

# Understanding the Benefits of an Engaged Father to the Family Unit

A Review of the Existing Literature on Fatherhood Engagement

October 2021



## Author

Sam Fisch, Student Intern- Tulane University

## Supervisors and Editors

Daniel Anderson, M.P.H., Epidemiology Program Manager

Lacey Delery, M.S., Health Equity Coordinator

Karis Schoellmann, M.P.H., Team Lead – BFH Communications team

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	4
GOALS .....	5
METHODS .....	5
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES .....	7
BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES .....	9
BENEFITS TO CHILD .....	11
BENEFITS TO MOTHER .....	14
BENEFITS TO FATHER .....	17
WHAT FATHERS ARE SAYING .....	18
HOW FATHER ENGAGEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED .....	21
NATIONAL AND STATE INITIATIVES .....	24
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	27
CONCLUSION .....	29
WORK CITED .....	31

### ABSTRACT

A father's presence within a child's life is necessary. Cultural shifts have changed the public's perception of fatherhood. For example, during the mid-20th century, society considered fathers to be the primary breadwinners and not necessarily involved in childcare. However, in recent years, societal expectations have evolved to emphasize the father's role in raising children. At the same time, research on child development has not developed to reflect this change. Family research has primarily focused on the mother's impact on a child's life. While the mother offers substantial benefits to the child, the father has an equally important role, which is highly understudied. Regardless, health departments provide care for the whole family unit and consider each member when planning programs and policy. In reviewing the limited literature relating to fathers, this review shows that there are various benefits to father engagement. It begins by summarizing the cultural history of fatherhood and providing a biological perspective of fathers.

This review utilizes original research and other literature reviews to provide an overview of fatherhood research. Ranging from the father's form of play to discipline, fathers offer immense benefits to the child, the mother, and themselves. These benefits range from better birthing outcomes for mothers to improved socialization for children and more desirable mental health outcomes for the fathers. This review also shares what fathers think about the negative perceptions of fathers. It summarizes existing initiatives related to father engagement. These endeavors include local and national initiatives to meet fathers' needs to encourage their participation in family life. Any organization seeking to support father engagement should consider prioritizing partnering with existing programs, and community leaders focused on

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

empowering fathers. This shift in emphasis will aid family health as the role of fathers is an often overlooked yet key component in fostering healthy families.

### INTRODUCTION

Within Louisiana, about 15% of all birth certificates have no father listed. The important role fathers play in child development underscores the gravity of the statistic. Numerous studies demonstrate the importance of fathers. One is improved health outcomes for the child and mother; fathers are important players in the family unit and should not be disregarded when considering the field of maternal and child health. While the expectations of fatherhood have changed within the last century, resources to support and include fathers have not kept pace, creating hurdles to them becoming fully engaged. From the lack of paternity leave to limited involvement in the clinical family planning arena, fathers are neglected. Treating the father as an afterthought is a disservice as doing so negatively affects all parties' health. In hopes to address the faulting numbers of fathers and to improve engagement, it is crucial to examine the importance of fathers, how they relate to a child's development, and the health outcomes of all parties involved.

To justify the significance of fathers, it is essential to compile information that provides an overview of how fathers are perceived and the health benefits they can offer. Four questions central to the literature review concern the role of fathers in family life. These questions are:

1. What are the benefits of having fathers involved in maternal and child health?
2. What are fathers' opinions on father engagement, and what obstacles do they face?
3. What are national initiatives that engage fathers?
4. What are local initiatives that engage fathers?

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

These four questions are answered within this literature review. In answering these questions, a more robust understanding of where fathers fit within society is identified, as well as a clearer means of how to get fathers involved.

## GOALS

The goal of this literature review is to provide a broad overview of all the relevant research relating to father engagement. It seeks to highlight general trends within father engagement and is not a deep dive into community-specific situations. The review seeks to elevate the role of fathers and serves as a starting point for future projects targeting fatherhood engagement at the Bureau of Family Health (BFH). Before writing this review, several members of BFH's programs/teams were interviewed to learn how and why father engagement can benefit their programming. Their input was a point of consideration throughout the whole review. The review also seeks to answer questions of BFH stakeholders.

