

EFFECTS OF FATHER PARTICIPATION IN CHILD REARING: Twenty-Year Follow-Up

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Follow-up data were obtained on the young adult children of fathers of intact, white, middle-class families who had been closely involved in early child rearing. The extent to which their locus of control, expectations about gender roles in career and family contexts, and academic competence differed from those of peers reared in more traditional families was examined. Greater paternal involvement was found to contribute to a more internal locus of control, particularly in sons.

During the past two decades, research on many aspects of involved fatherhood has flourished (Blanchard & Biller, 1971; Lamb, Frodi, Hwang, & Frodi, 1982; Murray & Sandqvist, 1990; Taris & Bok, 1996). Short-term longitudinal data focusing on outcomes for offspring who have been exposed to differing levels of paternal involvement in child care have shown that children, especially sons, benefit from high levels of such involvement (Radin, 1981a; Radin & Sagi, 1982; Russell, 1982; Williams, Radin, & Allegro, 1992). Using 20-year follow-up data, the present inquiry has focused on how adult children's levels of internality, perceived academic competence, and expectations concerning gender-related roles differed between those from families with greater and lesser paternal participation.

The first objective was to assess the relationship between fathers' involvement in child rearing and their adult children's gender role attitudes in work and family con-

texts. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes that parents, as primary socializers, have great influence on their children's beliefs about how roles should differ by gender. Children learn these roles by first observing and then imitating their parental models, particularly those who are powerful and nurturant or of same sex. The concept of gender becomes firmly established within the child's first two years (Fagot & Leinbach, 1995; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), and the typical roles attributed to each gender are integrated into the personality at a very early age. However, Fagot and Leinbach's (1995) study, which compared families with shared parenting and those with more traditional parenting, found that children from egalitarian families adopted polarized gender labels at a later age than did the those from traditional families. At the age of four, these same children exhibited less knowledge of gender roles than did those from traditional families. This suggests that children whose fathers are highly

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involved in their care have begun to form flexible gender role attitudes at a very early age. As have other findings in the literature (Ruble, 1984; Stangor & Ruble, 1987; Williams, et al, 1992), a study by Damon (1979) concluded that children's reactions to non-traditional gender activities were more flexible after the age of seven, suggesting that experiences beyond preschool and early childhood modify gender role attitudes. More recently, an 11-year follow-up of the present study's sample (Williams et al, 1992) found that greater involvement in child care by their fathers was predictive of adolescents' future expectations for both nontraditional employment and nontraditional child rearing arrangements.

Differential shaping of boys' and girls' gender roles is common, with fathers more likely than mothers to reinforce stereotypical roles (Fagot & Leinbach, 1995). Sons are usually taught instrumental competence and how to manipulate their environment, while daughters learn how to be affectionate, sensitive, and supportive. Fathers typically respond to feminine behavior by their daughters with approval, and additionally foster a feminine orientation by playing the reciprocal male role (Johnson, 1975; Radin, 1986). To the extent that fathers do not respond to daughters as males typically respond to females, daughters are less likely to develop traditional sex role attitudes (Radin, 1986). It seems that children whose parents reward and model nonstereotypical gender roles, and whose fathers do not give typically male responses to daughters, develop more flexible gender role attitudes than do children raised in traditional families, in which mothers are the primary caregivers.

The second objective of the present investigation was to examine the relationship between their father's involvement in early child care and adult children's locus of control. Aldous's (1974) theory of role makers suggests that certain personality characteristics, such as high self-esteem, flexibility, and a sense of controlling one's own

destiny, might be expected of individuals creating new roles in families. Fathers pioneering family roles are likely to exhibit these features and will, in turn, model and reinforce internality in their own children. The empirical literature supports this speculation. A study of 642 young adults aged 18–26 (Taris & Bok, 1996) found that paternal involvement was linked to an internal locus of control in the adult child, while the reverse effect was found for maternal involvement. Finally, in the first investigation of the present study's sample (Radin & Sagi, 1992), it was shown that for both Israeli and American children, internality was positively correlated with high paternal involvement in child care.

