

# Fatherhood

## Research Bulletin

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Australian Fatherhood Research Network Bulletin 38 April 2017

### **Fatherhood Research Symposium II: Theory, Measurement, Policy and Practice**



The Bulletin is produced by A/Prof Richard Fletcher (editor), Dr Elaine Bennett, Dr Elisabeth Duursma, Dr Jacqui McDonald, Dr Eileen Dowse, Dr Jennifer StGeorge & Associate Prof Campbell Paul and Miranda Cashin. We acknowledge the support of The Family Action Centre, Faculty of Health and Medicine, The University of Newcastle

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## NEWS

### Fatherhood Research in Australia Symposium II 2017

Melbourne April 20 – 21st

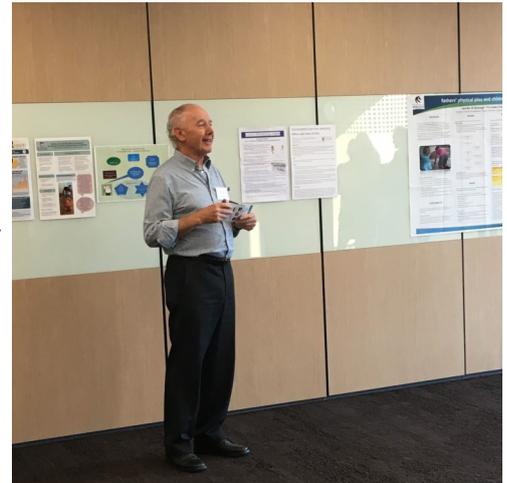
Engagement, technology, connection and collaboration; these were the key themes that emerged from the second Fatherhood Research Symposium held in Melbourne on April 20 – 21st. Run by The Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle, in partnership with The Centre for Social and Early Development at Deakin University, the symposium was a chance for more than 40 fatherhood researchers, service providers and media outlets from across the country to come together and discuss their projects, make connections and build collaborations for the future.

Following poster presentations from researchers, on Day 1 attendees formed groups to discuss existing databases for examining fathers and fatherhood over the life course; qualitative and theoretical work on measurement in fatherhood research; and, the links between research and interventions with fathers.

#### Development of an Action Plan

With a focus on building collaboration, it was decided to first take a specific topic as a focus to develop a mechanism for researchers clinicians and practitioners to begin to work together. The issue of ‘fathers’ and infants’ sleep’ was chosen as a starting topic.

Four working groups were identified: a Literature review group, a Data and analysis group, an Interventions group and a Scientifics communications group and an Action Plan was formulated.



**Literature Review Group:** Karen Wynter will first establish whether a current Monash doctoral student is already undertaking a literature review that, through general parenting search terms, captures all literature related to fathers’ sleep and father involvement in child sleep. This group will review the student’s search terms and decide if there is any need or scope to conduct a further systematic search. If it is agreed that all relevant literature is captured by the student’s search, given the student’s focus is broadly on parenting and sleep, the group might consider a narrative review and theoretical case for investigating fathers and sleep.

**Data and Analysis Group:** This group planned a paper using MAPP (Men and Parenting Pathways) and possibly the Ten to Men (National Longitudinal Study of Australian men) wave 1 data. These data are cross-sectional and allow for comparisons between men with and without children. Lyn Colvin will investigate further data opportunities and conditions of use. The draft title of the paper: “Sleep quality, mental health and social functioning: a comparison between Australian men (aged xxx to xxx) who are and are not fathers”.

**Interventions Group:** This group has planned to collect focus group data from fathers and their experiences of and involvement in their children’s sleep. Two initial sites will be hosted by Ngala in Western Australia and the O’Connell Centre in Melbourne. The aim of the focus groups is to inform development of sleep interventions and to inform future SMS4dads content. A recommendation was that the focus group members be invited to be part of an ongoing consumer reference group (CRG) on multiple questions around fatherhood and that this CRG would be available for consultation on future consortium projects.

**Scientific Communications Group:** This group proposed the development of key messages on fathers and sleep to be disseminated to the wider community. One proposal was for a video of a father soothing a baby to model paternal-infant healthy sleep behaviours. This group will make use of the evidence base developed by other working groups and will align its activities with theoretical frameworks. It was noted that this group’s strategies might have the potential to be formally evaluated and published and activities may need to be reviewed by ethics committees of participating institutions.

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## The Consortium

In order to allow all participants at the Symposium to engage with the work while recognising the range of skills and experience represented, it was decided to form a consortium. The purpose of the consortium is to allow groups to develop materials such as research papers or resources with due recognition for authors while also crediting all members of the consortium as contributors.

