016). Thus, emergent research, across time and diverse participants, points to the importance of fathers in the transmission of religious practice among children. The theoretical explanations for the findings are varied. For example, the authors (Haug & Wanner, 2000) contend that children take their cues and conceptions of the outside world more from the father. As a result, if they see their father engage the outside world via religious practices, then the children will follow suit. Similarly, many Judeo-Christian religions consider the father to be the "head of the household" or spiritual leader in the family; thus, a basic explanation is that children are simply following the lead of their fathers. Future research may be able to shed additional light on these findings by asking adult children how their father influenced their religiosity and spirituality.

Fathering and Child Moral Development

As stated earlier, morality is a common component of religion. Michael Aquilina, a popular Catholic author, emphasized this point in his account of early Christianity, as he described how Christianity established an unusually high moral bar for those living in the pagan societies of

ancient Rome and Greece (Aquilina & Papandrea, 2015). Accordingly, religion may influence the moral component of parenting. Understanding how fathers influence their children to live congruently with a moral code is an important consideration. Child moral development may represent a unique focus area in this chapter on religion, spirituality, and fatherhood. Fathers are often considered primary disciplinarians, and the moral development of their children may fall within their parental responsibility for religious and family reasons. We contend that fathers can play a critical role in the moral development of their children, "for most children, parents are the original source of moral guidance" (Damon, 1999, p. 77).

Lawrence Kohlberg developed the foundational theory of moral development; he proposed three levels of moral reasoning, with each level consisting of two stages: (1) Level 1 is marked by self-interest and motivated by punishment and reward, (2) Level 2 is focused on social approval and motivated by interpersonal relationships and social order, and (3) Level 3 is directed at higher, abstract ideals and involves university rights and social contracts. Similar to other stage theories of that era, Kohlberg's theory has since been critiqued, and additional theories of moral development have emphasized divergent foci such as biological factors, stress and socialization, and intellectual development (Damon, 1999). Still, regardless of theory, moral development is a complex, longitudinal process involving individualized thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are exhibited across contexts and reasons. The core of moral development, however, is the child learning right from wrong, good from bad, altruistic, and prosocial values from deviant and antisocial tendencies. Those distinctions are pivotal to the transfer of moral development to daily actions ranging from honesty on schoolwork, vandalism, underage alcohol or drug use, risky sexual behavior, and bullying.

Some scholarship has pointed to how parenting styles (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian) impact children's moral development, with the authoritative style playing the most positive role because such a style focuses on establishing consistent rules and firm limits while also encouraging open discussions with their children (Qi, 2019). Not surprisingly, harsh parenting practices that are consistent with the authoritarian parenting style have been correlated with aggressive behaviors and moral disengagement among children (Qi, 2019). Certainly, open discussions between fathers and their children are important to establish clear expectations, connections between their religious beliefs and moral behaviors, and religious/spiritual guidance that can factor into the child's moral decision-making (Augustine & Stifter, 2015). Such discussions may be important for a father to role model to his children about how he works through moral conflicts and decisions within the context of any religious or spiritual consideration. A simple example may be that a father explains that he had an opportunity to cheat on a test but did not because of the 10 Commandments and cheating is similar to stealing answers. In doing so, the father is helping his children to develop their conscience, which is a key mechanism for limiting impulsive behavior and facilitating self-regulatory and rule-compatible behaviors (Augustine & Stifter, 2015). Religions have similar teachings about "the conscience" as the social sciences. For example, Kochanska and Aksan (2006) consider the conscience as a complex system of self-regulation of moral emotions, behavior, and cognitions. Catholicism (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997) defines the conscience as a judgment of reason that helps a person to recognize right from wrong and the moral quality of an action. Similarly, the Catholic teaching and psychological literature both emphasize the importance of self-introspection and self-examination as internal mechanisms that are needed to understand and follow the conscience more clearly. An area of future research would be to explore how fathers foster those internal mechanisms in their children and the impact on moral development.

In addition to role modeling intentional moral decision-making, fathers may focus on teaching their children three additional socialization skills that are considered part of the moral self: (1) *Perspective-taking*, which is the ability to see a

situation from a different point of view. Perspective-taking is considered important for exhibiting empathy towards others, which is counter to narcissistic and antisocial tendencies that are associated with immoral behavior; (2) *Social negotiation* is the process of learning and responding to boundaries, structure, and rules. Small children tend to learn social negotiation through play, and fathers have been shown to engage in rough and tumble play with their children, which facilitates the learning of boundaries (Oren & Oren, 2009). (3) *Scaffolding* entails emotional regulation, joint problem-solving, warmth, and responsiveness to others. Thus, their moral behavior and development are contextualized within their social relationships and include their emotional intelligence. More current father involvement theories and measures have included emotional nurturance. Thus, fathers have a unique opportunity to demonstrate and encourage emotional expression and regulation with their children in a manner that connects with their moral development. Fathers may impact moral development by helping their children understand their impact on others and nurturing the internal factors of decision-making and emotions that are important to the child's moral self.

Practical and Clinical Applications

Religion and spirituality have been integrated into various psychological and mental health interventions, including individual, group, and psychoeducational modalities (Plante, 2009; Worthington Jr. & Aten, 2009). Such integration is considered part of cultural humility and multicultural competence, which enhances the therapeutic alliance and is correlated with improved treatment adherence and outcomes (APA, 2017). Integration of R/S into clinical practice usually starts with an appropriate assessment. In the assessment, a practitioner can take the time to explore the client's faith or spirituality in an open-ended manner or through structured questionnaires (Table 2). An interdisciplinary, short, and well-regarded assessment tool includes five simple questions to ask a client (Garfield, Isacco,

& Sahker, 2013): (1) Do your religious or spiritual beliefs provide comfort and support or do they cause stress? (2) How would these beliefs influence your health decisions? (3) Do you have any beliefs that might interfere or conflict with your health care? (4) Are you a member of a religious or spiritual community and is it supportive? (5) Do you have any spiritual needs that someone should address? Those questions are designed to provide preliminary insight into the client's religious affiliation, influence on health care, and impact on client health. The questions can be tailored to fathers or new questions can be added, such as (1) how does your R/S influence how you raise your children? (2) how has your R/S shaped who you are as a father? Both questions are open-ended, exploratory, and phrased in a manner to generate additional discussion and insight.

We suggest that providing an opportunity for fathers to explore these important questions can enhance and deepen the therapeutic alliance. If a father wonders about the relevance of such questions, the practitioner may view the questioning as an opportunity to provide psychoeducation about research indicating that their own religious and spiritual practices impact their child(ren)'s health and development. In addition to the open-ended questions, practitioners may utilize various self-report scales that assess different religious and spiritual constructs that may be relevant to fathers within the specific practical setting. See Table 2 for specific constructs and assessment tools. It is worth noting that these scales also have been used in several research studies and can be used in future studies with fathers to examine their religiosity and spirituality in relation to their health and impact on the family system.

Assessment is an ongoing process that complements counseling interventions. This section explores individual, couples, and family counseling with fathers focused on the integration of R/S. First, scholars have applied the concept of generative fathering (discussed previously in the chapter) to a narrative therapy approach with fathers (Dollahite et al., 2002). Generative fathering, which has a focus on establishing and nurturing an ethical relationship with children, provides an aspirational framework for individ-

ual counseling with fathers. A clinical approach consistent with generative fathering may imbue a greater sense of meaning from fathers and capitalize on their strengths and desire to be a father that will be good for their children. Integrating R/S into narrative therapy might include asking the father what role the Sacred plays in his relationship with his child(ren) and orienting the father to match his paternal aspirations to those of his faith traditions. The theoretical framework of generative fathering allows practitioners to connect meaning with their parenting and their religious/spiritual values and beliefs. For fathers of particular religious and spiritual backgrounds, such work may be instrumental in understanding the divine significance for their fathering role. Individual counseling with fathers may benefit from the integration of other religious/spiritual constructs such as religious coping, religious support, and their relationship with the divine, as described earlier in the chapter (Isacco & Wade, 2019).

Religious values, faith beliefs, and moral congruence can be points of connection or conflict among couples. Religious and spiritual factors have been found to increase marital cohesion, satisfaction, and communication (Marks, 2005), supporting the old adage "the couple that prays together, stays together." Couples that present for couples counseling may have drifted apart on previously shared core values and beliefs. Other couples may be seeking support through couples counseling because of difficulty practicing their faith beliefs. Couples may seek counseling for various other reasons, but the general point is that practitioners can explore the role of R/S with the couple. The exploration may include identifying the religious/spiritual influences of roles and expectations within the couple. For example, Judeo-Christian anthropology considers men to be "patriarchs" within their family. The degree to which a man has integrated such an anthropology into their identity likely affects his spousal relationship in general and has a trickle-down effect on communication, conflict resolution, and relationship expectations. Practitioners may help couples to identify and to discuss those religious and spiritual influences in more constructive

ways. Couples counseling may also focus on assisting the couple to connect with other sources of religious support, such as marriage ministries in their community. A common couples counseling intervention is to institute and engage in regular "Summit Meetings" that clarify expectations and experiences in the relationship (Gottman & Silver, 2015). These meetings pose three simple questions about the relationship, which can be tailored to incorporate specific check-ins about the couple's faith, spirituality, and religiosity. Example questions include: (1) What is something that is going well in our relationship because of our religion, spirituality, and faith? (2) What is something that we are having difficulty with as a couple related to our religion, spirituality, and faith? (3) Is there anything about our faith that we would like to do differently as a couple?

Family counseling may be similar to couples counseling with interventions between parents. In this section, we refer to family counseling as at least involving the father and his child(ren). Unfortunately, fathers may be underrepresented in family counseling for various reasons such as single-parent households, nonresidence, incarceration, military service, complex co-parenting dynamics from a divorce or marital discord and poor help-seeking attitudes and behaviors from fathers (Isacco et al., 2016). Some fathers may be absent from family counseling because of religious reasons, such as preferring to seek help from a priest/rabbi/religious leader instead, relying on spiritual practices for changes, and/or perceiving mental health services as incongruence with their faith beliefs. When practitioners are exploring why a father may not be present in family counseling, it is important to assess any religious/spiritual factors. Assuming it is ethical and legal as well as clinically indicated, practitioners are encouraged to explore creative outreach efforts to engage fathers that have religious/spiritual barriers to family counseling involvement. Destigmatizing counseling, expressing explicit support for their religiosity/spirituality, and demonstrating other multicultural competence about the role of R/S in their identity, family, fathering, and culture could all help engage the father and build a therapeutic alliance that will benefit the

family counseling process (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Family counseling that involves the father, child(ren), and other parent may integrate R/S in a clinically and culturally competent manner. Using the narrative therapy approach associated with generative fathering, practitioners may prompt fathers to explain to their child(ren) how they want to create a meaningful life and legacy in the family and how the divine plays a role in their future. Practitioners may also incorporate the skills associated with moral development. Family counseling interventions can work with the family to develop competence in boundaries, differentiating between right and wrong according to their religious/spiritual belief system, establishing a family ethical code and mission statement, social negotiation, perspective taking, and empathic regard for others. Some families may also prefer to incorporate prayer, meditation, or mindfulness into their counseling sessions to connect their clinical work with their faith traditions (Abernethy et al., 2006; Henry, 2015).