The third objective was to address the effect of their father's early involvement on adult children's academic competence. An accumulating body of work suggests that fathers have significant influence, particularly for sons, on the cognitive domain of child development (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Downey, 1994; Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 1988; Hoffman, 1989; Radin, 1982). According to social learning theory, cognitive development is facilitated by fathers who are available to their children (Bandura, 1986). Sons, in particular, learn by observing their fathers and modeling their problem-solving strategies, vocabulary, and other behavior.

As an example, third-grade boys who experienced frequent interaction with their fathers received higher grades in school than did boys with less frequent father interaction (Blanchard & Biller, 1971). In a more recent study of children aged 5–18, using data from a national survey of families and households ($N=13,017$), children whose fathers were highly involved in household tasks and provided homework assistance were found to perform significantly better academically than children with uninvolved fathers (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996).

The data for school-age female cognitive development are not as consistent, except

in the area of mathematics (*Murray & Sandqvist, 1990; Radin, 1981b*). A survey of American College Entrance Examination scores for college sophomores (*Landy, Rosenberg, & Sutton-Smith, 1969*) found that quantitative scores by females whose fathers had been at home during the day until they were ten years old were significantly higher than those of females whose fathers had not been present at that age.

From these theories and empirical data, it was hypothesized that compared to peers from intact families whose fathers played a relatively minor child rearing role, adult children from intact families whose fathers played a large child rearing role would have: 1) less traditional sex-role attitudes in general; 2) less traditional expectations of their future parental roles; 3) a more internal locus of control; and 4) a self-perception of higher academic competence. Gender was explored as an influence on these four variables, since it had proved a significant predictor of outcomes in prior follow-up studies with this sample. Analyses were performed separately for each of the prior three ages at which measures of father involvement were taken.

METHOD

Subjects

Original study (Time 1). In 1977, a study was designed by Radin (*1981a, 1981b*) to examine antecedents and consequences of high involvement by 59 fathers in intact, white, middle-class families in their preschool children's care. Each parent was interviewed separately and a series of tasks was administered to the children, then aged 3–5 years. A Paternal Involvement In Child Care Index (PICCI) was developed for the study, based on the literature regarding socialization. It included the sum total of both mothers' and fathers' responses about paternal involvement in five areas: overall child care, physical child care, socialization of the child; decision making regarding the child; and availability to the child. Higher PICCI scores reflect higher involvement.

Based on the PICCI scores the families were divided into low, medium, and high father involvement levels (*Radin, 1981a, 1981b*). Mothers' and fathers' estimates of the percentage of time in which fathers had primary responsibility for the child were a mean of 22% by mothers and 23% by fathers in the low-involvement group, 41% and 40%, respectively, in the medium-involvement group, and 56% and 58%, respectively, in the high-involvement group. The labels of low, medium, and high father involvement were therefore considered valid. Among the developmental consequences found for children in the high father involvement group were greater internalization and cognitive competence (*Radin & Sagi, 1982*).

Four-year follow-up (Time 2). In 1981, the study was repeated with the 47 intact families that could be located and of which both parents agreed to participate (*Radin & Goldsmith, 1985*). The major inquiry was whether the fathers in the three groups had maintained their levels of involvement now that their children were school-age (7–9 years). The same cut-off points as at Time 1 were employed to identify the three father-involvement groups. The children were not assessed at this time.

The child-care arrangement in the high father involvement group was found to be less stable than it was among the more traditional fathers in the two lower-involvement groups in that the highly involved fathers tended to become less involved as their children grew older.

Eleven-year follow-up (Time 3). In 1988, 32 intact families of the 42 interviewed at Time 2 were located, agreed to participate, and agreed to allow their children to be interviewed (*Williams et al, 1992*). The children were now in grades 7–10 and aged 14–16 years. Their views on sex roles and on gender roles in employment and child rearing were examined to determine whether those whose fathers had been highly involved in preschool and early school years had more flexible attitudes. The adoles-

cents' satisfaction with their father's involvement and their perception of advantages and disadvantages in these child care arrangements were also examined.

The major findings were that greater paternal involvement in the children's preschool years was predictive of greater adolescent support for nontraditional employment arrangements if they should marry. More paternal participation at 7-9 years predicted greater support for more nontraditional child rearing patterns if they should marry and have a family. The trend was for males in the high father involvement group to see more advantages, and females in the group to see more disadvantages.