For further information on the Symposium and the Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium contact Jacqui Macdonald [jacqui.macdonald@deakin.edu.au](mailto:jacqui.macdonald@deakin.edu.au) or Richard Fletcher [richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:richard.fletcher@newcastle.edu.au)

## NEWS

### Support for fathers from the Australian Government

**FRB Comment:** *The advertisement below for a support service for fathers is part of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. While the allocation of funding to develop a national service for fathers is to be welcomed, the focus solely on domestic violence prevention seems unnecessarily narrow. The tender is being offered to a confidential list of agencies.*

The Australian Government is inviting organisations via a restricted process to apply to deliver services under the Families and Communities Program / National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2019. Support for Fathers from 2017-18 to 2018-19. Funding will be offered to one organisation as a result of this process. For all children, parents and caregivers are their most important role models. The way parents engage with and look after their children, and how they interact with each other, has a profound impact on children. It also influences how children will behave as parents and develop and maintain intimate relationships.

The transition to parenthood is a time of increased risk of domestic violence. Research indicates that becoming a father can have a transformational impact on men, particularly in regards to attitudes on gender equality. It is for this reason that strategies aimed at young men and fathers, at this time, have the potential to foster positive and respectful attitudes and behaviours in future or current relationships.

The aim of the *Support for Fathers* activity is to contribute to a reduction in violence against women and their children, by engaging young men and fathers to better understand and appreciate the importance of their (current or future) role as parents and partners; as well providing them with evidence-based tools, strategies and knowledge to improve their confidence as both parents and partners in order to develop, maintain and role-model healthy and respectful relationships with family members.

This grant provides one-off funding to develop and implement a strategy targeting young men and fathers in these ways, with a particular focus on engaging them through their interactions with existing service providers.

The strategy must be implemented through Commonwealth, state and territory providers who have contact with young men and fathers across health (including parenting), education, family and relationship (including family law and counselling), care and corrections, men's behaviour change and homelessness services. It is expected that the successful applicant will engage with these providers to build their capacity to engage young men and fathers to develop skills and knowledge in these areas. This could include materials for distribution to young men and fathers.

<http://bit.ly/2pZXyM4>

## ON THE WEB

### Dads #ShareTheLoad



A laundry detergent advertisement featuring an Indian grandfather's realisation that domestic work needs to be shared has won a major award from the Advertising Club of New York this month. The video addresses gender inequality and encourages men to help their partners with the laundry.

The ad ends with the question, "why is laundry only a mother's job? Dads #ShareTheLoad."

[https://www.rewardme.in/tag/arielsharetheload?utm\\_source=Fatherhood+Institute&utm\\_campaign=25c984a6f3-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2017\\_04\\_19&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_13d69e2c31-25c984a6f3-82774905](https://www.rewardme.in/tag/arielsharetheload?utm_source=Fatherhood+Institute&utm_campaign=25c984a6f3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_04_19&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_13d69e2c31-25c984a6f3-82774905)

### British election campaign for working families highlights fathers' needs

**FRB comment:** *On the 8<sup>th</sup> June a general Election will be held in Britain. The Families and Work Group in the UK, an informal coalition of charities and trade unions who work together to develop policy thinking around families and work have mounted a campaign to push for improved policies from all parties. Here is an edited version of their opening statement:*

### Supporting working families in the next Parliament

Published: 25 Apr 2017



There are 11 million working mothers and fathers in the UK, making up more than a third of the workforce. Ensuring this group of people reaches its economic potential is vital to the success of the UK economy in the next Parliament, and beyond. But work isn't currently working for families or for the economy.

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47% of parents think that over the last two years it has become financially more difficult to raise a family<sup>[1]</sup>. 46% of people in the UK want to work flexibly but currently only 8.7% of jobs are advertised flexibly<sup>[2]</sup>. Eight out of ten mothers and seven out of ten fathers would assess their childcare needs before taking a new job or promotion, limiting career progression and costing the economy billions in under-utilised skills<sup>[3]</sup>. The estimated annual costs of underutilising women's skills alone is estimated to be between 15 and 23 billion pounds<sup>[4]</sup>. 47% of fathers agree they would like to downshift into a less stressful job. This runs the risk of creating a 'fatherhood penalty' – whereby men move into lower paid and lower quality work simply because they have become fathers. The way we design, organise and advertise work in the UK restricts many with family responsibilities from being economically active in the first place; causes many others to downshift or drop out of the labour market entirely, and is a barrier to returning to work. The evidence for women is well known, but now we see similar patterns of compromise and disengagement appearing among younger fathers. As the UK prepares to exit the European Union, these patterns must begin to be reversed. We have therefore come together to call for these policies to be included in the political party manifestos prior to the General Election on 8 June 2017. We are calling for:

**Meaningful flexibility and job security in the labour market.** Flexible and well-designed jobs are crucial to ensuring that UK employers get the best out of their workforce and of ensuring that people achieve their full potential.