Furthermore, this review focuses on heteronormative families, and while diverse families with similar situations exist, their stories go beyond the scope of this review. Father engagement is a diverse topic, and ways to approach the field depend on various factors such as social determinants and specific populations. This review is not an overarching authority of the subject but simply a starting point for further research and planning. With that said, the review seeks to provide those with a breadth of information and potential resources to address the vital topic of father engagement.

## METHODS

To gain more knowledge on father engagement, the researcher compiled a literature review of different studies and programs relating to the matter. As mentioned in the



## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

introduction, the researcher first became familiar with the BFH's four questions around father involvement in the family unit. In understanding these questions and aligning them with the goals of the organizations and stakeholders, the researcher was better suited to use scholarly databases and research previously compiled from the BFH to create the literature review. The creation of an outline followed, where the researcher used it as a guide in compiling research.

### Selection criteria

Many articles appeared to be suitable for usage, though, on closer examination, the articles were too obscure or beyond the focus of the review. These excluded articles were typically psychology-based and not focused on the larger societal impacts of father engagement. Though these articles were tempting to utilize as literature relating to father engagement, the articles offered little to advance the topic and were therefore excluded. The articles that were chosen aligned with the goals laid out by the BFH. These articles focused on the societal implications and benefits of father engagement.

### Search keywords

The research was composed using various keywords within scholarly databases, such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and the Howard Tilton Memorial Library. Keywords used include: "Father involvement," "Health benefits," "Parenting fulfillment," "Father-child relationship," and "Mother father relationship,"

### Data collection and analysis

Synthesizing the data was made simple by grouping and storing relevant points of information in their respective folders. To write the literature review, the researcher inserted all quotes deemed necessary to support the argument for father engagement and to help answer the four questions as mentioned in the introduction. Each section received its

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

respective outline in which the researcher cited information. Supplemental to the independent research, the BFH supplied the researcher with an evidence summary document from previously compiled program analyses of BFH programs/teams with an interest in engaging fathers (Title V, Health equity, Developmental screening, Breastfeeding, and Home visiting) and summary reports from audience research with fathers facilitated by Motivational Educational Entertainment (MEE). The researcher evaluated these documents the same way previously mentioned. Additionally, the researcher interviewed the programs/teams mentioned above to gain their perspective and initiatives relating to father engagement. From these interviews, the researcher used their thoughts as starting points when looking for additional articles.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Based on the information from Michael E. Lamb (2000), father involvement can be broken down into four different eras. Over time, the societal expectation of a father's role has dramatically changed. Cultural shifts are common within society and highlight the complexity to which humans adapt to their perceived roles. The study of fatherhood gained momentum during the turn of the century as social scientists sought to understand a father's role within the family unit. The resulting literature worked to understand father-child relationships, paternal influences on child development, and the impact of father involvement on children and families. Sociologists too began to examine fathers to evaluate their role in the larger society, and historians began to piece together the overlying reason for the role change.

Father roles can be divided and explained by four motifs: (1) provider of moral guidance, (2) financial provider, (3) sex-role modeling, and (4) nurturance. Each motif comes with a different era and cultural resonance. Fathers are expected to cater to these changes, and while

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

societal expectations have shifted, the present systems in which fathers operate have not.

Throughout time, these societal expectations become unrealistic and unachievable to most fathers. Below are the four motifs:

### Moral guidance

Dating to Puritan times, fathers were meant to be teachers. As teachers, they were tasked with ensuring a child was educated and literate within biblical studies. Through scripture, children would adopt values deemed necessary of society. A father's role was to promote and instruct literacy, all of which would allow the child to embrace Christianity.

### Financial Provider

With a growing society and rapid industrialization, a father's duty shifted from instilling moral values onto the children to “breadwinning,” which means providing financial support. It is essential to recognize that this shift was not immediate nor that the father's role of a mentor disappeared; this era simply emphasizes the role of breadwinning.