Conclusions and Future Directions of Research

The extant research and scholarship on religion, spirituality, and fatherhood are both informative and in need of continued development. Future research has several areas of inquiry that would deepen the empirical base and contribute to more empirically-supported interventions. On a national level, updated descriptive data is needed to better understand the current religious and spiritual attitudes, beliefs, and practices of fathers. Ongoing and more nuanced correlational studies can better identify specific pathways between religious and spiritual constructs measured among fathers and child development outcomes. Those studies would benefit from replication efforts across diverse samples of fathers and children according to race, ethnicity, religious affiliations, age, child gender, and other diverse family constellations. Similar studies are needed to understand correlations with paternal health and wellness outcomes. For example, how

do religious attendance, sacred reading, and/or prayer engagement impact paternal social–emotional health? The intersections of masculinity, fatherhood, and religion/spirituality have not been fully elucidated. Future research is wide-open in terms of exploring those points of intersection and how those various social identities impact family health outcomes and parenting practices. As mentioned earlier, there would be immense interest in longitudinal studies that identify the mechanism in which fathers transmit faith beliefs and practices to their children in ways that keep their children connected to those faith traditions across the lifespan.

Finally, the prevailing models of fatherhood are focused on father involvement as measured by engagement, accessibility, and responsibility with updates that include other dimensions of caregiving (Lamb et al., 1985; Pleck, 2010). The psychological sciences have caught up to the updated and newer theoretical models by developing newer father involvement measures and scales (see Singley et al., 2018). R/S constructs may deepen mainstream theory and measurement of fathering beyond father involvement to the study of father's love for their children. The primary role of parents is to love their children. The major world religions, secular-humanists, and affiliated and unaffiliated spiritualities ultimately all boil down to the love of the divine and the love of others. A scientific agenda focused on the study of paternal love for their child(ren) would be a unique contribution. Interdisciplinary perspectives from theology, philosophy, psychology, family studies, human development, and the psychological study of R/S would be needed to advance this line of inquiry.

Religious and spiritual considerations within fatherhood are understudied but important. Studies have found that a father's religiosity and spirituality influence parenting practices, child development outcomes, and paternal health. Practitioners are encouraged to integrate religious and spiritual factors into assessment, individual, couples, and family counseling to enhance the therapeutic process, align with the client's culture, deepen the therapeutic alliance, and offer impactful interventions for diverse fathers and

families. Future research is ripe with many opportunities to better understand the intersections of religion, spirituality, and fatherhood.

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Parenting Programs for Fathers of Young Children: Lessons from Research and Practice

Glen Palm and Jay Fagan

This chapter addresses both prevention and intervention programs for fathers of children prenatal to 5 years. Fatherhood programs are defined as parenting and family education initiatives that are targeted to fathers or couples where the primary focus is on father outcomes that may also include child and co-parenting outcomes. Family is added to parenting education to reflect the recent emphasis on both co-parenting and family systems outcomes. Programs include primary prevention and intervention activities that provide fathers with knowledge, attitudes, and skills that improve parenting behaviors connected to child well-being and family resilience. Family Foundations is an example of a universal prevention program (Jones et al., 2018) for couples during the transition to parenthood. An example of an intervention program for fathers is The Just Beginning "BabyElmo" (Richeda et al., 2015) that targets incarcerated teen fathers with children 0–36 months old. There are other popular parenting programs for fathers such as 24/7 Dad^T and Nurturing Fathers that are not specifically targeted for fathers of young children that will not be included. The chapter will also not examine generic parenting programs. These programs are typically targeted toward mothers with the assumption that mothers are the primary parent and most likely to become program participants (Panter-Brick et al., 2014). Programs for fathers of young children have been developed in different sectors (health care, early education, child welfare, child support, corrections, and community-based programs) and emphasize different goals, use different delivery formats, and employ practitioners with different backgrounds. A shared goal of all fatherhood initiatives is to increase positive father involvement that leads to long-term benefits for children (Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Pruett, 2000; Flouri, 2005).

The chapter will focus on three major questions. (1) What do the current research findings about parenting and family education programs for fathers of young children reveal about the practice and challenges for the field; (2) What are the implications for practice and policy that emerge from the research and practice literature? and (3) What are the future directions for the field to improve support for fathers and families?

Review of Research Findings

The research on fatherhood programs addressed in this chapter will focus on two different age groups of children: prenatal to 2 and 3–5. These programs represent different institutional initiatives and different goals for both fathers and

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children. There are other fatherhood programs that serve a wider age range of children and focus on a wide range of goals for fathers (e.g., Responsible Fatherhood Programs are also concerned with job training and employment). The analysis will draw upon the results of previous research reviews to identify important trends in services and common themes about best practices. A perennial limitation of fatherhood programs has been the lack of strong research evidence about program effectiveness (McBride & Palm, 1992; McBride & Lutz, 2004; Panter-Brick et al., 2014; Fagan & Palm, 2015; Lee et al., 2018). The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC) (2020) for Child Welfare for Father Involvement Interventions identified only two programs with rigorous research evidence to be listed as evidence-based. The CEBC identified an additional seven programs which could not be rated due to a lack of information about the research. Only two of the nine programs for fathers, Boot Camp for New Dads (Bishop, 2006) and Parenting Together Project (Doherty et al., 2006), focused specifically on children prenatal to age 5. Only one, Parenting Together Project (Doherty et al., 2006), met the criteria for Supported by Research Evidence, and this program has not been extensively studied after the initial research project.

Prenatal to Three Programs

Many programs for fathers of children ages prenatal to three were initially created as childbirth education-related initiatives and most often occurred during the 1980s (see Magill-Evans et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2018). Magill-Evans et al. (2006) reviewed studies from 1983 to 2003 and identified 12 studies that met their research criteria and focused on father outcomes. Nine of the 12 studies were with fathers of infants, one with fathers of toddlers, and two with fathers of preschoolers. Some studies were low intensity with one session to teach skills such as infant massage, kangaroo care, or sensitivity of infant behavior. Other interventions ranged from a total of two sessions up to daily sessions for a month.

Most of the studies in the Lee et al.'s (2018) review were conducted in health care settings. The 19 interventions included in the review were programs offered during the 40-year period from the 1970s through 2017. Only a third of the 21 studies were randomized control trials (RCT). Eleven of the 19 (two of the 21 were the same intervention) interventions were focused on childbirth and infant care and development. Four interventions had co-parenting as a goal, and four were clinical or case management programs. The interventions varied widely, with some programs providing just a pamphlet on cesarean birth with a follow-up about the content, while others provided longer interventions of 8- and 9-week-long classes. The outcomes for fathers covered a broad range of measures that assessed father involvement, parenting knowledge, father–infant relationship, fathers' parenting attitudes, and mental health. Other outcomes that were measured focused on father–mother relationships, including the co-parenting relationship, partner relationship quality, communication, and father's supportive behaviors. Child outcome measures were more difficult to assess due to children's ages and short-term assessments. However, the father–child relationship patterns that were assessed would be expected from research to lead to longer term positive child development outcomes. Lee and colleagues conclude that there are few father-inclusive programs during the perinatal period. While these studies met the criteria for the review, only four of the studies were deemed to have a low risk of bias due to participant selection, blinding of the outcome, incomplete data, and selective reporting.

Promising results are emerging from co-parenting programs that include fathers during the perinatal period. These are worth noting in more detail here. These studies all used a curriculum that focused on co-parenting skills. Three of these studies (Fagan, 2008; Feinberg & Kan, 2008; McHale et al., 2015) were included in the Lee et al. (2018) review. They reported positive impacts on both father involvement and co-parenting skills. The co-parenting skills that improved in these programs were conflict resolution, problem-solving, communication, and

mutual support (Jones et al., 2018; McHale et al., 2015). Two other studies related to father involvement and co-parenting are included in the California Evidence-Based Father involvement programs (Cowan et al., 2009; Doherty et al., 2006). These five studies represent a trend towards emphasizing the co-parenting relationship as a pathway to increased father involvement as an important dynamic within a more holistic family systems perspective.

One of the premises of co-parenting programs during the prenatal and transition to parenthood periods is that better partners make better parents (Epstein et al., 2015; Doherty et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2018). This theory of change posits that when co-parenting relationships are better, then parenting skills such as sensitivity, responsiveness, and setting limits for children are improved, which leads to child emotional regulation, fewer depressive symptoms, and higher academic achievement (Henry et al., 2020). The emphasis on co-parenting as a pathway to improved parenting for both mothers and fathers is core to programs like Strengthening Father Involvement (SFI) and Family Foundations (FF). The targeted goals and strategies for developing parenting skills for fathers reflect both attachment theory and social/cognitive theory. Attachment theory emphasizes sensitivity to child cues and positive responsiveness and interactions with infants (Palm, 2014). This can be accomplished through modeling of skills, video feedback, and practice of skills (Palm, 2014) and increased understanding of child development (Hoffman, 2011). Strengthening the father–child relationship is central to attachment theory approaches. In social/cognitive theory, the role of observation and modeling, through video clips, role play, and practice are pathways to learning new parenting knowledge and skills (Henry et al., 2020). These intervention models are based on research evidence that increased parenting knowledge and skills for fathers lead to positive changes in child social–emotional and academic outcomes (Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Pruett, 2000).

Another set of initiatives focusing on fathers of infants and toddlers comes from Early Head Start (EHS) program studies (Raikes et al., 2005).