**Better support for fathers in the workplace.** This is crucial to improving equality at work and to reducing the UK's persistent gender pay gap, which has no place in a modern, prosperous, inclusive economy.

**More support for working mothers and fathers of disabled children.** Too many parents give up work at the point of their child's diagnosis out of necessity, then move into long-term unemployment, with all its associated economic and social costs. Nine out of ten parents of disabled children currently not in work would like to return to paid work. Four out of ten have been out of work for at least six years<sup>[6]</sup>.

<https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/news/supporting-working-families-in-the-next-parliament/>

## PROGRAMS AND FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

### Stay at Home Dads Australia New Zealand



A Facebook group that, as the name suggests is a forum and resource for and by Stay At Home Dads in AU/NZ. It is for guys who are thinking of, planning to be, or already are SAHDs. It's a way to share and discuss resources and experiences from the point of view of dad as the primary care giver.

When I joined there was just a few members. I think when I started looking

at what's out there I thought "15 members... pfft won't bother with that one." Then I couldn't find anything else in Australia and eventually joined, the small size was good in a way. After being a SAHD for a year and seeing where things were at, it felt like time for something more, so with a bit of effort the group has started to grow and now we've got 110 at-home-dads from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Our members have children from newborn to teenage, and some guys looking forward to fatherhood. We have at least one father of four, that's our biggest family so far. A lot of the guys have experienced a fair amount of isolation being a SAHD and are really pleased to find the group and keen to know if there are any others SAHDs in their area. Perth is the only city with its own SAHD group on Facebook so far and we've been meeting weekly at local parks for a casual breakfast bbq. We will be able to get more city groups going this year now that the national group is growing.

The content of the page is lately a mix of new member introductions, parenting questions and laughs as well as sharing resources and articles about being a SAHD.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/921377174567162/>

Contact: Max Boronovskis [0478843394](tel:0478843394)

## Engaging Fathers in Parenting Programs: National Practitioner Training

This is a free, national training program for staff which aims to improve skills for engaging, working with, and retaining fathers in parenting programs. The training has been developed by a team of psychologists and researchers from the *Like Father Like Son* project at the University of Sydney and is proudly funded by the Movember Foundation. The training is only available as part of a research study which will evaluate the effectiveness of the training. To participate, you will need to sign a consent form and complete a series of questionnaires.

### The training covers the following topics:

- Research background on father engagement
- Current barriers and obstacles to engagement
- How to positively engage with fathers
- How to work effectively when conflict arises
- Planning for future father-inclusive practice

### There are two training options:

- A half-day face-to-face workshop

- Online training, presented by **Professor Mark Dadds** and **Associate Professor David Hawes**.

The training is AASW-endorsed and can be counted towards continuing professional development.

To participate or find out more, go to <https://www.likefatherlikeson.com.au/practitioner-training/>

or email [matthew.burn@sydney.edu.au](mailto:matthew.burn@sydney.edu.au)



## CONFERENCES

### Society for Research in Child Development Conference 2017



For the first time in the history of the Biennial Meetings of [the Society for Research in Child Development](#), a preconference (mini-meeting) was held on *Fathers and Families: New Perspectives and Future Directions*. The preconference focused on advancing research and measurement on the role of fathers for children's development in the context of the family and was a follow-up to a SRCD-sponsored meeting, (iDADS, International Dialogue about Dads) held at the University of Michigan, 2016. The meeting was convened by Professors [Natasha Cabrera](#) (U Maryland) and [Brenda Volling](#) (U Michigan), and about 80 junior and senior scholars in fathering from USA, Canada, Europe, UK and Australia participated. The main topics of measurement and context were treated through Key note presentations by Brenda Volling and Professor [Jay Fagan](#) (Temple U), and 12 breakout sessions. These were led by researchers from the iDADS group, and were aimed at discussing issues in topics such as the neuroscience of the paternal brain ([Darby Saxe](#), USC), assessing father-child attachment relationships ([Lieselotte Ahnert](#), U Vienna), fathering interventions in high-risk settings ([Rachel Barr](#), Georgetown U), or working with community agencies to establish father interventions ([Carolyn Dayton](#), Wayne SU). Many more topics on measurement and context were covered.