20-year follow-up (Time 4). In 1997, 21 intact families from the prior studies agreed to participate (nine could not be located and two refused to participate). The children, now aged 23-25 years, were either still in college or had recently graduated; none had married. Copies of the questionnaires were mailed to the respondents, after which interviews were conducted by telephone, with respondents reading the questions along with the interviewer.

To determine whether these 21 families were representative of the original 1977 sample, the PICCI scores of that sample were divided into two subgroups consisting of the 47 participating and 12 nonparticipating families in the Time 2 follow-up. The PICCI scores of the 32 participating and 15 nonparticipating families in the Time 3 follow-up were similarly divided. These scores were then compared on *t*-tests. No significant differences were found in either case (*Williams et al., 1992*). The same procedure was employed at the Time 4 follow-up, with similar results. Thus, no differences in father involvement were found between families in the Time 1 and Time 2 studies, the Time 2 and Time 3 studies, and the Time 3 and Time 4 studies.

Dependent Variables, Time 4

Four composite dependent variables were employed. The two pertaining to ap-

proval of nontraditional gender and child rearing roles were examined to test the hypothesis that the greater the father's involvement in child care during the preschool, early school, and adolescent years, the more nontraditional would be the children's views at Time 4 about gender roles in general and child rearing roles in particular.

The third dependent variable pertained to the children's level of internality at Time 4. It tested the hypothesis that the greater the father's involvement in child care during the three childhood phases, the more likely it was that the adult children would prefer to base their thoughts and actions on their own opinions rather than on chance or on others' opinions.

The fourth dependent variable pertained to the children's self-reported academic competence at Time 4. It tested the hypothesis that the greater the father's involvement in child care during the three childhood phases, the higher would the adult children rate their own academic competence.

All the gender-role questions posed were drawn from a large national study by the Institute for Social Research (*Bachman, Johnston, & O'Malley, 1981*) that was designed to explore changes in the values, behavior, and life-styles of American high-school seniors. This study has reported significant results over many years of testing and the questions were thus presumed to be sufficiently valid and reliable.

Measures. The first of the four composite variables used the Index of Approval of Non-Traditional Gender Roles (*Bachman et al., 1981*), a mean of seven questionnaire items dealing with notions of equal employment opportunities for women and the ability of working women to have warm and secure relationships with their children. Respondents were asked to react to such general statements as "Men and women should be paid the same amount of money if they do the same work," and "A preschool child is likely to suffer if the

mother works." Some of the questionnaire scores were reversed for purposes of unidirectionality. Responses were scored from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree), with the Index direction moving from traditional to nontraditional. Chronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient is .97.

The second composite variable used an index consisting of the mean of ten questionnaire items that addressed approval of traditional child rearing practices, with high mother involvement and low father involvement; equally shared child rearing; and nontraditional child rearing, with low mother involvement and high father involvement (Bachman et al., 1981). Respondents were asked how they would feel about a specified child rearing arrangement in a particular situation. The responses were scored from 1 (not at all acceptable) to 4 (desirable). Scores for the component pertaining to approval of a traditional child rearing arrangement were reversed, and scores for that concerning approval of a nontraditional arrangement were multiplied by two; this gave a scale of nontraditional attitudes toward child rearing roles. Possible scores ranged from 1.40 (least approval) to 5.60 (most approval). Chronbach's alpha coefficient is .66.

The third composite variable used an Index of Internality (Radin, 1988) that had been used at Time 3 and was based on Rotter's (1966) Internal-External Scale. It consists of a mean of eight questionnaire items asking the respondent to specify how much their emotions and behavior depended on what others said or did and how much on what they themselves said or did. Responses pertaining to the respondent's own speech or actions were scored from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal). Scoring was reversed for the responses for the items pertaining to what others said or did. Chronbach's alpha coefficient is .83.