EHS programs have reported the percentage of fathers in various components including home-visiting (32%), parent education (17%), group socialization (15%), program committees (9%), and father-only activities (6%) (Raikes et al., 2005). Some of the conclusions from EHS father involvement studies are that fathers are more likely to attend if mothers are also involved, as the low level of involvement in father-only activities indicates (Raikes et al., 2005). Also, the level of father involvement is impacted by the maturity of the program (Raikes & Bellotti, 2006). Programs that had more time to develop and more experienced staff reached higher levels of father attendance. EHS programs for fathers reach an important target group at a critical stage during early child development and family formation. EHS data suggest that home visits may be an effective way to reach the largest group of fathers. Sandstrom et al. (2015) have assessed approaches to father engagement in home visiting programs. This study documents that home visiting programs are an important vehicle for providing parenting education to fathers and reaching a large population of parents of children prenatal to three. Effective home visiting practices that engage fathers include: (a) adapting content and activities to meet the interests of fathers; (b) building a trusting relationship with fathers by visitors that demonstrate patience, persistence, flexibility, and nonjudgmental attitude and are advocates for father; and (c) male home visitors. In addition, successful programs often provide supplemental services of peer support groups, outings, and family events. The Dads Matter-HV Study (Bellamy et al., 2020) also identifies how to engage fathers in home visiting through service enhancements that include father engagement strategies, co-parenting, and individual support modules. This study demonstrates that additional adaptations may be needed to engage fathers in home visiting programs.

Preschool-Aged Children

Fagan and Palm (2004) make a case for father involvement in early childhood education

initiatives that include a variety of goals, settings, and programs that target fathers. This is the network of programs that is most accessible to fathers and families during the preschool years (3–5), as a majority of young children are engaged in some type of early childhood program. Preschool programs, including Head Start, offer different opportunities for father engagement that include parent education, parent–teacher conferences, classroom volunteering, and policy council. Our focus is on parent and family education programs that are created specifically for fathers or co-parents. There has been a long history of programs for fathers of preschool children (Klinman & Kohl, 1984, Minnesota Fathering Alliance, 1992) but limited research on program effectiveness. McBride (1990) was the first to demonstrate that father–child activity programs for fathers of preschool children had a positive impact on fathers and father involvement. Fagan and Iglesias (1999) provided opportunities for fathers in a Head Start program to be involved in activities geared for fathers, including father–child activities and support groups. These led to increased father involvement and support for child learning in the group of fathers who participated for 21+ hours. There have also been scattered efforts to involve fathers of young children with disabilities in parenting programs (Turbiville & Marquis, 2001). A more recent focus in early childhood has been on increasing father involvement in parenting programs that promote early literacy (e.g., Chacko et al., 2018; Ortiz, 2000; Palm, 2013). The opportunities for men to be involved in parent and family education through early childhood programs continue through initiatives like Early Childhood Family Education and Head Start, but research on program outcomes is sparse.

There are three important trends that emerge from the review of parent and family education programs.

1. Programs for fathers continue to have father involvement and strengthening the father–child relationship as core goals (Henry et al., 2020), but the possible pathways to these goals and related goals have expanded. For example, programs such as Tuning in to Kids (DadTIK) assist fathers in emotion coaching to help both fathers and children to improve emotional regulation skills (Wilson et al., 2014). Early literacy has also become an important outcome related to school success. Dads have been recruited to help children develop language and early literacy skills related to school success (Palm, 2013). Where a program is located (health care, early education, human services, and corrections) has a strong influence on specific program goals for fathers (Panter-Brick et al., 2014).

2. The focus on early intervention starting during the prenatal period has continued to be a leverage point for including fathers, but the focus has expanded from basic childbirth education to family formation with an emphasis on co-parenting skills. Research on brain development is one factor that has reinforced this timing (Center for Developing Child at Harvard, 2016). In addition, awareness of prenatal influences of fathers on mothers and the family system and the impact on the developing child is another factor (Fatherhood Institute, 2014).

3. Program evaluation and accountability standards have increased, and resources have been made available to support the higher expectations (e.g., Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, 2014). More specific research questions about dosage, attendance, attrition, recruitment, and program components are starting to be addressed. This should lead to more effective program design and implementation.

Implications for Practice

The research and practice literature are filled with recommendations for improving practice (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2012; Burgess, 2009; Burwick & Bellotti, 2005; Lee et al., 2018; Magill-Evans et al., 2007; Palm, 1997; Sandstrom et al., 2015). There are two basic issues that face program practitioners. First, how should practitioners recruit fathers or get them into the doors, and second how should they engage them in

appropriate and effective ways to meet fathers' needs and the program goals? Before addressing the pragmatic questions related to designing and implementing programs, it is important to examine institutional readiness for program development. Fatherhood programs are initiated in the context of different institutions that are the potential gateways for father engagement. Palm and Fagan (2008) reviewed the situational factors in early childhood education settings and described the problems with creating and sustaining father-friendly programs. Situational factors such as early education environments often have feminized décor and images. Activities such as dramatic play area themes (housekeeping and doll play) and music for young children are not familiar or comfortable for some fathers. Female staff dominate early childhood care and education programs and give the message that this is not a space for males. This analysis can be extended to health care, child welfare, child support, and corrections settings. None of these institutions have been designed to serve fathers through parent and family education as a primary focus. Even though child support and corrections may be focused on males, transforming them to be father-friendly is a challenge. The discourse around fatherhood and its relation to institutional goals suggest that supporting fathers has not been seen as a priority (Panter-Brick et al., 2014). This leads to few if any resources are given to parent and family education for fathers. It takes time and persistence to establish a program that becomes effective and can be sustained (Burwick & Bellotti, 2005). EHS has been a leader in this work and has identified program maturity as a key to successful fatherhood engagement. This includes hiring dedicated staff for leading program development and getting the support of all staff in creating a father-friendly and welcoming environment. Finding staff who have the skills and experience to lead fatherhood programs has also been challenging. Building a solid foundation for program development and implementation takes time, commitment, and resources. The goals, program components, and curricula for parent and family education will be directed by the institutional setting and developmental stage of the child from prenatal to age 5. Institutions should look at "leverage points" to build family resilience in creating programs for fathers. For example, health care should engage fathers and mothers together during prenatal care and extend programming through the transition to parenting. Early education programs might target programs for 3- to 5-year-olds to engage fathers in supporting, social-emotional development, early literacy, and school readiness.

There are some general recommendations for program development and implementation that emerge from the literature about program components, staff, recruitment, and curriculum content and methods. One of the program components that has been noted as important for group formats is time for parent–child activity or interaction (Palm, 1992; Richeda et al., 2015; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2009). In the meta-analysis of parent training programs (CDC, 2009), two components were related to successful programs. One of the critical components was requiring parents to practice with their own children during the training sessions. In the Baby Elmo program, incarcerated teen fathers are given the opportunity to learn the basics of attachment theory and to practice the skills they learned during parent–child interaction time (Richeda et al., 2015). The parent–child interaction component gives parents an opportunity to observe other children and to observe the modeling of skills and practices targeted to parents. Home-visiting programs have parent–child interaction built into the program delivery systems but do not provide opportunities for observing other parents and children. Special events can be another component that might help introduce fathers to a setting to become comfortable before enrolling in a more intensive program (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999; Lee et al., 2018). Head Start programs have many different components that support both the whole child and family beyond fatherhood initiatives. Parent and family education programs for fathers should collaborate with other programs to refer fathers who may have additional needs for mental health services or job skill development.

The research and practice literature offers different recommendations about staff characteristics related to effective programs. Since programs exist in many different venues, the professional backgrounds vary from nurses, social workers, and early educators to mental health practitioners. These groups are typically dominated by women, so that it can be challenging to find qualified male staff. Research suggests that professional training and experience is related to program effectiveness (Bellamy et al., 2020; Morris et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018). Researchers have also recommended that staff should mirror the characteristics of the fathers being served (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2012). Chacko et al. (2018) used nonprofessionals as facilitators in their intervention with fathers and found that a focused program using Parent Behavioral Training and literacy outcomes was successful. More research is needed to determine how important gender, racial, and age affinity match is in comparison with the experienced individual with a professional background. Friedewald (2007) discusses the issue of gender for fatherhood groups. He cites others who have strongly recommended that male facilitators are preferable. He also notes that men in his groups are more open to discussion with a same-sex facilitator. He suggests that professional credentials in health care settings are preferable and that men who were also experienced fathers make effective practitioners. One of the reasons that there are few male facilitators has been that they are difficult to find and recruit. Friedewald provides a successful model of recruitment of men for these positions in Australia. We would add that the development of facilitation skills and experiences with groups are also important factors in staff selection. When co-parenting is the program focus, a male–female team (Cowan et al., 2009; Doherty et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2018; McHale et al., 2015) has been used to deliver programs. The different recommendations and program practices illustrate the challenges of identifying and hiring male staff to work with fathers.

Recruiting fathers into programs has been a challenge due to work schedules. Evening or weekend times can address the work schedule issues for some fathers. Providing support services such as childcare, transportation, and a meal can make a program more accessible. Perhaps the most compelling reason for a father to attend a program is that he cares deeply about this child and wants to become a better parent (Avellar et al., 2020). If staff are able to convey the message that fathers are important, appreciate the strengths that men bring, and respect fathers, this will support recruitment efforts. Another practical tip is to use mothers as a connection to inform and encourage fathers to participate in programs. An invitation from a male peer is also an effective strategy. Father–child activities can be another way to attract men into parenting programs. The most effective recruitment strategy is "word of mouth" based on the development of a welcoming environment and relevant programming that resonates with fathers.

Curriculum content and format should be tailored to fathers' needs and interests. Palm (1997) and Panter-Brick et al. (2014) describe some of the unique differences in fathers related to their experiences (i.e., male socialization), expectations, strengths, interests, and constraints. These are general differences that need to be considered when determining content and format for parent education programs. Content also should be tailored to specific community populations and their needs. For example, the first author of this chapter (Glen Palm) began work in a state correctional facility after years of working with fathers in early childhood programs. It was important to take time to assess the needs and interests of fathers through focus groups and individual interviews before designing a curriculum. He discovered that incarcerated fathers were concerned about the safety of their children and wanted ways to communicate with their children from a distance. There is a core set of parenting topics that has been used in most parenting programs (Morris et al., 2020) that includes: child development, communication, emotional socialization, attachment and parenting styles, discipline/guidance that minimizes harsh punishment, and skills to promote a young child's social, cognitive, and academic skills. Content related to improving the co-parenting relationship is a more

recent addition to this core (Fagan, 2008; Doherty et al., 2006).