Outcomes of the preconference include new working groups of scholars attacking grey areas of knowledge; promoting a father-inclusive message within the SRCD itself; and a widening of the web of father researchers across continents. Methodologically, theoretically and in practice, the focus of fathering research continues to head in the direction of family systems, and recognition of context and difference, with research in all areas of the biopsychosocial model. Our own research area of [father-child playfulness](#), stimulation and physical play is also gaining international traction in terms of research groupings, e.g., [PEDAL](#) in the UK, and research findings, e.g., Bureau's [laughing task study](#). However, it was also recognized that not enough research into the process and meaning of fatherhood is occurring, or, there is a need for more collaboration or cohesion amongst researchers of different traditions in order to provide an evidence base that persuades policy makers and funders. It is proposed that the next meeting be a symposium at the 2018 SRCD themed meeting on secondary data analysis, focusing on large data sets and fathers. Contact [Jennifer StGeorge](#) if you would like to know more.

## RESEARCH

### Issues to consider working in practice with fathers

**FRB comment by Dr Elaine Bennett :** *Time spent playing with their child, the quality of the parenting and the attitudes (parental sensitivity) of the father are necessary issues to remember for positive child development outcomes. Studies continue to grow the evidence-base for practitioners working with fathers. These have continued to evolve over the past decade. Scourfield et al (2016) looked at (in a large UK longitudinal study) the association between characteristics of fathering in infancy and depressive symptoms in adolescence. The findings alert practitioners to the importance of working preventively with fathers with vulnerabilities in pregnancy and early parenting to assist fathers cope better with parenting stress. Flouri et al (2016) in the UK Millennium Cohort study studied the relationships between father involvement and child problem behaviour at 3, 5 and 7 years. The authors also explored the role of temperament in modifying any child adjustment effects on subsequent changes in father involvement and found no effect. Although this study didn't capture the quality of the relationships it showed that fathers involvement increased with child problem behaviour in the early childhood and primary school years and assisted in child adjustment. Kroll et al (2016) again studied longitudinal data from the UK Millennium Cohort study and the results suggested that the father's quality of parenting rather than frequency or share of routine care, is associated with lower risk of child behaviour problems. Education and support for fathers emphasising parenting quality was seen as important. Opondo et al (2016) used the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children to explore the nature of paternal involvement in early child-rearing adopting a social developmental perspective, and estimate its effect on behavioural outcomes of children aged 9 and 11 years. They also found that at pre-adolescence it is the psychological and emotional aspects of father's involvement in a child's infancy that are the most powerful influences on later child behaviour. How new fathers see themselves as parents, how they value their role as a parent and how they adjust to this new role, rather than the amount of direct involvement in childcare in this period, appears to be associated with positive behavioural outcomes in children.*

### The association between characteristics of fathering in infancy and depressive symptoms in adolescence: A UK birth cohort study

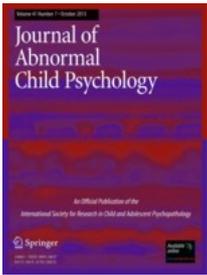


Evidence suggests that the quality of fathers' parenting has an impact on psychological outcomes during adolescence, but less is known about which aspects of fathering have the strongest effects. This study, using the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), considers which paternal attitudes towards and experiences of child care in infancy are most strongly associated with depressive symptoms in adolescence, and whether father effects are independent of maternal influence and other risk factors. Primary exposures were fathers' attitudes to and experiences of child care at 8 weeks, 8 months and 21 months coded as continuous scores; the primary outcome was self-reported depressive symptoms at 16 years (Short Moods and Feelings Questionnaire score  $\geq 11$ ).

Multivariable logistic regression models showed reasonably strong evidence that parental reports indicating potential paternal abuse when children were toddlers were associated with a 22% increased odds of depressive symptoms at age 16 (odds ratio [OR] 1.22 [95% CI 1.11, 1.34] per SD). There was some evidence for an interaction with social class ( $p = 0.04$ ): for children living in higher social class households (professional, managerial and technical classes), an increase in the potential abuse scale increased the odds of depressive symptoms by 31% (OR 1.31 [1.13, 1.53] per SD), whereas there was no effect in the lower social class categories. The potential paternal abuse measure needs to be validated and research is needed on what circumstances predict anger and frustration with child care. Effective interventions are needed to help fathers cope better with parenting stress.

Scourfield, J., Culpin, I., Gunnell, D., Dale, C., Joinson, C., Heron, J., & Collin, S. M. (2016). The association between characteristics of fathering in infancy and depressive symptoms in adolescence: A UK birth cohort study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 119-128.