### Sex-role modeling

The early 1900s were a tumultuous time; wars, disease, economic depression, and rapid population growth brought a sense of whiplash upon the nation. By the 1940s, a new consensus of fatherhood emerged. And as a reaction to literature that focused on the impacts and realities of neglectful fathers, new priorities were set for fathers to be assertive role models, especially for their sons. Films such as *Rebel without a Cause* highlighted neglectful father's faults and instilled anger onto many. Fathers were now expected to be teachers, financial providers, and role models.



## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

### Nurturance

By the mid-1970s, active parenting became a central focus within social science literature.

Day-to-day engagement with a child was ideal, and the idea of a good father has a vibrant and equal role in nurturing a child.

The motifs of fatherhood listed above are crucial to understand when evaluating the field of father engagement. Fathers have been directed by their cultural expectations while simultaneously being misguided and unsupported. Fathers are more than static characters; they are dynamic and critical to the development of a child.

## BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The biological changes a mother undergoes while pregnant are drastic and visible.

Carrying a child prompts a myriad of hormones and brain changes that prepare the mother for the upcoming responsibilities of a child. Extensive research supports the biological changes and helps to explain their reasoning. The notion that fathers have no biological or psychological change because they do not carry the child is a misleading narrative, as fathers have evolved to be nurturing caregivers. Human fathers are special. Only 5% of mammals have a culture of fatherhood, where the father is present throughout the child's whole life (Kleiman et al., 1981). With humans included, it is beyond reasonable to assume a change occurs within the father.

One of the first changes a father experiences is a dip in testosterone levels. The lessening of this hormone allows the father to be more caring and conscious of the newborn's needs (Gettler et al., 2011). The resulting decrease in testosterone comes with a trade-off, as the individual is more likely to release reward and bonding hormones like oxytocin and dopamine when interacting with their child. The production of a neurochemical reward makes

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

bonding a comforting act and enhances the father's perception of his child (Mascaro et al., 2014).

Transformations of white and gray matter in the brain accompany hormonal changes—different areas of the brain change for the mother and the father. Mothers see dramatic changes at the core of the brain, an area associated with care and nurturance. For fathers, the brain's outer surface sees the most active change, an area associated with thought, goal orientation, problem-solving, and planning (Atzil et al., 2012). These changes represent a shift in priorities for the father. Areas within the father's brain associated with nurturing, empathy, and attachment have more white and gray matter between 12 and 16 weeks in comparison to gray matter composition within the first two and four weeks (Kim et al., 2014).

Stereotypes relating to fathers being the playful parent and mothers being the nurturer have merit when evaluating the change in brain makeup. Fathers and mothers receive different neurochemical rewards depending on the activity. When a child is hurt and seeks out their mother, there appears to be a peak in oxytocin levels in the mother's brain. The same increase in rewarding neurochemicals occurs in the father's brain when engaging in rough-and-tumble play (Swain et al., 2014). Children's brains mimic the increase in oxytocin levels when engaging with their father and mother and feel equally rewarded when being cared for by mother or stimulated by father (Feldman et al., 2013).

The evident changes within the father's biology and psychology when expecting a child are apparent and should not be taken out of consideration when evaluating the family unit and issues relating to father engagement. For a father to bond with their child takes time, upward to six months (Jessee et al., 2018), though the connection made is strong and beneficial to both

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

parties. Seeing fatherhood as an evolutionary byproduct is an important outlook and can significantly advance the field of father engagement and public health.

### BENEFITS TO CHILD

The benefit of a father to a child's health begins before birth. When given the opportunity to be an equal and participating partner in a woman's journey throughout pregnancy, fathers develop a greater sense of understanding for the mother as well as a solid co-parenting relationship. The added support given to the pregnant mother eases stress and allows more energy to be devoted to the child's development. The benefits to the mother, in turn, allow for a healthier baby, with a healthier birth weight and less of a chance of premature birth (Teitler, 2001). If the father visits a baby born prematurely frequently, the hospital will release the baby from its care more quickly. When released, the father shows an enhanced connection to the infant, a heightened sense of personal development, and an ability to adapt to the challenges of fatherhood (Levy-Shiff et al., 1990). Fathers who visit their preterm infants are more inclined to display positive affection to their infants by holding and playing with them. Fathers are also more receptive to their child's emotional outbursts at ages 8 to 18 months, perceiving these challenging times as necessary in a child's development.