Sometimes it may be necessary to adapt the language for core topics to become more father friendly. Fathers may find it more comfortable to talk about concepts with familiar labels such as emotion coaching versus emotional sensitivity, a parenting toolbox as a metaphor for discipline techniques, and emotional intelligence versus empathy. Media images and real-life examples also have to resonate with a group of fathers to be most effective. While some evidence-based curricula may present core concepts with engaging educational methods for fathers, they may need to be adapted or translated to resonate with diverse cultural groups. The strength of an evidence-based curriculum is that it is most often based on a well-defined logic model of program content, methods, sequence, and clearly defined outcomes.

Program evaluation research begins with clearly defined outcomes that can be measured and a manualized curriculum so that program fidelity can be maintained. This research tests the logic model that the treatment (program/curricula) improves the target outcomes. At a meta-analysis level (e.g., Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Henry et al., 2020), this research provides a way to examine factors across studies to identify common factors from successful programs. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) analysis noted two specific content areas that were related to positive outcomes, teaching parents positive emotional communication skills and positive parent–child interaction skills. This analysis also identified one delivery strategy that was connected with successful programs, requiring parents to practice skills with their children during sessions. Henry et al. (2020) identified content areas of parental sensitivity and child emotional regulation as important and that practice of skills like emotion coaching and video feedback were effective strategies.

Implications for Policy

Policy issues that emerge from the review of programs for fathers are at both the program/institutional level and at the national level. At the institutional level, the question of how to initiate the systemic change to be more father-inclusive (Panter-Brick et al., 2014) is relevant. This begins with an administrator who believes that serving fathers is important and sends this message to the program staff by providing training and support for all staff to be welcoming to fathers (see Burdick & Bellotti, 2005). This has to be supported by resources to fund staff and programs in a sustainable manner. One limitation of fatherhood initiatives is that most institutional economic models do not support an ongoing source of funding (Draper & Ives, 2013). This reality creates the foundational national policy issue of identifying sustainable funding for fathering initiatives.

One of the policy issues that is cited in the literature is the question of universal versus targeted services (Burgess, 2009; National Academy of Sciences, 2016; Panter-Brick et al., 2014). Cost-benefit analysis of programs can shed some light on this question. Targeted programs offer more comprehensive services (e.g., Responsible Fatherhood Programs), are very expensive, and also have the most potential for significant outcomes. The policy response has been to fund programs that target young, unmarried fathers with some evidence that these programs have a good return on investment (Chase, 2020). It is much more difficult to assess the value of universal prevention programs that depend on more long-term outcomes. One of the conundrums of funding only target populations is the message that this particular group of fathers is deficient in some way. This stigma is then connected to young men of color in urban areas where programs have been targeted. This makes it more difficult to apply a strength-based program philosophy. The benefit of universal access programs is that they send a message that all fathers need and can benefit from parent education experiences to improve their parenting skills. This creates a cultural/social norm that learning about parenting is an

important set of skills for all fathers. The long-term return on this type of investment is harder to evaluate. The tensions around gender, racial, and income equity are also related to the policy decisions of which group or groups of fathers or mothers should be served. The most visible return on investment is at the individual father and family level for the groups that have the highest need and most potential for growth. These are not policy decisions that can easily be resolved, especially with limited resources and advocacy for fatherhood programs. The continuum model proposed later in the chapter describes different levels of investment needed for prevention versus high-level interventions.

A second policy question is about two different service delivery formats, home-visiting programs and group parenting programs. There is some evidence that low-income fathers are more likely to participate in home visiting (Raikes et al., 2005). Home-visiting programs take away the barriers of lack of transportation and childcare. They are also convenient and less time-consuming for parents than traveling to a group program. However, group programs offer a number of benefits, including the social support network that is developed, the opportunity to become part of a community of fathers, the observation of other children, and the sharing of ideas with peers. This sharing provides a normalization of the issues that parents are facing and can lower anxiety and stress levels around parenting issues like sleep, tantrums, or eating. There have been some creative suggestions for merging the two delivery systems with fathers by supplementing home visiting with support groups for fathers and opportunities for father–child activities (Sandstrom et al., 2015). There also may be opportunities for home-visitors to connect fathers to other community resources for parenting that complement the home-visiting curriculum and provide both father and child with new social connections. Another issue with fathers in home-visiting is how to address nonresidential fathers. This often requires a separate home visit that then increases the cost of an already expensive delivery model. In addition, home visitors may not have the training to work with couples and family

system dynamics which are more complex and requires a different skill set than the typical parent–child dyad model (McHale & Phares, 2015).

Future Directions

The focus in this chapter has been narrow in addressing only the parent and family education programs that focus on fathers and co-parenting of children prenatal to 5. The diversity of programs that have been included, the different practitioner backgrounds, and the diverse set of fathers and family needs create a complex picture to sort out. There are four different concepts that may be helpful for considering how to improve services for fathers and families of young children. The first is thinking about a continuum of services that can provide a model for collaborative work among different sectors/institutions. The second is to dedicate more resources to early intervention for expectant fathers to support the psychological growth and development of first-time fathers and new family formation. The third is to articulate how to best support the development of staff who are delivering services to fathers and families. The final concept is around accountability and how to improve programs and create new adaptions to tailor programs to different needs.

A Continuum Model
Continuum models of parent services have emerged as one way to integrate the diverse set of programs and goals from universal prevention to intensive intervention. The Triple-P Program (Sanders, 2008) is one model for identifying different levels of needs and matching services for parents. The idea of a continuum is one way of moving beyond the universal access or targeted program debate. The National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016) proposes a continuum of services model for parenting education that includes three different levels. Level one is Universal Prevention that addresses common parenting issues by the age of the child with varied program formats and levels of intensity. Level two is Targeted for Populations at

Risk, including children with special needs, behavior problems, or parents with mental health issues. Level three is for Families Facing Persistent Adversities, long-term issues that require intensive, long-term, and integrated services. This model applied to fathers of young children and adolescent males who are approaching childbearing age provides a framework that values Universal Prevention parent and family education for fathers. This can be described as a public health approach that serves all fathers and families and strengthens communities. The continuum framework recognizes that there are different levels of needs and depicts how program collaboration across sectors can be part of a broader network of support and services for fathers and families at a local community level. This integrative picture of services provides a framework that values both universal and targeted services for fathers.

Early Intervention Programs for Expectant Fathers

Pregnancy offers many "teachable moments" for first-time fathers (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2010; Bond, 2010). Fathers are more open and responsive to information and support during this time and are more likely to change their attitudes and behaviors (Fagan, 2008). Genesoni and Tallandini (2009) describe pregnancy as the most demanding period of psychological reorganization of the self for men. New roles for fathers emerge to be explored, supported, and integrated into a new psychological identity. Fathers now consider the role of protector and how to protect the child and their partner's well-being during pregnancy and beyond. They must also take on the role as a parenting partner and the task of forming a co-parenting alliance with their child's mother. Their role as providers is expanded to prepare and provide a safe physical and emotional space for their new baby. Fathers also have a new responsibility to be a role model and to reflect on important values and habits they want to teach their children. In addition to the psychological growth opportunities are the potential neurobiological changes or brain rewiring processes that occur through the

involvement and commitment of fathers as caregivers of their babies (Kim et al., 2014; Abraham & Feldman, 2022). We are just beginning to understand brain science and its application to understanding new fathers. Fatherhood is a generator of change from being more self-centered to other-centered (Palkovitz, 2002). May and Fletcher (2013) define clear developmental goals during this transition. These include: understanding the mother's thinking and feelings, understanding role and relationship changes during the transition, understanding infant crying patterns, and how to refine their own emotional regulation skills. The programs that have been developed for co-parenting (Doherty et al., 2006; Fagan, 2008; McHale et al., 2015) shine a light on the importance of this period for creating family stability and resilience. Florsheim et al. (2020) describe an approach to helping young fathers that links health care and infant mental health in a collaborative effort to provide individual services. Parent and family education services for new expectant fathers are fertile ground to develop.

Training and Support for Practitioner Development

What level of knowledge and skill does the practitioner need to be effective at delivering parent and family education services to fathers? There is some consensus that an experienced practitioner with a professional background or specific certification is important (Lee et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2020). The National Parenting Education Network (2019) has defined a specific set of competencies for parent educators that outlines knowledge about human development, parenting, and family systems and skills such as facilitating groups, making referrals, and evaluating programs with a core set of attitudes or dispositions that form a foundational mindset that guides parent and family education practice. Practitioners from different professions tend to deliver parent education using an evidence-based curriculum. Curriculum training is seen as the necessary preparation for becoming an effective parent educator (Morris et al., 2020). Jones et al. (2018) have made a case for employing peer educators and paraprofessionals to assist with delivering

parent education services. This view supports using practitioners who may not have the professional credentials but who mirror the population that they are serving to play a role as effective parent educators. Some basic preparation and familiarity with child development and the ability to work with groups as well as the community are seen as critical background knowledge and skills for this group. An additional factor is the set of dispositions/attitudes that support effective parent and family education practice. Some of the critical dispositions from the National Parenting Education Network (2019) include practitioners who are nonjudgmental and accepting, have cultural humility, are open to learning, are collaborative across programs, display genuine empathy, believe in a strength-based approach, and value program evaluation.

The practitioner is critical to program effectiveness. Program components and curricula are the tools that have been created by evidence-based programs. Practitioners who deliver parent education services to fathers begin as novices and over time and with support, can develop into master teachers (Campbell & Palm, 2004). This developmental process takes continuing education, support, and time for reflective supervision. One of the challenges for the field is the inability to sustain programs so that practitioners have the time to practice and develop the complex set of skills needed to become a master teacher. It is the combination of evidence-based programs delivered by skilled and experienced parent and family educators who can adapt materials to different groups that assures successful programs for diverse audiences. It is important to develop a deeper understanding of the characteristics of practitioners that lead to the delivery of effective services.