## The relationship between father involvement and child problem behaviour in intact families: A 7-year cross-lagged study



This study investigated the cross-lagged relationship between father involvement and child problem behaviour across early-to-middle childhood, and tested whether temperament modulated any cross-lagged child behaviour effects on father involvement. It used data from the first four waves of the UK's Millennium Cohort Study, when children (50.3 % male) were aged 9 months, and 3, 5 and 7 years. The sample was 8302 families where both biological parents were co-resident across the four waves. Father involvement (participation in play and physical and educational activities with the child) was measured at ages 3, 5 and 7, as was child problem behaviour (assessed with the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire). Key child and family covariates related to father involvement and child problem behaviour were controlled. Little evidence was found that more father involvement predicted less child problem behaviour two years later, with the exception of father involvement at child's age 5 having a significant, but small, effect on peer problems at age 7. There were two child effects. More hyperactive children at age 3 had more involved fathers at age 5, and children with more conduct problems at age 3 had more involved fathers at age 5. Child temperament did not moderate any child behaviour effects on father involvement. Thus, in young, intact UK families, child adjustment appears to predict, rather than be predicted by, father involvement in early childhood. When children showed more problematic behaviours, fathers did not become less involved. In fact, early hyperactivity and conduct problems in children seemed to elicit more involvement from fathers. At school age, father involvement appeared to affect children's social adjustment rather than vice versa.

Flouri, E., Midouhas, E., & Narayanan, M. K. (2016). The relationship between father involvement and child problem behaviour in intact families: a 7-year cross-lagged study. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 44(5), 1011-1021.

## Early father involvement and subsequent child behaviour at ages 3, 5 and 7 years: Prospective analysis of the UK millennium cohort study



**Objective:** Fathers are increasingly involved in care of their babies and young children. We assessed the association of resident fathers' involvement with subsequent behaviour of their children, examining boys and girls separately.

**Methods:** We used longitudinal data from the UK Millennium Cohort Study for children born in 2000–2001, divided into three separate analysis periods: ages 9 months to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, and 5 to 7 years. By exploratory factor analysis of self-reported attitudes and engagement in caring activities, we derived composite measures of various types of father involvement at 9 months, 3 and 5 years. Where possible we created equivalent measures of mother involvement. Child behaviour was assessed by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which was completed by the mother when the child was aged 3, 5 and 7 years. We estimated gender-specific odds ratios for behaviour problems per quintile of father involvement, using separate logistic regression models for boys and girls in each analysis period. We controlled for a wide range of potential confounders: characteristics of the child (temperament and development at 9 months, and illness and exact age at outcome), equivalent mother involvement where appropriate, and factors related to socioeconomic status, household change, and parental well-being, where statistically significant.

**Results:** Paternal positive parenting beliefs at age 9 months and increased frequency of creative play at age 5 years were significantly associated with lower risk of subsequent behaviour problems (SDQ total difficulties) in both boys and girls ( $p < 0.05$ ), odds ratios ranging between 0.81 and 0.89 per quintile of involvement. No associations were observed for other composite measures of caring activity by the father at 9 months, 3 years or 5 years.

**Conclusion:** Quality of parenting, rather than the division of routine care between parents, was associated with child behavioural outcomes.

Kroll, M. E., Carson, C., Redshaw, M., & Quigley, M. A. (2016). Early Father Involvement and Subsequent Child Behaviour at Ages 3, 5 and 7 Years: Prospective Analysis of the UK Millennium Cohort Study. *PloS one*, 11(9), e0162339.

## Father involvement in early child-rearing and behavioural outcomes in their pre-adolescent children: evidence from the ALSPAC UK birth cohort



**Objective:** To explore the nature of paternal involvement in early child-rearing adopting a social developmental perspective, and estimate its effect on behavioural outcomes of children aged 9 and 11 years.

**Setting:** The data come from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) cohort recruited in the former county of Avon in the southwest of England.

**Participants:** Out of the 14 701 children in this cohort who were alive at 1 year, 10 440 children were living with both parents at 8 months and were therefore eligible. Outcome data were available for 6898 children at 9 years and 6328 children at 11 years.

**Main exposure:** Paternal involvement was measured using factor scores obtained through factor analysis of fathers' responses on their participation in, understanding of, and feelings about their child's early upbringing.

**Outcome** Behavioural problems were measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) total difficulties score.

**Results** 3 factors were identified in the factor analysis: Factor 1 described fathers' emotional response to the child; factor 2 measured the frequency of fathers' involvement in domestic and childcare activities; factor 3 characterised fathers' feelings of security in their role as parent and partner. Children of fathers with high scores on factors 1 and 3 had 14% (OR 0.86, 95% CI 0.79 to 0.94,  $p=0.001$ ) and 13% (OR 0.87, 95% CI 0.79 to 0.96,  $p=0.006$ ), respectively, lower adjusted odds of behavioural problems at 9 years. Factors 1 and 3 were associated with comparable reduction in adjusted odds of behavioural problems at 11 years (OR 0.89, 95% CI 0.81 to 0.98,  $p=0.017$  and OR 0.89, 95% CI 0.81 to 0.99,  $p=0.034$ , respectively). Factor 2 was not associated with the outcome.