Beyond the hospital setting, fathers are integral players in assisting a mother to breastfeed/chestfeed their child. Majority of fathers see breastfeeding/chestfeeding as the appropriate way to nourish their children (Hansen et al., 2018). They are receptive to informational materials when hospitals or clinics offer them. A father's presence in the child-rearing process increases the likelihood that the child will be breastfed/chestfed, as fathers are excellent facilitators in initiating skin-to-skin contact (Sihota et al., 2018). The benefits of

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

breastfeeding/chestfeeding a child, as opposed to other forms of nourishment, are substantial and go beyond the scope of this review. A study of newborns who had father skin-to-skin contact opposed traditional cot care during the first 2 hours after birth cried less, became drowsy sooner, and had less rooting, sucking, and wakefulness (Erlandsson et al., 2007).

Additionally, fathers encouraging the mother during the breastfeeding/chestfeeding process increase confidence between a father and mother, further developing a sense of trust (Tohotoa et al., 2009). The parental unit develops a more robust collaborative relationship, providing additional support for the child.

Infancy is a crucial time during which fathers need to bond with their children. As an infant's mind is highly malleable, fathers can be successful initiators in setting behavioral boundaries. These boundaries can relate to various activities such as play or sleep. Because fathers help to establish order and regulate, infants receive many long-term benefits. The father's involvement here is critical, as they tend to create stronger boundaries than mothers do (Brody, 1996). Toddlers of fathers who enforced limits saw better social and emotional skills 12 to 18 months later. Furthermore, extended interaction between fathers and children within the first six months results in higher mental competence for the children (Main et al., 1981).

As children begin to develop their motor skills, parents act as considerable sources of stimulation, accelerating development. Fathers, in particular, offer a valuable role by playing with their children. Known as rough-and-tumble play, this form of engagement begins between ages two to seven (StGeorge et al., 2021). Rough-and-tumble play is one of the most common forms of play for both humans and non-human animals. This form of play is highly stimulating and involves non-aggressive physical contact with participation from both parties. Mothers do

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

engage in this form of play but not to the same extent as fathers. Whereas mothers are more encouraging and interpersonal, fathers seek to challenge their children and work physically to form connections (Fletcher et al., 2011). A father's use of rough-and-tumble play is beneficial in allowing children to take charge and take chances to overcome obstacles. This form of play helps children regulate their aggression and helps young boys control their testosterone-induced aggression as their brains develop through formative years (Flanders et al., 2009). From this engaging form of play, fathers and children further cement their bond, creating a built sense of trust and achievement. For the child, this experience leaves the impression that the father is an individual they can confide in. A father's presence bolsters children's self-confidence, leading them to understand that difficult obstacles can be overcome.

Fathers affect a child's ability to succeed in school. They do so by engaging the child in thought-provoking activities and challenging them to conquer new tasks (Meuwissen et al., 2009). This positive outcome transcends the quality of education, as students coming from father-present families score higher in math and science even when they come from poorer-performing schools (Davidson, 1990). Further studies show that even when race, education, income, and other socio-economic factors are equal, living without a dad doubles a child's chances of dropping out of high school (McLanahan et al., 1994). Children raised with an active father are 39% more likely to earn A's in school (Nord et al., 2001), 45% less likely to repeat a grade (Martin et al., 2007), 60% less likely to be suspended or expelled (Yogman et al., 1995), and two times as likely to go to college and find stable employment after high school.