The fourth composite variable used the Index of Perceived Academic Competence, consisting of a mean of two questionnaire items of which the first pertains to respon-

dents' self-reported cumulative average grade in school. It was originally scored on a scale of 1=D and 9=A; however, since students' responses ranged from B- to A, the variable was recoded so that grades D through C+ were dropped, and scoring was on a scale of 1=B- and 5=A. The second questionnaire item (Bachman et al., 1981) was: "Compared with others your age throughout the country how do you rate yourself on school ability?" Responses were scored from 1 (far below average) to 7 (far above average). The items were significantly correlated, $r(21)=.46, p<.04$. Both elements of the Index were then placed on a common scale and averaged.

Independent Variables, Time 4

Four independent variables were employed at Time 4. The first three pertained to the amount of father involvement at Times 1, 2, and 3. In each case, the grand total of the PICCI was also trichotomized to reflect low, medium, and high father involvement. The Time 1 and Time 2 scores used the same cut-off points to define these groups. The Time 3 grand total PICCI score was slightly modified, due to an omission of one of the three items in the area of fathers' statement of overall involvement. Thus, for the Time 3 study, new cut-off points were established by dividing the variable into thirds to reflect low, medium, and high father involvement. Additionally, the five subscales (degree of fathers' involvement in five child care domains) of the three grand total PICCI scores were examined. The remaining independent variable was the children's gender at Time 4.

Analyses

Pearson product moment correlations were computed between the dependent and independent variables. The outcome variables showing significant correlation with an independent variable were then correlated with the relevant demographic variables. A significant association was found between father's age and perceived aca-

demographic competence for the group, $r(21) = -.44, p < .05$; partial correlations controlling for the father's age were accordingly computed. One-way ANOVAs were performed between those outcome variables that significantly correlated with an independent variable so as to determine whether any significant differences existed between low, medium, and high father involvement. Finally, if a significant correlation emerged, correlations between the dependent variables and the five PICCI sub-scales comprising each total PICCI were also computed. All analyses were completed for both the total sample and males and females separately.

RESULTS

In TABLE 1 are presented the correlations between independent and dependent variables for the total group and by gender. One-way ANOVAs and PICCI subscale correlations are reported in the text only when they are significant. The means of the four dependent variables for the total group on an interval scale and by gender grouping are also presented in the text when relevant.*

Gender Roles and Child Rearing

No significant correlations were found between the PICCI scores and the two outcome variables of nontraditional gender roles and nontraditional child rearing.

Internality

Total group. Internality for the group as a whole was significantly associated with higher father involvement at both Time 2 and Time 3. The difference between the high and medium paternal involvement groups was not significant. As can be seen in TABLE 1, the significant first-order correlations between internality and the grand total PICCI score for the whole group were $r(21) = .50, p < .05$ at Time 2 and $r(21) = .49, p < .05$ at Time 3. When controlling for fa-

Table 1
BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS (r) BETWEEN INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES BY TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY GENDER

VARIABLE	TIME 1	TIME 2	TIME 3
Gender Roles			
Total group	0.28	0.04	-0.01
Males	0.35	0.09	0.11
Females	0.43	0.11	-0.09
Child Rearing			
Total group	-0.08	0.25	-0.02
Males	-0.12	0.25	-0.01
Females	0.39	-0.12	0.27
Internality			
Total group ^a	-0.24	0.50*	0.49*
Males ^b	-0.37	0.68*	0.74**
Females	0.30	-0.17	0.31
Academic Competence			
Total group ^c	0.19	0.04	0.44*
Males	0.11	0.32	0.41
Females	0.16	-0.16	0.27

Partial $r = 0.21$ at Time 2, and 0.51^ at Time 3, controlling for father's age.

^bPartial $r = 0.47$ at Time 2, and 0.73^{**} at Time 3, controlling for father's age.

^cPartial $r = 0.32$ at Time 3, controlling for father's age.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

ther's age, only the correlation at Time 3 remained significant, $r(21) = .51, p < .05$. An analysis of the PICCI subscales was made to determine whether any one scale was dominant over the others. For the group as a whole, higher levels of internality by the adult children were significantly associated with fathers' overall involvement, $r(21) = .46, p < .05$, and involvement in socialization activities at Time 3, $r(21) = .53, p < .05$. There were no significant subscale correlations at Time 2.

