

Joining Forces

Volume 2 Issue 1

RESEARCH NEWS YOU CAN USE

October 1997

**Fathering:
an important, absorbing,
and complicated role that
can be the single most creative,
fulfilling, and depleting
endeavor of a man's life.**

Pruett, Kyle (1987)
The Nurturing Father.
New York: Warner Books

This edition of *Joining Forces* focuses on initiatives for fathers. The *Washington Post* recently published (10 Sep 97) an article entitled "Love Conquers What Ails Teens, Study Finds." The study found that teenagers are less likely to use drugs, drink alcohol or have sex when they believe they are the focus of attention by their parents and teachers.

These research findings illustrate that family relationships are vital for the healthy development of children. Only recently, however, has there been a concerted effort to focus on fathers.

Strengthening father-child relationships is not adversarial to the interest of mothers. The active support of mothers is required for fathers to fulfill their responsibilities to children. Single fathers also play important roles by nurturing and supporting their children.

Only a limited amount of empirical research has focused upon the role of single fathers. This newsletter illustrates how research data can be applied to questions that arise in the field (See article: Single Army Parents). It also highlights the application of a systematic thinking process to [planning an intervention](#) (See article: Essentials of Assessment & Evaluation).

THE ARMY AND FATHERHOOD

Research is a process of systematic inquiry. FAP's 1997 annual training conference used this process to explore a number of key issues on fatherhood. What would be a working definition of "fatherhood initiatives" for the Army Family Advocacy Program (FAP)? How would such initiatives relate to father absence due to deployments or other unavoidable assignments? What needs of fathers and their families would be met through fatherhood initiatives?

With the goal of strengthening family functioning, a conference work group explored fatherhood issues related to safety, self-sufficiency, personnel preparedness, and community cohesion.

The group identified several target groups or categories of soldiers for whom fatherhood initiatives would be developed. These include: single fathers, fathers below the grade of E-5, highly deployable fathers, fathers of special needs children, fathers in families with financial problems, and fathers who have a family or personal history of violence.

Major goals identified to strengthen family functioning were to help fathers understand and fulfill financial obligations for their families and provide a healthy and violence-free environment for their children. In order to reach these goals, the work group recommended:

- 1) awareness training in financial management,
- 2) skill building programs to enhance parenting by fathers,

3) expanded new parent support programs that focus on fathers, and

4) the recruitment of fathers to participate in men-oriented social service organizations and programs.

Desired outcomes of fatherhood initiatives would be:

- a) to create positive changes in fathers' behavior that positively influence the behavior/attitudes of children,
- b) to decrease the loss of duty time due to family problems, and
- c) to influence fathers' positive and proactive involvement with their children.

It was strongly suggested that the Department of the Army establish policies and procedures that would enhance initiatives to support fatherhood.

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FATHERHOOD REVISITED

A "Fatherhood Movement" is underway across the nation. Therefore, the door is open for research on issues pertaining to fathers and fathering.

In 1995, Vice President Gore initiated a "Father-to-Father" program that launched a national campaign to encourage fathers to be strong and positive forces in the lives of their families and children.

On 16 June 1995, President Clinton issued a memorandum for the heads of federal departments and agencies on supporting the role of fathers in families. The President indicated that the future of our country depends upon committed fathers who are essential for strong families.

He reported that strengthening fathers' involvement with their children cannot be accomplished by the Federal Government alone because solutions lie in the hearts and consciences of individual fathers and the support of families and communities. All executive departments and agencies were directed to review every program, policy, and initiative that pertains to families to:

- ensure, where appropriate, that in designing new programs they seek to engage and meaningfully include fathers;
- proactively modify those programs that were designed to serve primarily mothers and children, where appropriate, to explicitly include fathers and strengthen their involvement with their children;
- include evidence of fathers involvement and participation, where appropriate, in measuring the success of programs; and
- incorporate fathers in government initiated research regarding children and their families.

Studies are ongoing to examine multiple institutional, social, and cultural factors that impinge upon the relationship between fathering and family behavior.

In the absence of father-focused initiatives, policymakers and service providers have begun to support innovative approaches to the promotion of responsible fatherhood.

What has been learned from programs and agencies that serve families? The National Center on Fathers and Families at the University of Pennsylvania has identified the following:

- Fathers care - even if that caring is not always shown in conventional ways.
- Father presence matters - in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.

- Joblessness is a major impediment to family formation and father involvement.
- Approaches to public benefits create obstacles and disincentives for father involvement.
- A growing number of fathers and mothers need support to develop vital parenting skills.
- The transition from biological father to committed parent has significant implications for young fathers.

The behaviors of young parents are influenced by intergenerational beliefs and practices within their families of origin.