New Technologies for Delivery of Services to Fathers

The fatherhood field has started to explore the use of new technologies for delivering services to fathers. This has become especially important during the Covid pandemic since most programs have not been able to provide face-to-face individual or group services. The new technologies being used include synchronous web-based classes in which fathers meet with a practitioner and group of fathers, asynchronous classes in which fathers attend a presentation that has been previously taped and can be viewed at any time, cell phone check-ins in which practitioners reach out to fathers to provide support and referrals, and cell phone access points (Aps) in which fathers are periodically prompted to read text regarding topics such as child development or ways to connect with children. Researchers are just beginning to examine the efficacy of these programs. The Text4Dad program was implemented as an add-on module in conjunction with a larger, multisite fatherhood program in Michigan's Healthy Start program (Lee & Lee, 2020). This program used peer mentors to provide support and information to new low-income parents. This implementation study found that although fathers had positive views of Text4Dad content, there was a lower-than-expected level of interaction between mentors and fathers through Text4Dad.

In an exploratory study of text messaging with low-income fathers, Lewin-Bizan et al. (2020) delivered 36 messages that intended to increase fathers' engagement with their children and levels of parental self-confidence for men with children aged 0–12 in Hawaii. The researchers found that although fathers liked the text messages, many fathers did not read them. Fathers also indicated in the evaluation that they would have liked to have face-to-face interaction with other fathers rather than just receiving text messages. Several researchers have suggested that future studies should explore how to combine the convenience and flexibility of online delivery modes with the critical components of in-person formats (Pearson & Fagan, 2021).

Accountability and Program Support

The call for more rigorous evaluation research on fatherhood programs has continued over three decades (McBride & Palm, 1992; Osborne et al., 2014), while the number of evidence-based programs and curriculums has remained low but is increasing (Lee et al., 2018). Recent initiatives such as the Fatherhood Research and Practice

Network (FRPN) have helped to substantially increase the number of rigorous studies of fatherhood programs. FRPN is a national research institute that promotes rigorous evaluation of fatherhood programs serving low-income fathers (Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, 2014). The cost of conducting rigorous studies (e.g., RCT) with large samples has limited the number of fatherhood programs that reach the threshold to become recognized as evidence-based. The decision to use and scale only evidence-based programs (Morris et al., 2020) needs to be tempered by the need to adapt programs and strategies to the needs of specific groups of parents. We need to learn more about which components of a program or curriculum work. How do these components work? And for whom do programs work or for whom do they not work? We also need to learn whether interventions have an impact on fathers' interactions with children as well as child outcomes. Epstein et al. (2015) found that different preconditions (low, medium, and high baseline conflict) with couples were related to different conflict outcome patterns in the Supporting Father Involvement program. As a group, the mean improvement was significant and positive, but couples who came in with medium levels of conflict actually increased their level of conflict during the 4-month follow-up.

The Center on the Developing Child has also been working on a new approach for fast-tracking program development, implementation, testing, and evaluation (Center for the Developing Child, 2020). The IDEAS Impact Framework™ stands for *I*nnovate to solve unmet challenges, *D*evelop a program with a clear and precise theory of change, *E*valuate the theory to determine what works for whom and why, *A*dapt in rapid-cycle iterations, and *S*cale promising programs. The end result would be to scale programs to meet the needs of specific populations. This approach offers promise for quicker development of new programs. Some of our evidence-based parenting programs are from the 1980s, and it is not clear that they still have the same impact 30 years later on more diverse populations of parents in different social-historical contexts. The concept of

continuous improvement is also an important strategy to be able to adapt programs to changing father and family conditions and needs. For example, Florsheim and Moore (2020) describe the need to tailor programs to young fathers' needs through individual counseling and case management. It will be beneficial for the field to move beyond the current use of RCTs as the pinnacle of program evaluation efforts and embrace other tools for continuous assessment and improvement of new and existing programs.

Summary

Parent and family education programs for fathers and co-parents of young children have continued to evolve over the last 40 years. A diverse set of program services have emerged to serve fathers from prenatal through the transition to parenthood, through infancy and toddlerhood, and into the preschool years. These programs are built on the strong research base that positive father involvement leads to positive outcomes for children, family stability and resilience, and potentially stronger communities. These programs aspire to meet a wide range of goals for fathers, children, co-parent relationships, and family stability. Program development has been limited by the challenge of creating systemic changes in institutions that have been designed for mothers and children. This is true across sectors of health care, human services, and early education. There has also been limited funding to develop evidence-based programs. The focus on education and support for fathers of young children has the long-term potential to lead to greater gender, racial, and income equity when done in concert with co-parenting and family systems approach in a collaborative manner across institutions.

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Applying the APA *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men* to Clinical Work with Fathers

Ginelle Wolfe and Ronald F. Levant

Introduction

This chapter considers the application of *The APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men* (APA, 2018) to clinical work with fathers. We start by discussing foundational theories in the psychology of men and masculinities—masculinity ideologies and gender role strain theories—as well as the second wave feminist movement, which served as an impetus to men's greater involvement in parenting. We next considered the APA Guidelines in general in the light of over four decades of research results on the correlates of major masculinity constructs (e.g., traditional masculinity ideology, conformity to masculine norms, and gender role conflict and stress) with a host of harmful outcomes. The Guideline specific to clinical work with fatherhood was next discussed. After summarizing research related to fatherhood, masculinity, and outcomes for fathers and their children, the model of paternal involvement was introduced, reviewing its three primary components and auxiliary components. Finally, we provided recommendations for clinicians working with fathers, including a description of and ways to encourage healthy father involvement, potential barriers and methods of problem-solving these barriers, as

well as clinical tools that may be specifically helpful for clinical work with fathers.

Masculinity Ideologies and the Gender Role Strain Theories

Although masculinity ideologies theory states that there are multiple masculinities based on intersections of gender role identity with other identities such as those based on race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability status, there is a dominant form called traditional masculinity ideology (TMI), which represents the masculinity ideology of the traditionally dominant group in the USA—namely, White, cisgender, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied men (Levant & Richmond, 2016). Based on this, TMI refers to a certain set of beliefs about the norms for boys and men's thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Thompson et al., 1992). This concept was originated by David and Brannon (1976), who proposed that TMI was characterized by four norms: (1) "no sissy stuff" (avoidance of femininity), (2) "the big wheel" (men should strive for success and achievement), (3) "the sturdy oak" (men should not show weakness), and (4) "give 'em hell" (men should seek adventure, even if violence is necessary). These constructs and their measurement were further developed by Levant and colleagues in their development of the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI; Levant et al.,

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2016). The MRNI has gone through a number of revisions over the last three decades. In the Short Form (the MRNI-SF), the seven domains of traditional masculinity ideology (e.g., the seven masculine norms) are restrictive emotionality, self-reliance through mechanical skills, negativity toward sexual minorities, avoidance of femininity, placing high importance on sex, dominance, and toughness. We argue that men who display rigid adherence in these domains, score in the upper tail of the distribution of TMI, or experience strain with these norms experience more detrimental outcomes. Specifically, we discuss the role of high restrictive emotionality as a barrier to positive father involvement.

The Gender Role Strain Paradigm (GRSP; Pleck, 1981, 1995) is a prominent research theory in the psychology of men and masculinities (Wong et al., 2010). The GRSP was developed by Pleck (1981) as part of a well-developed refutation of the Gender Role Identity Paradigm (GRIP), which had previously dominated psychological research on gender for about 50 years (ca. 1930–1980; Levant & Richmond, 2016). The GRIP had stated that children's healthy personality development required their adopting the traditional gender role performance associated with their biological sex, masculinity for boys and femininity for girls. The GRSP, stemming from feminist and social learning theories, instead theorized that these traditional gender roles were culturally variable and socially learned. Pleck adduced evidence showing that these traditional gender roles were problematic and theorized further that both adhering and failing to adhere to these roles resulted in negative consequences.

Historical Background: Second Wave Feminism

The second wave of feminism began in the late 1960s (Friedan, 1963). This wave resulted from the continued discrimination of women even after they won the right to vote and attained legal rights in marriage and divorce. Second-wave feminists were concerned with women's day-to-day experiences. This included redefining work for women and fighting for equality in the public sphere of paid labor. Additionally, their advocacy extended to the private sphere, where they took a critical perspective on women's roles as wives and parents in the home where unpaid labor occurred (Rampton, 2015). In the 1970s and 1980s, women broke out of their traditional roles and entered the workforce in a large way. In 1948, only about 17% of married mothers were in the labor force, whereas in 1985, 61% were (Cohany & Sok, 2007). Specifically, only about 10% of mothers with children under six were in the workforce at the end of World War II, yet over half were in the labor force by 1985 (Cohany & Sok, 2007). Women challenged traditional gender roles as they sought employment in the public sphere and equality at home. That is, given that women were now populating the public sphere, there was a new demand in families for men to step up and provide care for their children. This led to a focus on the division of family labor (which is defined as childcare and housework, e.g., Pleck, 1997), where men were expected to do more of the unpaid family work in the home.

Although feminist political activism has resulted in greater gender equality in the U. S., it has not yet led to an equal distribution of family work. For example, Miller (2015) reported that mothers still spend the same amount of time doing activities with their children as mothers did in the 1990s. She notes that there has been a significant improvement since the 1960s when fathers on average spent about a tenth of an hour per day doing child-related activities, but that the distribution has not changed since the mid-1990s when women did 62% of the family work, men did 38%, and men had on average about 10 hours per week more leisure time than women (Miller, 2015). Thus, although equality in the workplace has improved, equality in the domestic sphere still has quite a way to go.

The APA Guidelines and Research in the Psychology of Men and Masculinities

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2018) adopted *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men,* which drew on the GRSP and masculinity ideology and gender role conflict theories and over four decades of research on the correlates of various masculinity constructs, including endorsing traditional masculinity ideology, conforming to masculine norms, and experiencing gender role conflict and stress. They concluded that the vast majority of findings indicated harmful correlates of these and other masculinity constructs. The Guidelines cover multiple topics and offer numerous recommendations, including a section that is specific to working with fathers.

The Guidelines cite a myriad of harmful correlates of the various masculinity constructs delineated above, highlighting the problematic role of gender role socialization in boys' development. The Guidelines (p. 3) state: "… socialization for conforming to traditional masculinity ideology has been shown to limit males' psychological development, constrain their behavior, result in gender role strain and gender role conflict…, and negatively influence mental health … and physical health." There have been proponents of "positive masculinity" that seek to promote positive masculine traits. However, recent research has indicated that traits that appear to encompass positive masculinity take the form of benevolent sexism (Brasil & McDermott, 2021).