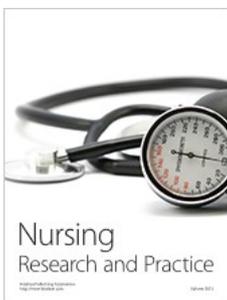
**Conclusions** Psychological and emotional aspects of paternal involvement in children's early upbringing, particularly how new fathers see themselves as parents and adjust to the role, rather than the quantity of direct involvement in childcare, is associated with positive behavioural outcomes in children.

Opondo, C., Redshaw, M., Savage-McGlynn, E., & Quigley, M. A. (2016). Father involvement in early child-rearing and behavioural outcomes in their pre-adolescent children: evidence from the ALSPAC UK birth cohort. *BMJ open*, 6(11), e012034.

## Skin to skin (S2S) contact by fathers after birth

**FRB comment by Dr Eileen Dowse:** Maternal skin to skin contact immediately after birth is relatively common practice among well women and babies in maternity units. It is one of ten global standards recommended by WHO & UNICEF in the promotion of the Baby Friendly Health Initiative. S2S is known to be beneficial physiologically for the newborn in terms of regulating heart rate, breathing and temperature. It is also conducive to bonding of the mother to her infant and the early commencement of breastfeeding. S2S in the early days and hours after birth, however, is not routinely practiced by fathers during the postpartum hospital stay. In the RCT conducted by **Chen et al. (2017)**, intervention group fathers were given a minimum of 15 minutes S2S with their newborn daily for the first 3 days postpartum. The key outcome measured was the Father-Child Attachment Scale (FCAS). As a result of the intervention these fathers had significantly higher scores on the FCAS compared to the control group. The authors recommend that nurses and midwives support the practice of paternal S2S in the postpartum period to encourage new fathers to engage and care for their infants to help build confidence in their roles as fathers. Another RCT conducted this time by **Mirnia et al. (2016)**, investigated the reduction of cortisol levels of premature NICU infants following 45 minutes of S2S with their fathers. Cortisol is a glucocorticoid secreted from the adrenal glands and is a well-known physiological measure of physical and psychological stress. Saliva samples were collected from the infants before, during and after S2S with their dads. Although the cortisol levels were found to decrease in both the intervention & control infant groups, there was a greater decrease found in the intervention group. However, this was not statistically significant at any of the time measures. Lastly, **Shorey et al. (2016)** undertook an integrative literature review looking at the impact of paternal S2S on both infant and paternal outcomes examining both qualitative and quantitative research evidence on the topic between 1995-2015. Similar to Chen et al (2017), the review authors recommend that fathers be encouraged to provide S2S to their infant. Recommendations were made for specific further research to examine the inhibitors and facilitators for fathers providing S2S.

## Effects of Father-Neonate Skin-to-Skin Contact on Attachment: A Randomized Controlled Trial



This study examines how skin-to-skin contact between father and newborn affects the attachment relationship. A randomized controlled trial was conducted at a regional teaching hospital and a maternity clinic in northern Taiwan. The study recruited 83 first-time fathers aged 20 years or older. By block randomization, participants were allocated to an experimental ( ) or a control ( ) group. With the exception of skin-to-skin contact (SSC), participants from each group received the same standard care. Both groups also received an Early Childcare for Fathers nursing pamphlet. During the first three days postpartum, the intervention group members were provided a daily SSC intervention with their respective infants. Each intervention session lasted at least 15 minutes in length.

The outcome measure was the Father-Child Attachment Scale (FCAS). After adjusting for demographic data, the changes to the mean FCAS were found to be significantly higher in the intervention group than in the control group. We recommend that nurses and midwives use instructional leaflets and demonstrations during postpartum hospitalization, encouraging new fathers to take an active role in caring for their newborn in order to enhance father-neonate interactions and establish parental confidence. This trial is registered with clinical trial registration number NCT02886767.

Chen, E. M., Gau, M. L., Liu, C. Y., & Lee, T. Y. (2017). Effects of Father-Neonate Skin-to-Skin Contact on Attachment: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Nursing Research and Practice*, 2017.

## Paternal Skin-to-Skin Care and its Effect on Cortisol Levels of the Infants

**Background:** Neonatal period is one of the most important critical phases of human life. Intensive care unit has a stressful environment for the infant in which the patient will be under the pressure of factors such as noise, nursing intervention and harsh light; the most important factor in this regard being separation from parents.

**Objectives:** This study aimed to investigate the effect of skin-to-skin care by fathers on salivary cortisol of his infant.