WORKING WITH FATHERS IN HOME VISITATION

Nathan O'Hara, Ph.D.
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Santa Barbara, California

Is the absent father a problem for children, or society? Are fathers truly unnecessary? What happens to families, and more specifically to children, when the father is absent? Open any issue of Psychological Abstracts and look for "father absence." You will find a dozen or so research entries indicating the harm to children which occurs when dad is away from the family.

The National Father Initiative has conducted a broad survey of the literature on this topic. A few of the findings follow:

- "Father Hunger" involving insomnia, nightmares, and night terrors, often affects boys aged 1-2 when their fathers are suddenly and permanently absent.
- Nationally, 29.7% of children living with a never-married mother and 21.5% of children living with a divorced mother have repeated a grade in school, compared with 11.6% of those living with both parents.

Joining Forces



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- Children whose parents separate are significantly more likely to engage in early sexual activity, to abuse alcohol and other drugs, and to experience conduct and mood disorders than other children.
- Children who are violent in school are 11 times more likely not to live with their fathers as children who do.
- Father absence and lack of paternal supervision are more closely associated with delinquency than with poverty.
- Seventy percent of juveniles in reform institutions grew up without a father. Only 13% of delinquents come from homes in which the biological parents are married to each other.

Following are 12 suggestions for promoting positive father involvement. Practice these approaches in the spirit of bridge-building, and compassion for yourself and for the fathers you serve.

1. Treat the interaction as a cross-cultural exchange. Be respectful. Be alert to cues (body language, jokes, expressive slips, etc.) Listen carefully, as if you and he had different first languages.
2. Make involving both parents a priority. Schedule meetings when both parents can be there. Draw both parents into the conversation. Treat him as a person, important in his own right.
3. Know your biases.
4. Build rapport with the father.
5. Be fair to both partners, and treat them as a couple/team. If you meet privately with Mom, also meet privately with Dad. Never take one person's side against the other.
6. Be non-judgmental and caring.
7. Ask his opinion. Remember men are usually more comfortable with thinking than feeling and with problem solving than commiserating.

8. Explore ways he can help with pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing.

9. Learn all you can about men, then listen for who this man is.

10. Discern, and call upon, his strengths (skills, character traits, aptitudes, interests) to help solve family problems and reach family goals.

11. Let the father know he is needed, valued, and liked. Look for ways to tell him that his contribution to the family is indispensable.

12. Look for more ways you, and your agency, can promote positive father involvement.

The importance of involving fathers comes from a body of research that demonstrates the salient roles that fathers play in the development of children. In addition, studies show that when fathers are positively involved, program goals for children are likely to be achieved.

Relative to sex role development, achievement, and psychosocial development, Michael Lamb of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development asserts that children are better off when their relationships with their fathers are close and warm.

Lamb, M. Parental Influences on Child Development. Presentation at Changing Fatherhood Conference, Tilburg, The Netherlands, May 1994.

The editors wish to thank Dr. Nathan O'Hara, and Dr. Wade Horn for granting us permission to cite their work in this edition of *Joining Forces*.

THE NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

Wade F. Horn, Ph.D., Director of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), reports that on almost every indicator of child well being, children today fare worse than their counterparts just a generation ago. The reason: the dramatic rise, over the last thirty years, in the number of children living in fatherless households.

NFI was founded to counter the growing problem of fatherlessness by stimulating a broad-based social movement to restore responsible fatherhood as a national priority. A three part strategy has been developed for ensuring that more children grow up with a loving father.

- First, an aggressive public education campaign highlighting the importance of fathers to the well-being of children and communities is being pursued.
- Second, coalitions of national and local community leaders committed to creating a culture that values and supports fathers are being organized.
- Third, pro-fatherhood messages are being taken directly to men through skill building classes, and community resource material with information on how men can become better fathers.

Certainly, much has been accomplished, according to Dr. Horn. However, he cautions against the delusion that the struggle to renew fatherhood has been won. He concluded that too many children continue to grow up in homes without fathers meaning that the most important battles are still before us.

For further information on the National Fatherhood Initiative or to inquire about a resource catalogue, please call 1-800-790-DADS. The mailing address is 1 Bank Street, Suite 160, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878.



SINGLE ARMY PARENTS

The Family Violence and Trauma Project (USUHS) explored the ASM Family Data Base for information about the numbers of single parents in the Army. Over the period 1993-1996, the number of male single parents has been steady at about 10,300 per year while the number of female single parents has slightly increased, from about 8,000 to about 8,800.

We researched some specific installations to determine the number of single parents at each one. We chose three FORSCOM (Ft Bragg, Ft Hood, and Ft Lewis) and three TRADOC installations (Ft Knox, Ft Benning, and Ft Sill). Similar proportions of male and female single parents were found at each installation.