One can find numerous examples in the research literature to support this statement. For example, Hill and Menvielle (2009) found that there were negative consequences of policing masculinity and that fathers who raise their sons to adhere to masculinity norms force them to choose between being who they in fact are and winning their father's approval. Another example is compromised intimate relationships in adulthood, ranging from attachment insecurity to the perpetration of abuse, both related to being discouraged in childhood from expressing vulnerable and caring emotions (Mahalik et al., 2005;

McDermott & Lopez, 2013; Pollack, 1995; Schwartz et al., 2004).

In a review of 249 studies, O'Neil (2008) assessed the relationships between 10 masculinity measures and various outcomes. Results indicated that masculinity, measured in various ways, was associated with many harmful outcomes, including depression, anxiety, loneliness, alcohol and other drug abuse, alexithymia, acceptance of rape myths, risk-taking, body image distress, anger and aggression, poor health habits, racism, sexism, homophobia, and lower levels of help-seeking and obtaining social support. A recent content analysis of research using the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI; Gerdes et al., 2018) found that scores on various versions of the MRNI were associated with myriad negative outcomes, such as aggression, alcohol and other drug abuse, psychological distress, sexism, and prejudice, as well as lower levels of help-seeking behavior, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and relationship quality. Focusing on a different masculinity construct, conformity to masculine norms, Wong et al. (2017) synthesized the results from 78 samples (19,453 participants) in a meta-analysis on mental-health-related outcomes. Wong et al. (2017) found that conformity to masculine norms was associated with lower levels of mental health and psychological help-seeking. Furthermore, masculinity is related to other harmful outcomes, such as substance abuse and suicide (Kilmartin & McDermott, 2015), and poorer health habits than women, which are associated with men's higher morbidity and mortality than women (Courtenay, 2011; Gough & Robertson, 2017). Taken as a whole, these findings support the idea that the restrictive gender role of masculinity has many negative correlates and can be very problematic for boys and men, those close to them, and society at large.

As alluded to earlier, the Guidelines also highlighted the complexities involving intersecting social identities, such as gender and race. Using an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989), researchers acknowledge that the dominant version of masculinity intersects with these different social identities, creating new masculinities. For example, Rogers et al. (2015) interviewed a num-

ber of African American men, and the results highlighted the pressures to conform to TMI impeded by obstacles to doing so due to racism. Studies of Latino American masculinity revealed two 'masculinities' in this culture: *machismo* and *caballerismo* (Ojeda & Organista, 2017). The machismo role is closely associated with TMI. However, caballerismo seems to be a somewhat more positive definition of masculinity, as it is defined by being respectful and chivalrous and connected to family (*familisimo*), but arguably still supports patriarchy as a form of benevolent sexism. Various masculinities tend to have their own set of rules and expectations that men, and therefore fathers, are expected to follow.

Nonetheless, as noted earlier, there are still commonalities in masculinities that seem to be endorsed and followed across different social identities. The Guidelines note that the dominant form of masculinity is still pervasive and shows up in various other constructed masculinities. Additionally, they state that adhering to traditional masculine norms can serve as a buffer for some of the discrimination minoritized men might face due to having a marginalized identity (Liang et al., 2010). For example, "cool pose" has been identified as a construction of masculinity in African American boys and men. This strays from TMI but still includes themes of dominance, restricting emotional expression, and avoiding feminine characteristics (Liang et al., 2016; Majors & Billson, 1993). In the Rogers et al. (2015) study, TMI was still an important theme in masculinity for African American men. However, the family was also highlighted and included the role of providing for the family. In the *machismo* domain of masculinity, toughness and dominance are highlighted. However, in both the *machismo* and *caballerismo* forms of masculinity, being a provider is still regarded as important (Ojeda & Organista, 2017). In Asian masculinities, restrictive emotionality was identified as an important component (Kim et al., 2001). Sánchez (2016) also described how gay, bisexual, and transgender men may feel pressured to conform to traditional masculine norms to be accepted in society. Thus, aspects of TMI

remain prominent in the intersections of masculinity with other social identities.

Research has found that men vary in their endorsement of the norms of TMI and that most adult men do not strongly endorse traditional masculinity ideology. In surveys using the MRNI, mean scores on the subscales (which measure the norms of masculinity) and total scale score (which measures general endorsement of TMI) tend to be below the neutral point of four on a seven-point scale, where higher scores indicate greater endorsement of TMI (Gerdes et al., 2018). After all, an established adult man, with a partner, a vocation, maybe children, maybe a mortgage or car payments, has far too much on his plate to worry about his masculinity.

If most men do not strongly endorse most masculine norms, what accounts for the correlates with harmful outcomes? There are two groups of men who appear to account for these correlates. First, there are the men in the upper tail of the distribution of scores, the high scorers on masculinity scales, the men who 'check all the boxes.' Then there are the men who feel ashamed of themselves for their perceived failures to conform to masculinity and thus experience discrepancy strain (referring to the discrepancy between their idealized version of masculinity and their actual masculinity). Discrepancy strain is measured by several scales, including the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (Eisler, 1995). In addition, discrepancy strain has been induced in experimental "precarious manhood" studies (Vandello et al., 2008), and the men who experience this experimental manipulation tend to react with aggression. To illustrate, Vandello and colleagues randomly assigned men to experimental and control groups. The experimental group was asked to perform a feminizing task—to braid the hair of a mannikin and put pink ribbons in the hair, while the control group braided ropes to strengthen them. After the task, members of each group were given the options of sitting quietly in a room or punching a punching bag. The experimental group—the men who were feminized—chose to punch the bag more frequently than those in the control group and punched it much

harder than those in the control group who selected this option.

These problems linked with masculinity also show up in boys. Boys tend to underperform in school (Kena et al., 2014) and have various other school-related problems such as bullying, harassment, and disruptive behavior due to widespread beliefs that being motivated in school is not masculine (Franklin, 2004; Steinfeldt et al., 2012; Wilson, 2006). Adherence to TMI also underlies boys having a higher tendency to bully in school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

Finally, to drive home the point that traditional gender role socialization is harmful to boys, consider the fact that most psychological traits vary in the population, from very low to very high. When boys are lower in the trait associated with a particular masculinity norm and are forced to conform to this norm, this could damage their personalities. For example, take the norm of toughness. If a boy is sweet and likes to care for his baby sister, and he is forced to be tough— indeed made to feel ashamed of what he naturally likes to do—the effects can be harmful. Furthermore, it has been a long-standing meme in Western culture that individuals should be true to themselves: To thine own self be true, Be the self that one truly is, or, as Oscar Wilde put it: Be yourself; everyone else is taken. Thus, forcing boys to conform to masculine norms is tantamount in many cases to force boys to be someone who they are not, which ultimately has very damaging intra and interpersonal consequences later on in their development.

APA Guideline on Fatherhood

The fifth Guideline reads: "Psychologists strive to encourage positive father involvement and healthy family relationships." This section states that in contrast to the old model of the breadwinner father who is uninvolved in caring for his children, new research supports fathers being more involved in their families' lives (Cabrera et al., 2000). Pleck outlined several components of involved fathering, proposing that fathering is

parenting, just like mothering, and that parenting does not actually have a gender. This new involved father role is described as having three primary components (positive engagement, warmth and responsiveness, and control) and several auxiliary components (Pleck, 2007, 2010b). The specific components are discussed as part of our clinical recommendations for working with fathers.

The Guidelines reviewed research on the effects on children of father involvement at different developmental stages. Greater father involvement is associated with greater language development and fewer behavioral problems and cognitive deficits in infants (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2008; Erlandsson et al., 2007; Pancsofar & Vernon-Feagans, 2006; Sarkadi et al., 2008;); better performance in school, fewer behavioral problems, and higher levels of emotional reasoning in childhood (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Trautmann-Villalba et al., 2006); and fewer depressive symptoms, substance use behaviors, and lower levels of violence as well as better grades and higher self-esteem in adolescents (Booth et al., 2010; Day & Padilla-Walker, 2009; Stamps Mitchell et al., 2009; Stewart & Menning, 2009).

The Guidelines also reviewed research on the benefits for the fathers themselves. Positive outcomes for fathers included lower tobacco and alcohol use (Kerr et al., 2011), less criminal behavior (Kerr et al., 2011), and fewer chronic illnesses among a sample in which a majority were married men (Pudrovska & Carr, 2009). Benefits have also accrued for first-time fathers, including improved relationships with healthcare professionals, friends, family members, and spouses, and an increased sense of responsibility (Chin et al., 2011), increased wearing of seatbelts, learning of new parenting skills, less risk-taking, and increased self-care (Chin et al., 2011; Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). The Guidelines also reported negative linkages to masculinity, specifically regarding fatherhood. For example, DeFranc and Mahalik (2002) found that adult sons who reported higher gender role strain of their fathers, measured using the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRSC; O'Neil et al., 1986), also

felt detached from their fathers. Another study found that adult sons' recollections of their fathers' expectations that they conform to masculine norms were positively correlated with lower self-esteem and poorer psychological health (Levant et al., 2018).

Thus, the Guidelines recommend that psychologists encourage fathers to be more fully involved with their children and families. This includes active play with children, caregiving, such as bottle-feeding infants, and enrollment in programs, such as Head Start, which has been shown to be related to greater father involvement and other positive outcomes, such as children's higher math scores (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999). Additionally, the Guidelines introduced fathering empowerment programs, which have been shown to increase fathers' self-efficacy in teaching their children (Fagan & Stevenson, 2002). One example is the Fatherhood Project, which includes programs for fathers in specific populations, including incarcerated dads, teen dads, and fathers going through divorce. The Guidelines also recommend that psychologists go beyond individual therapy and work to implement curricula for expectant fathers to promote positive paternal involvement before parenting (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2007).

The Guideline on fatherhood closes by providing conclusions and applications of the Guidelines. These include promoting healthy growth, deconstructing masculine ideals, and increasing father involvement. The Guidelines also advocate new models of fathering that include various components of healthy father engagement. Specifically, they discuss the new father involvement model in depth, to be considered next.

Clinical Recommendations

The new conceptualization of father involvement has implications for practitioners working with fathers, which are addressed in the Guidelines. The Guidelines discuss promoting healthy father involvement, problem-solving barriers to involvement, and programming for fathers. Based on current literature, clinical practices, and the Guidelines, we put forth several recommendations for clinical work with fathers. First, we discuss healthy father involvement, followed by problem-solving barriers to father involvement. Barriers are broken down into individual and systemic, and specific clinical tool suggestions are provided.