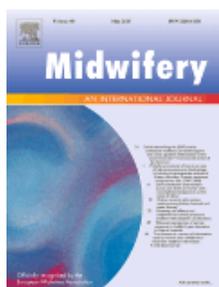
**Methods:** This study was a randomized clinical trial on 45 premature infants paired by their fathers at the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of Tabriz Alzahra teaching hospital conducted during November 2015. The control group received standard care and the intervention group had 45 minutes of skin to skin care. Saliva samples were collected from infants before, during, and after this intervention to measure the cortisol level. The SPSS 13 statistical software was used to analyze the data with the significance level of  $P < 0.05$ .

**Results:** Salivary cortisol in babies in the control group had a mean value of 66.36 (SD = 71.22) and intervention group a mean value of 59.56 (SD = 59.20) ( $P = 0.56$ ).

**Conclusions:** Both groups showed decreasing cortisol levels during the study, the reduction in the skin-to-skin care group was more than the control group, but with no significant difference. Thus, making it possible for fathers to take care of their infants in an effective, helpful and secure way.

Mirnia, K., Bostanabad, M. A., Asadollahi, M., & Razzaghi, M. H. (2016). Paternal Skin-to-Skin Care and its Effect on Cortisol Levels of the Infants.

## Skin-to-skin contact by fathers and the impact on infant and paternal outcomes: an integrative re-



**Objective:** to summarise research evidence on the impact of father-infant skin-to-skin contact on infant and paternal outcomes.

**Design:** an integrative literature review.

**Data sources:** PubMed, ScienceDirect, PsycINFO, and Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health.

**Review methods:** studies included were: (1) published in English between January 1995 to September 2015; (2) primary researches; and (3) focused on fathers providing skin-to-skin contact with their infants and its impact on infant and paternal outcomes. The Joanna Briggs Institute's Critical Appraisal Checklists were used to appraise the scientific rigour of the studies.

**Findings:** twelve studies (10 quantitative and two qualitative) were included in this review. Father-infant skin-to-skin contact had positive impacts on infants' outcomes, including temperature and pain, bio-physiological markers, behavioural response, as well as paternal outcomes, which include parental role attainment, paternal interaction behaviour, and paternal stress and anxiety.

**Conclusions:** a father's involvement in providing skin-to-skin contact seems to be feasible and beneficial to both infants and fathers. However, there has been a scarcity of literature that exclusively examines fathers' involvement and perceptions related to skin-to-skin contact in the postpartum period. Future research should examine skin-to-skin contact by fathers and its associated benefits, as well as fathers' perceptions on father-infant SSC among varied populations.

**Implications for practice:** a father's involvement in providing skin-to-skin contact should be promoted during the post-natal period. Father-infant skin-to-skin contact is a valuable alternative, especially during the un-availability of mothers due to special circumstances, including medical emergencies and caesarean section.

Shorey, S., He, H. G., & Morelius, E. (2016). Skin-to-skin contact by fathers and the impact on infant and paternal outcomes: an integrative review. *Midwifery*, 40, 207-217.

## Paternal routes of influence on children

**FRB comment by Dr Jennifer StGeorge:** *In this set of papers, the focus is on the link between father-child relationships and child problems, such as childhood obesity, and internalising and externalising disorders. Different routes can lead to protecting children from these risks (the principle of equifinality), and it is interesting to see if or how researchers investigate these routes. On the broadest level in these three studies, **Morgan et al. (2017)** provide an example of how ‘any route [parent] will do’. The authors discuss the growing evidence of paternal influence on children’s food intake and then systematically review fathers’ participation in 213 childhood obesity prevention or treatment randomised control trials (RCT). A surprise finding was that many RCT implementers did not actively involve or even count fathers’ participation. While two thirds of the RCTs did include fathers, few provided objective father engagement data, and only 2% explicitly reported that the lack of father participation was a limitation of the study. Not considering a different route (i.e., father participation) to the prevention of childhood obesity) appears to be short-sighted.*

*In the study by **Bureau et al. (2016)**, the authors examined the route to children’s externalising behaviours by comparing mothers’ and fathers’ attachment and sensitivity. Children’s conduct problems were worse when parent-child attachment was insecure, and this link was stronger for dads than for mums. This study demonstrates that one route to child behaviour is the parent-child attachment relationship, but that the potency of the route varies with parent gender.*

*Other researchers take an evolutionary standpoint, and hypothesise that fathers do indeed take a different route to achieve positive child outcomes. In the **Gaumon et al (2016)** study, the researchers use the Risky Situation test to assess an alternative type of father-child attachment, the activation relationship, formed by fathers’ sensitive encouragement to explore the environment while also protecting with by clear limits. The researchers found that a balanced activation relationship with the child could protect against anxiety disorders for children who have disorganized attachment with the mother, while an under-activated relationship was a risk factor for anxiety disorders for children who have an insecure relationship with the mother.*

## Involvement of fathers in pediatric obesity treatment and prevention trials: A systematic review

### PEDIATRICS

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**Context:** despite their important influence on child health, it is assumed that fathers are less likely than mothers to participate in pediatric obesity treatment and prevention research.