Considering small and large installations, the number of male single parents was between approximately 250 and 1,000 while the number of female single parents was between about 100 and 800. Overall, the number of male single parents was larger than the number of female single parents at all six installations.

In order to make the numbers more meaningful for each installation, we calculated the percentage of single parents by the sex of the installation's active duty population. We found that the percentage of male single parents for active duty men was between 2.0 and 2.7% while the percentage of female single parents for active duty women was between 10 and 18%.

The number of single male parents in the Army is larger than the number of single female parents. However, the percentage of single mothers in the Army is larger.

A research question that could arise from this finding is whether the needs of single parents differ by sex or other characteristics.

ESSENTIALS OF PROGRAM PLANNING-ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Research can incorporate scientific thinking into program planning and implementation. If you were to consider establishing a program for male single parents (MSP) at your installation, you should think through whether or not a definitive problem exists and how you would go about solving it.

STEP 1: CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Conduct a needs assessment pertaining to the type of program you want to establish.

- Clarify the purpose of the assessment, and characterize your target group.

Factors to consider in characterizing your target group of MSP may include: the number and ages of children, whether the children are living with the soldier or elsewhere, location of residence (on or off post), child care arrangements, social support systems, and other information that may help you identify the needs of MSP to be addressed by your program.

- Consult with a sample of your target group, commanders, chaplains, or representatives from other agencies or activities on the installation.

Such discussions can help you

clearly define the problem situation. For example, are the problems and issues faced by MSP similar or different from those of female single parents?

Completion of this process establishes a foundation for using the performance-based management model you learned during FAP's annual training conference in San Diego.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Use the needs assessment as the basis for identifying programmatic outcomes. Remember that outcomes are what you want your target group (MSP) to be able to do as a result of your program's intervention. Let's choose the outcome of having MSP provide safe and violence-free home environments for their children.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY PROGRAM OUTPUTS

Think of the functions your agency can perform that would be directly related to providing safe and violence-free home environments for children. These would be your program outputs linked directly to changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior (KAB).

In considering KAB, what is the current status relative to where you would like MSP to be at the completion of your intervention? Answering this question provides an opportunity for you to initiate your evaluation process.

For example, conduct a pre-test of MSP to measure the level of their KAB before participating in your program. Later, a post-test may provide information regarding the effectiveness of your efforts to change or modify the KAB of MSP.

STEP 4: IDENTIFY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Identify the various activities that will ensure the desired changes in KAB. Engage MSP in

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those activities needed to attain your goals rather than provide them with activities you have available. Avoid a cookie cutter approach when an individualized treatment plan, based upon a thorough psychosocial assessment, is indicated.

Remember that the activities should be directly tied to the outputs (changes in KAB) and the outputs should be directly tied to the attainment of your outcomes.

STEP 5: ALLOCATE RESOURCES

Consider how resources can be allocated to develop, support, and maintain an efficient and effective program for MSP at your installation.

STEP 6: EVALUATION

Evaluate client outcomes and programmatic outputs. If you invest in such a program for fathers, you should be able to demonstrate, through a comprehensive evaluation process, a positive return on your investment.

Remember that a positive return on your investment cannot be measured solely by the number of people you serve. Better indicators would be: 1) the percentage of total MSP that you reach, and 2) specific changes that occur in their KAB so that they will provide safe and violence-free home environments for their children.

Research-Focused Resources on Fathering

National Center on Fathering

P.O. Box 413888

Kansas City, MO 64141

1-800-593-DADS

Website: www.fathers.com

The Fatherhood Project

Families & Work Institute

330 7th Avenue 17th Floor

New York, NY 10001

212-337-0934

NEW PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAM'S SERVICES TO FATHERS

According to John Cassidy, Ph.D., J & E Associates, the NPSP provides various parenting classes and support groups to meet the needs of the military community. At all sites, staff members strive to include fathers during home visiting services.

Classes and groups are open to both mothers and fathers. Workshops, support groups, parenting classes, expectant and post-partum classes, play mornings, and infant care classes are offered at various installations for fathers.

Existing and new sites are developing strategies to improve the rate of male participation in NPSP activities. The measurement of such activities can be a part of future research efforts.

GOOD WORK ENVIRONMENT PROMOTES GOOD FATHERING

Helpful fathering programs can be provided through efforts to improve the working climate in units. Promoting higher unit cohesion through an improved work environment has the potential to contribute to improved fathering via enhanced self-esteem.

Grimm-Thomas and Perry-Jenkins (*Family Relations*, 1994, 43, 174-181) studied the relationship between work experiences of working class fathers and the perceptions they and their children had of them as fathers.