Males. As can be seen in TABLE 1, the correlation analysis revealed a significant association both at Time 2, $r(12) = .68, p < .05$, and at Time 3, $r(21) = .74, p < .01$. When controlling for father's age, only the correlation at Time 3 remained significant, $r(12) = .73, p < .01$. A significant overall effect emerged for males with father involvement at Time 3, $F(1,11) = 12.47, p < .01$, when sons were 14–16 years old. Those whose fathers were more involved in child rearing (medium group $M = 4.11$, high group $M = 4.31$) had a more internal locus

*A tabular presentation of these data is available from the first author upon request.

of control than did those raised in traditional families (low involvement group $M=3.24$). Subscale analysis indicated a significant association at Time 3, when the sons were 14–16 years old, between father's overall involvement, $r(12)=.65$, $p<.05$, and involvement in socialization activities, $r(12)=.61$, $p<.05$. Once again, there were no significant subscale correlations at Time 2.

Academic Competence

Total group. As can be seen in TABLE 1, perceived academic competence was significantly associated with increased father involvement at Time 3 for the entire group, $r(21)=.44$, $p<.05$. When controlling for father's age, this correlation became non-significant. On subscale scores, perceived academic competence for the entire group was significantly associated with paternal influence in decision making at Time 3, $r(21)=.52$, $p<.05$.

DISCUSSION

Because the sample was small and involved only white middle-class families, conclusions should be treated as tentative and generalization beyond this population made only with caution. However, the unique longitudinal nature of the study lends some weight to the results.

The first two hypotheses—that adults raised in intact families with greater paternal involvement would have less traditional gender role attitudes in general and would hold less traditional expectations regarding their future parental roles—were not supported by the findings at Time 4.

The third hypothesis—that young adults raised in intact families with greater paternal involvement would have a more internal locus of control—received support for the entire group and strong support for males. The finding relating to the group as a whole at Time 4 is consistent with that at Time 1 (Radin & Sagi, 1982), when it was found that more father involvement was associated with greater internality in these

children. The significant subscale correlations that related to increased internality for the group and for males were those pertaining to fathers' statements of overall involvement and involvement in socialization activities. This finding differs from that at Time 1 (Radin & Sagi, 1982), when only the father's decision making power in the family was associated with greater internality for the group and for females, though not for males. It is possible that with the passage of time, sons gravitate toward their fathers and are more likely than daughters to internalize paternal ways of relating. In addition, as children get older, the amount of time fathers spend at home and involved in socialization activities becomes more salient to their children, particularly their sons.

The fourth hypothesis—that young adults raised in intact families with greater paternal involvement would perceive themselves as having greater academic competence—was not supported in the findings at Time 4. The children may have realized that their fathers perceived their careers as secondary to their child care responsibilities (Williams & Radin, 1993), and this may have had a negative effect on the children's own academic expectations.

No daughters were to be found in the high father involvement groups at Time 3, when children were 14 to 16 years old. Apparently, as children get older, fathers' high involvement is more likely to be maintained with sons than with daughters. It is notable that there was no evidence across any of the four dependent variables that fathers' early participation in child rearing had a long-term effect on daughters. Clearly, however, such participation had a long-term influence on sons, at least in the domain of internality. This finding is consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasizes the importance of same-sex models for sons.

Overall, there were no instances in which traditional parenting was associated with nontraditional values in adult children. The

finding at Time 1 that increased paternal involvement led to increased internality in children has been maintained over the 20-year period of the study. It should be noted that the significant differences in the ANOVAs were between low father involvement and medium or high involvement. No significant differences were found between medium and high involvement. This finding may be related to parental estimates at Time 1 of the proportion of time for which fathers were the primary caregivers. For the low involvement group, the estimates were 22% by mothers and 23% by fathers; for the middle group, they were 40% and 41%, respectively; and for the high level group they were 58% and 56%, respectively. Thus, it might be said that for fathers to have a major impact on their children, especially their sons, they must be at least moderately involved in their children's upbringing. From a different perspective, it appears that when fathers are primary caregivers of their sons for under 25% of the time, their influence results in a tendency for the sons to perceive themselves as controlled by external rather than internal factors.

After following these white, middle-class families for 20 years, it can be said that in this population, to rear children who believe they can control their own lives (an attitude associated with success in school) active participation by fathers in rearing their children, particularly their sons, may be necessary.

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