**Objective:** this review investigated the involvement of fathers in obesity treatment and prevention programs targeting children and adolescents (0–18 years).

**Data sources:** a systematic review of english, peer-reviewed articles across 7 databases. retrieved records included at least 1 search term from 2 groups: “participants” (eg, child\*, parent\*) and “outcomes”: (eg, obes\*, diet\*).

**Study selection:** randomized controlled trials (RCTs) assessing behavioral interventions to prevent or treat obesity in pediatric samples were eligible. parents must have “actively participated” in the study.

**Data extraction:** two authors independently extracted data using a predefined template.

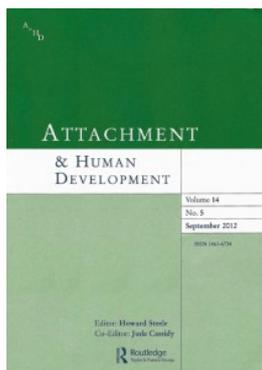
**Results:** the search retrieved 213 eligible RCTs. Of the RCTs that limited participation to 1 parent only ( $n = 80$ ), fathers represented only 6% of parents. In RCTs in which participation was open to both parents ( $n = 133$ ), 92% did not report objective data on father involvement. No study characteristics moderated the level of father involvement, with fathers underrepresented across all study types. Only 4 studies (2%) suggested that a lack of fathers was a possible limitation. Two studies (1%) reported explicit attempts to increase father involvement.

**Limitations:** The review was limited to RCTs published in English peer-reviewed journals over a 10-year period.

**Conclusions:** Existing pediatric obesity treatment or prevention programs with parent involvement have not engaged fathers. Innovative strategies are needed to make participation more accessible and engaging for fathers.

Morgan, P. J., Young, M. D., Lloyd, A. B., Wang, M. L., Eather, N., Miller, A., & Pagoto, S. L. (2017). Involvement of Fathers in Pediatric Obesity Treatment and Prevention Trials: A Systematic Review. *Pediatrics*, 139(2), e20162635.

## Correlates of child-father and child-mother attachment in the preschool years



The increase in fathers' involvement in childrearing, particularly beyond infancy, warrants research exploring factors influencing the quality of child–father attachment relationships, and the impact of these relationships on children's social development. The current investigation explored various correlates of preschoolers' child–father attachment security to both parents, including contextual factors (i.e., socioeconomic status, child temperament, parenting stress), parental play sensitivity, and child social adaptation. Participants included 107 preschool-aged children (59 girls;  $M = 46.67$  months,  $SD = 8.57$ ) and their fathers and mothers. Results revealed that both mothers' and fathers' play sensitivity were associated with child attachment security after controlling for different contextual factors. Furthermore, the magnitude of the association between child conduct problems and child–father attachment insecurity was stronger than the corresponding association with child–mother attachment insecurity. Findings provide important information on caregiving factors associated with child–father attachment security in the preschool years and the importance of this bond to children's social adaptation.

Bureau, J. F., Martin, J., Yurkowski, K., Schmiedel, S., Quan, J., Moss, E., & Pallanca, D. (2016). Correlates of child–father and child–mother attachment in the preschool years. *Attachment & Human Development*, 1-21.

## Anxiety and attachment to the mother in pre-schoolers receiving psychiatric care: The father-child activation relationship as a protective factor



This 49-family study is the first to explore the father–child relationship in a clinical population of preschoolers (at a tertiary care child psychiatry clinic) and to examine its relation to child anxiety and attachment to the mother. A moderation model of the father–child activation relationship on the relation between attachment to the mother and child anxiety was tested and discussed. Analyses confirmed the expected independence between mother–child attachment and father–child activation as well as the association between mother–child attachment and anxiety. The highest levels of anxiety were found in insecure children, and more specifically, in insecure-ambivalent children and insecure disorganized-controlling children of the caregiving subtype. Hypotheses regarding the relation between anxiety and activation were only partially confirmed. Finally, the activation relationship with the father was shown to have a moderating effect on the relation between attachment to the mother and child anxiety; activation by the father may be considered either a protective or a risk factor. Results for this clinical population of young children are discussed in the light of attachment theory and activation relationship theory. The study's findings have the potential to contribute to the development of preventative, diagnostic, and intervention programs that take both parental figures into account.

Gaumon, S., Paquette, D., Cyr, C., Émond-Nakamura, M., & St-André, M. (2016). Anxiety and attachment to the mother in preschoolers receiving psychiatric care: The Father–Child activation relationship as a protective factor. *Infant mental health journal*, 37(4), 372-387.

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