Healthy Father Involvement

As stated above, the Guidelines endorse Pleck's (2010a, 2010b) model of paternal involvement in their recommendations for clinicians in promoting father involvement. The three primary components highlight the main ways this construct is operationalized in research, and the two auxiliary domains refine the primary component of responsibility. Each of these components includes behaviors that the clinician can promote in fathers to increase involvement.

The first domain, "positive engagement activities" (Pleck, 2010a, 2010b, p. 63), refers to active involvement with children. Not to be confused with the simple amount of time spent with their child, this domain refers to the time a father spends interacting with his child(ren) to promote their development, such as providing basic care (e.g., feeding, getting the child dressed in the morning, getting ready for bedtime, and bathing), as well as activities such as playing, helping, and teaching. The second component, "warmth and responsiveness" (p. 63), is the relationship quality aspect of fathering. Through the process of engaging with his child, a father is warm in his interactions and is also responsive to his child's needs and sensitive to his moods. The third component, "control" (p. 64), includes making decisions about the child and knowing their whereabouts, also known as parental monitoring. These three main components of involved parenting include many similarities to the authoritative parenting style defined half a century ago and advocated over both the authoritarian and laissez-faire parental styles (Baumrind, 1971; Pleck, 2010b). Pleck (2010b) draws similarities between paternal involvement and authoritative parenting,

as both highlight the importance of multiple types of parental involvement and a multidimensional definition of parenting. Thus, the model of paternal involvement can be thought of as the authoritative parenting style applied to fathers, but again without gendering parenting.

The two auxiliary components of parental involvement fall under the general domain of responsibility. The first is "indirect care" (p. 65), which includes things a father does for his child without direct involvement. Pleck (2010a, 2010b) stated that indirect care is broken up into two subcategories: "material indirect care," which includes "purchasing and arranging goods and services for the child" (p. 65), including healthcare, other appointments, education, recreation, etc. This component thus refers to overall planning for the child's needs. The second subcategory is "social indirect care," which refers to "promoting the child's community connections" (p. 66). This includes planning social activities for the child, such as playdates and involvement in other social activities.

The second auxiliary domain is "process responsibility," which includes "taking the initiative and monitoring what is needed" (p.66). A father engaged in process responsibility is monitoring his child's needs and identifying needs as they come up, rather than simply filling the needs after they have been identified. Pleck (2010a, 2010b) discusses Doucet's (2006, 2009) description in which fathers are described as "assistants, partners, or managers in these domains, which in effect places them on a continuum of process responsibility" (p.66). Father involvement thus includes direct caregiving, supervision, monitoring, and overall process involvement as a parent. The involved father role also addresses the long-standing gender equity issue and serves to achieve a more equitable balance between mothers and fathers in family work.

In summary, Lamb (2010) and Pleck (2010b) proposed a new way to conceptualize and measure fathering, which reflects what many feminist scholars have envisioned for fatherhood. This model is essentially just good parenting and can be supported and modeled in clinical work. These components include specific behaviors that can be turned into recommendations and goals in therapy. They can make the idea of being a more involved father tangible in the therapy room.

Problem Solving Barriers at the Individual Level

Another recommendation in the Guidelines is "identifying problems and barriers to involvement" (p. 13). Clinicians can work to address both individual and systemic barriers to father involvement. This section reviews three constructs that constitute barriers to healthy father involvement: The essential father hypothesis, gender role strain, and normative male alexithymia. Suggestions for problem-solving these barriers are also discussed.

The Essential Father Hypothesis

The essential father hypothesis is an older perspective on fatherhood informed by Freudian psychoanalytic conceptualizations of child development, particularly the theory of the Oedipal conflict. This hypothesis viewed fathers as playing an essential role in their son's development, modeling and reinforcing masculinity and heterosexuality in their sons (Pleck, 2010a). This perspective is based on the assumption that boys need this type of guidance from a masculine heterosexual man in order to develop a secure heterosexual and masculine gender role, which reflects the older, now discredited GRIP, discussed above. In this view, fathers were not expected to provide actual care to their children, which is the mother's job, but instead would be their playmates and chief disciplinarian, and the provider/supporter to their mother.

Silverstein and Auerbach (1999) deconstructed the assumptions behind the essential father hypothesis. The first is that due to biological sex differences, men are not meant to nurture children, which claims a biological basis for fatherhood. Men, therefore, were thought to have unique, different roles in parenting. Although this hypothesis is congruent with evolutionary psychology (Buss, 1995; Popenoe, 1996; Trivers, 1972), it has not been supported in many studies

of nonhuman animals, where male animals do in fact act as caretakers of their offspring (Fernández & Reboreda, 2003; Ohba et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2017; Williams, 1989; Ziegler et al., 2009). Furthermore, feminist research highlights the behavioral similarity between male and female nonhuman animals in terms of sexuality (Gowaty, 1997; Hrdy, 1994). Finally, the idea that men are not natural parents also does not hold up in human families where both parents are men (Patterson & Chan, 1997), where men are primary caregivers (Pruett, 1989), or in single-father households (Greif & Demaris, 1990).

The second assumption is known as the "civilizing effects of marriage" (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999, p. 402). The belief that marriage somehow civilizes men, which in turn protects children, comes from the idea that boys and men have innate aggressive tendencies and need social sanctions, such as those provided by marriage, to civilize them. The third assumption stresses the importance of the presence of a male role model to ensure that boys learn "how to be a man" by fathers demonstrating heterosexuality and masculinity and serving as protectors for the family (Popenoe, 1996). This latter assumption relies to a great extent on father absence research, which concluded that there are many negative effects for boys in families where fathers are absent. However, that body of research conflated father absence with the effects of racism and poverty (Threlfall et al., 2013); furthermore, by comparing two-parent with one-parent (female-headed) households, it conflated the differential effects of one parent vs. two parents. Biological anthropologist Lionel Tiger (2000), an apologist for the essential father view, discussed this position in his book, *The Decline of Males*. He asserted that family units should return to traditional gender roles in which fathers provide a unique and indispensable function in the child development process.

In a critical review of the research literature on essential fatherhood, Pleck (2010a) concluded that the hypothesis has received—at best—modest support. The literature thus does not support this idea of fathers playing a unique role in modeling and reinforcing masculinity and heterosex-

uality in their son's development. In contrast, research has shown that in the past decade, men have adopted more flexible gender role expectations and behaviors in parenting (Galinsky et al., 2011; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012). Randles, based on a series of qualitative interviews, put forth the concept of hybrid fatherhood, a more flexible definition of fatherhood, and expanded gender roles for men, which included emotional expressivity and caretaking responsibilities.

Although the idea of the unique contributions of fathers to child development has not been empirically supported and the essential father hypothesis no longer attracts research interest, the practice of this conceptualization of the father's role seems to be deeply embedded in U. S. culture, as seen in fathers modeling the avoidance of femininity (Fagot & Hagan, 1991; Lee & Lee, 2018), teaching toughness (Pollack, 1998; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004), and endorsing gender stereotypes (Endendijk et al., 2014). Specifically, one study found that traditionally masculine fathers modeled the "avoidance of femininity" masculine norm in various ways when parenting their sons (Lee & Lee, 2018), such as avoiding cooking meals, doing laundry, scheduling activities for their children, or reading to them. Another study found that fathers gave less praise and attention to their sons when they engaged in behaviors typically construed as 'feminine' (Fagot & Hagan, 1991). Further, Epstein and Ward (2011) asked college-aged men and women to recall messages they received from their parents about gender. Findings indicated that college men recounted instances of feeling pressure from their fathers to be tough and overall received more messaging emphasizing toughness, while college women recounted receiving more messaging around egalitarian relationships. Some studies have pointed to more flexible definitions of parenting and father involvement (Eerola & Mykkanen, 2015; Randles, 2020), but themes of traditional masculinity still emerged in one study. Over time, the essential father hypothesis may not be considered as the only way to be a father, but the themes still persist. Considered as a whole, these findings highlight the pervasive nature of the essential father idea in current con-

ventional discourse and fathering practices and suggest that it has not changed much over time. However, that question has not been definitively examined.

The essential father hypothesis serves as a barrier to father involvement because the masculine norm of avoiding all things feminine requires that fathers not take on tasks that are stereotypically considered feminine. This is particularly salient in White working-class families, who tend to adhere more strongly to the avoidance of femininity norms. For example, middle-class Black men long ago redefined protection, provision, and procreation to include nurturance (Cazenave, 1981)—a traditionally feminine activity—because the educational and vocational opportunities that would enable Black men to be good providers were impeded by racist barriers. However, White men have no need to incorporate new dimensions into fatherhood because they are not victims of racism. This became particularly problematic in the Great Recession of 2008 when many White working-class men would not consider taking so-called pink collar jobs that are traditionally performed by women, such as those in healthcare (e.g., nursing), education (e.g., teaching), office (e.g., bookkeeping), and other administrative jobs. Furthermore, out-of-work men did not opt to pick up the slack in childcare, which would have helped the women in their lives who had a better chance of employment.

Although general clinical tools are further discussed below, here we suggest specific tools to problem solve barriers created by the essential father hypothesis. First, providing education about the social construction of masculinity and the pressures for men to instill heterosexuality and toughness in their sons may open a window for discussion. Clinicians can use motivational interviewing to assess the perceived benefits and drawbacks of ascribing to this ideal. For example, if a father's presenting concern is feeling disconnected from his family, the essential father hypothesis can be discussed as a contributor to this presenting concern. Additionally, they may ask fathers to think about their own relationships with their fathers and assess whether TMI was modeled and how that may have impacted their

father–son relationship. This may serve as a window for the therapist to open a discussion about increasing involvement in their kids' lives and giving examples of more flexible parenting.

Gender Role Strain

Gender role strain, described earlier, poses a major barrier to father involvement. Fathers may experience gender role strain when the tenets of healthy father involvement contradict traditional masculinity ideology. One way that therapists can problem solve with men who experience gender role strain is by looking to recommendations from men who have already had to navigate this barrier. Previous literature has assessed gender role strain in various samples of men. Recommendations were provided and can be used in working with fathers who experience gender role strain in therapy.

For example, Benson et al. (2005) explored gender role strain and fatherhood in gay fathers. Results of this qualitative study indicated that these fathers already established an emotional connection with their kids because they discussed sexual orientation at a young age. These conversations were described as "important and personal" (p.23) topics. Although this was in a specific context, clinicians can encourage fathers to have similar emotionally deep discussions with their kids in order to build emotional connections and increase father involvement. Clinicians can support this model of navigating gender role strain.