They found that men who reported positive work environments also reported higher levels of self-esteem. The fathers who reported higher autonomy, clarity, innovation, involvement,

supervisor support, peer cohesion, and physical comfort in their jobs also reported higher self-esteem.

Fathers with higher levels of self-esteem were more accepting of their children and utilized less psychological control over them.

IDENTIFYING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES FOR FATHERS

Discussions and support groups can be used to identify program activities for fathers. Such groups can produce valuable qualitative research data. For example, do fathers in different types of units have different family needs? How effective are programs in meeting fathers' needs?

Co-parenting issues, expectations from children, limit setting, communication of feelings, and health or nutrition concerns are examples of areas that can be discussed. In addition, allowing the group to generate lists of needs and activities would be an important source of data for program planning.

Organizing father-child activities can be used to increase fathers' involvement. Trips to local attractions, visits to military units, retreats, and sporting events can also encourage development of more meaningful relationships.

Special events such as an awards ceremony for the installation's father of the year can help to publicize fatherhood initiatives that are ongoing at your installation. Fathers who are the most supportive of their children's involvement in sports, school, or other activities can be nominated for the award.

Developing a fatherhood project at your installation can provide an opportunity to form partnerships with other programs and activities. It may also be a forum for identifying research topics of mutual interest.



COMPUTING CHI SQUARE USING THE 2X2 TABLE

Laurie Thayer, M.P.H.

Chi square is a statistical test designed to answer questions about research data that exist in the form of frequencies rather than measurements or scores along some scale. Chi square is one of the most common statistical tests of association used in research. What does association mean? Association simply means related. It does not mean the degree of relationship, just that there is a relationship. The question to be answered by chi square is whether or not frequencies observed in your sample differ significantly from some theoretical or expected population frequency. Examples of possible frequency categories are: male or female, yes or no, abuser or non-abuser, single or married, agree or disagree.

The 2x2 table is a way of visualizing input for the chi square test. It is important to note that neither the chi square test nor other tests of association tell whether one event causes another. Therefore, you should never make a causal inference based on a chi square test.

How does the chi square test work? Remember that chi square tests the difference between existing, or observed frequencies and expected frequencies which are based on chance. Chi square can also be described as a "goodness of fit" test, illustrating how obtained information (in the form of frequencies) differs from chance.

How do you calculate chi square? Let's say that on Ft. Swampy during the last year there were 130 single active duty fathers and 1,000 married active duty fathers. Of the total of 1,130 fathers, seven (7) single fathers were child abusers and 120

married fathers were child abusers. A 2x2 table using this information can be constructed. (Cells of the table are assigned letter values to facilitate calculation.)

	Single	Married	
Child Abuser	7 (A)	120 (B)	127 (A+B)
Non-Child Abuser	123 (C)	880 (D)	1,003 (C+D)
	130 (A+C)	1,000 (B+D)	1,130 (N) Total

Note: In calculating chi square, no frequency (or cell count) should be less than 5. In this event, for 2x2 tables, you would use Fisher's Test of Exact Probability. This test will be discussed in a later newsletter.

The research question is: Is there a significant difference between the proportion of child abusers who are single compared to those who are married? In other words, is there a relationship or association between child abuse and being either a single or married father. We can use a chi square test to determine if the association between fatherhood and child abuse is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Basically, we are testing a null hypothesis that single fathers and married fathers have similar rates of abuse, i.e., that the frequencies for both groups are not statistically different. Using the following formula and the numbers from the above table, you can calculate chi square.

$$\begin{aligned}
 X^2 &= \frac{[(AD) - (BC)]^2 N}{(A+B)(C+D)(B+D)(A+C)} \\
 &= \frac{[(7)(880) - (120)(123)]^2 1,130}{(127)(1,003)(1,000)(130)} \\
 &= \frac{83,574,800,000}{16,559,530,000} \\
 X^2 &= 5.05
 \end{aligned}$$

You have determined that the chi square statistic is 5.05. To complete the statistical process and answer your research question you must compare the chi square statistic to the chi square table in the back of any statistics book. Remember that we are checking for statistical significance at the 0.05 level and we have one degree of freedom. From the 2x2 table, the degree of freedom is determined by multiplying (number of row categories minus one) times the (number of column categories minus one). Since we have two rows and two columns, our degree of freedom is (2-1) times (2-1) = 1. The statistics book shows a value of 3.84 for the 0.05 level of statistical significance with one degree of freedom. Because 5.05 is greater than 3.84 we can reject our null hypothesis that the two groups of fathers are the same. For this set of data, (which is fictional and created solely for this exercise), we can conclude that the abuse rates for married fathers is not only higher, but that there is a statistically significant difference in abuse rates between the single fathers and married fathers. Remember, however, that this in no way implies that being a married father causes one to be a child abuser.