Silverstein et al. (2002) assessed gender role strain in three groups of fathers: Haitian Americans, Promise Keepers, and gay fathers. This study identified specific types of gender role strain experienced by fathers who are practicing contemporary definitions of fatherhood and reconstructing their fatherhood. Specifically, gay men may experience strain due to heterosexism. Ethnic and racial minority men may experience strain due to racism as well as to conflicting standards resulting from various cultures. One study highlighted that Haitian-American fathers experienced bicultural gender role strain in having pressures to conform to father roles in both Haitian culture and father roles more prevalent in

the United States. Overall, men may experience gender role strain due to the combination of pressures of being a primary provider with the pressures of being actively involved in their children's lives. Many fathers in the study reconstructed their father's role in light of the strain that they experienced. Results indicated that the men who made shifts in their parenting to becoming more involved in their children's life enhanced the quality of their relationships with their children. Clinical recommendations from this article suggest that clinicians can use psychoeducation and experiential techniques to help fathers understand the negative impacts of gender role socialization. Therapists can discuss these tensions in the therapy room and have explicit conversations about masculine socialization as well as the strain it can cause.

Rather than blaming the father or family for presenting concerns, such as a lack of father involvement, therapists can discuss gender role strain as uncomfortable experiences that result from not living up to all masculine expectations. Therapists can discuss the feelings of dissonance and stress that occur in men who believe they are not meeting the standards of traditional masculinity ideology. Providing education about gender role strain can help fathers and their families understand that there is nothing wrong with the father himself, but the expectations that are socially constructed and placed on him, and that these feelings are likely a normal part of increasing father involvement and flexibility.

Normative Male Alexithymia

One way that involved fathering directly offsets traditional masculinity ideology (especially the norm of restrictive emotionality), as described above, is the inclusion of emotional availability and interpersonal connection in healthy parenting. This norm is included in the three most widely used masculinity scales measuring gender role conflict (GRCS-SF; Wester et al., 2012), traditional masculinity ideology (MRNI-SF; Levant et al., 2013), and conformity to masculine norms (CMNI-30; Levant et al., 2020). All of these scales have a subscale that relates to emotionality. In the MRNI and GRCS, it is called "restric-

tive emotionality," and in the CMNI, it takes a broader form of "emotional control." Socializing boys to conform to restrictive emotionality may lead to an inability to put their feelings into words and access and express emotions, which is termed "normative male alexithymia" (Levant et al., 2006, p. 212). The term 'normative' refers to the fact that it results from socializing boys to conform to the masculine *norm* of restrictive emotionality. This problem could impair such men's ability to benefit from psychotherapy, most forms of which require that clients identify and describe their emotions to process them and put them into perspective. Therefore, Levant developed Alexithymia Reduction Treatment (ART; Levant et al., 2009) to increase alexithymic men's emotional self-awareness. This is currently a four-session manualized treatment, consisting of a series of exercises and homework assignments that can be integrated into psychotherapy of any orientation.

Thus, practitioners may focus treatment on helping fathers develop language for emotions. This might serve to counter masculine socialization to conform to the norm of restrictive emotionality that some fathers might otherwise impose on their sons. Through this process, clinicians should be aware of the residual effects of their own gender role socialization process and also work to highlight and critically analyze their clients' gender socialization. Given the many negative outcomes of strict gender role socialization, it is important that clinicians work to question some of these gender norms and processes of socialization when working with fathers.

Clinical Tools

Although the pervasiveness of belief in the essential father idea, gender role strain, and normative male alexithymia function as barriers to healthy father involvement, some clinical tools may help problem solve. Based on recommendations from the APA Guidelines, previous literature, and personal experiences as clinicians, we propose some specific recommendations for working with fathers.

Rapport Building

Men who adhere to more traditional masculine beliefs may also find it difficult to establish sufficient trust (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). This can show up in the therapy room, in an environment that uses trust as a foundation to allow a high level of disclosure and often emotional expression and exploration (Good & Robertson, 2010). The therapeutic relationship in-and-of-itself counters much of how boys and men are taught to think, act, and feel. Thus, clinicians should spend a significant amount of time developing a trusting relationship with the client. This may include processing and normalizing reservations to therapy and taking smaller steps to increase emotional expression.

Measurement

Pleck (2010b) discussed utilizing specific questionnaires to assess fathers' levels of involvement. One example is the National Survey of Families and Households. By utilizing this measure, clinicians can get a sense of how involved their clients are in their children's lives and in what ways. This can be used to identify strengths and areas for growth to promote healthy development in their children. Clinicians can also use measures such as the MRNI, GRCS, and CMNI to better understand in what specific domains gender role strain may be occurring or which traditional masculinity ideology beliefs are especially high.

Flexibility

Additionally, Pleck (2010b, p. 88) states, "Practitioners should always have in mind the multi-faceted nature of paternal involvement. Because there is no 'one way' for fathers to be involved, there is necessarily no 'one way' to promote increased father involvement." Thus, it is important that practitioners are flexible in working with fathers to assess what will be beneficial for their clients' families and various ways to be involved. Clinicians should promote and facilitate the exploration of various forms of parental involvement. Several of the studies and recommendations described tend to reflect the perspective of White middle-class heterosexual, cisgender men. For example, research has shown that African American fathers traditionally have had an active engagement in their children's lives, and therefore, their conceptualizations of fatherhood may differ from that of White fathers (Auerbach et al., 1997).

Language

Pleck (2010b) also suggested that language usage may be important in clinical work with fathers. The word "essential" was used to describe fathers' unique contributions. Although this model of fatherhood has been debunked, the language used was helpful because it underscored the importance of fathers as parents. Pleck observed that given the environment in which mothers are thought of as being primary caregivers, the term "essential" may be useful to increase involvement from fathers. The term implies that fathers could make a valuable contribution to parenting. This countered the notion that fathers were not useful in parenting. Given this context, it is important that fathers understand that their role in parenting is important. Although there does not seem to be anything gender-specific and indispensable that fathers alone provide that other parents cannot, the clinician should reinforce the idea that their role is very important.

Case Example

Levant et al. (2006) presented a case of a man who "felt nothing" about his impending fatherhood. The client was not concerned about this because he usually felt nothing. When asked the last time he cried, he stated it was 10 years ago when his dog died. Levant utilized ART to help the client gain access to his emotional life, after which he gradually discovered unresolved grief over his own father's remoteness. As a boy, he had idolized his father and desperately wanted a relationship with him to the point of following in his footsteps when he became the editor of the school newspaper (his father was the publisher of the local newspaper). Resolving this grief gave him greater access to his emotional life and allowed him to open up his heart to his new baby.

Problem Solving Barriers at the Systemic Level

Additionally, the Guidelines include recommendations for psychologists at the larger societal level. Although practitioners can work with fathers individually, it is important to advocate at a larger systemic level to promote healthy father involvement. Psychologists may become involved in fathering programs such as head start or father empowerment programs. They could also advocate for support programs such as paternity leave.

Research has shown that men are less likely to seek help with their health (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Mansfield et al., 2003; Vogel & Heath, 2016). Specifically, men who endorse traditional masculinity ideology are less likely to seek both medical and psychological help. This creates barriers to working clinically with fathers who may benefit most from increasing their paternal involvement. Clinicians might consider running fatherhood support groups or practice in settings that may serve to increase father engagement, rather than only offer psychotherapy. The group setting may also serve to promote consciousness-raising, as participants hear other fathers' experiences which can serve to normalize and validate their own. However, it may still be challenging to engage fathers, especially those who adhere more strongly to masculine norms, in this type of clinical work.

Thus, it is important to have more outreach and programs that can reach a larger population of fathers, rather than just the ones who do seek out therapy. One example is the Boston Fathering Project. The site includes numerous resources for specific populations. For example, two special programs include "Dads matter in pediatrics" and "Dads matter in recovery." This type of community programming can promote father involvement in various settings. The website also includes documents for clinicians working with fathers, lists of community organizations, and facts about father engagement. This list of facts is supported by research to promote father involvement. Therapists can seek out these resources and use relevant handouts when working with fathers to promote involvement. They can also encourage clients to seek out these websites and community programming or do this in session.

For example, from 1983 to 1988, I (RL) led the Boston University Fatherhood Project. One central technique used was providing distance from the self to help group members access their emotions. For example, members engaged in roleplays, which were recorded. They then watched the playback to assess their fathering techniques and develop better parenting skills. I used the framework of sporting events and instant replays in order to help men analyze their performance and better understand how to improve. This intervention was structured and behaviorally focused.

Group therapy may be especially helpful for men because it directly counters the masculine socialization of not discussing feelings or connecting emotionally with others. A group setting can also be used to normalize emotions so that men can understand that there are societal pressures put on them. To illustrate, I (RL) led men's growth groups in the mid-1990s, in which a group of 10 or so men gathered for several hours. One of the exercises is the "Top Secret" task. I passed out 3 × 5 index cards and pencils and asked the men to write down their top secrets that they have never told anyone and would never tell anyone. I then collected the cards and made an elaborate show of shuffling them, while gasps went up—"he's going to read them!" And read them I did. The secrets themselves were utterly banal violations of the masculinity norms, some of which have occurred in childhood: Fears of being too close to one's mother, unresolved anger (with underlying grief) about the lack of emotional connection to one's father, hidden dependency on other people, and cowardice (e.g., backing down from a fight in high school). What is amazing and also healing to the men is the similarity of the secrets, which is healing because many men believe that they are the only man to have ever violated masculinity norms, and they experience immeasurable relief to discover that other men feel the same way.

Summary and Conclusions

The APA Guidelines outline the negative impacts of traditional masculine fatherhood and promote paternal involvement, which includes active involvement in children's lives. Clinicians have the potential to intervene and promote paternal involvement, which is associated with several benefits and lower negative outcomes for children and their fathers. However, it is important that clinicians are aware of the gender role strain fathers may face in trying to navigate multiple messages regarding masculinity and fatherhood, including the beliefs that fathers must model masculinity and heterosexuality for their sons, as well as be a breadwinner and serve as the chief disciplinarian of the family and other barriers associated with masculine socialization such as normative male alexithymia. Clinicians can discuss these pressures in addition to introducing a host of clinical tools to engage fathers in self-exploration and reflection and increase paternal involvement.

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