The positive influence fathers provide in their children's lives carries over into the teenage and even adult years. Fathers are pushers who help children succeed through building

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

trust. This trust allows a child to excel in tasks that may otherwise seem beyond their reach. Fathers are guides who create boundaries to protect children from danger. Children between the ages of 10 and 17 living without their biological fathers are more likely to be victims of child abuse, major violence, sexual assault, and domestic violence. While fathers can sometimes be abusers themselves, stepfathers are more likely to be abusive (Turner et al., 2006). Fatherless children are more likely to have a teen pregnancy (Garwood et al., 2015). Also, among youth in prison, 85% grew up in a fatherless home (Hixson, 2008). Having a father-child relationship is beneficial, and the bond created during these formative years has long-term effects, which influence future relationships. If children have substantial contact with their dads growing up, then they more easily make open, receptive, and trusting connections with new people in their lives (Winston et al., 2016).

## BENEFITS TO MOTHER

While extensive research focuses on the benefits a child has on a mother, limited studies examine the father's impact on a mother's well-being. As childbearing can be challenging for the mother, having a partner to alleviate daily stressors is advantageous and provides an opportunity for better health outcomes. Many other benefits coincide with the mother's feeling of trust and allow the father to assist them throughout a challenging time. These health benefits are both mental and physical and can transcend to the baby.

When a father acts as a mother's support system, she is more equipped to handle the stresses of pregnancy. With the mother's ability to be more in touch with her mind and body, she is apt to seek medical attention when needed (Giurgescu et al., 2015). And with the father's increased observance, they too can be in touch with their partner and understand the struggles

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

that accompany pregnancy. Fathers are great motivators in ensuring the mother is attending her appointments and accompanying the many pregnancy milestones. Fathers who are present during visits such as ultrasounds are likely to listen and react objectively to the information, reinforcing their partner's need to keep up with the appropriate prenatal testing schedule (Lee et al., 2016). During a women's pregnancy, involved partners are more likely to be on top of the mother's prenatal care and strive for robust treatment. The added parental activity of attending prenatal care appointments further prepares both parents and allows them an opportunity to bond.

A father's support during pregnancy significantly relieves the mother of many pressures. In recognizing the delicacy of pregnancy, both fathers and mothers are more receptive to eliminating negative behaviors such as drinking and smoking. Drinking and smoking while pregnant can result in adverse congenital disabilities such as low birth weight, preterm birth, and an increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (Shiono, 1986). The motivational influence of the father to care for and provide a safe environment for the child can encourage the mother to quit these habits. Among mothers who smoked, father involvement was linked with a smoking reduction of 36% (Martin et al., 2017). Beyond the child's health, abandoning these habits results in long-term health benefits for the mother.

During the act of labor, a father's presence in the operating room can drastically alter the father's perspective and influence the mother's and child's health. Fathers present during labor are more likely to sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) form. This form binds a father to the child, regardless of marital status, and allows the father to have an equal role in the child's life. In signing these forms, fathers are more likely to be active parents throughout

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

the child's life, further assisting the mother in the duties of raising a child (Anderson, 2017).

Furthermore, father participation in the delivery process increases the likelihood that the mother and child are healthy post-partum. Mothers are less likely to have complications during childbirth, and the child is more likely to be born meeting high health standards (Redshaw et al., 2013).

When raising a child, father assistance is highly beneficial. Of the many benefits of a father's involvement with a child, the father's aid to the mother is invaluable and allows the pair to gain co-parenting skills. In allowing the mother ample time to recover from childbirth, the father can play a significant role in caring for the child. Fathers' increased care for the child alleviates the mother from tasks and allows the father to bond with the child (Teitler, 2001). The first few months in which a father interacts with their child are integral in creating a solid connection, resulting in the father feeling more inclined to care for the child in the future. The first six months are crucial for fathers to develop the requisite brain chemistry that facilitates a robust father-child bond (Palmer, 2002). The father's future care prospect lessens the burden of the mother solely raising the child and allows the parents to build co-parenting skills.

A father's involvement throughout the mother's pregnancy and subsequent duties of raising a child immensely benefit the mother. Most notably, the sense of trust created between the parents relieves them of mental and physical stresses and promotes well-being. Parenting is a difficult task, and fathers have a prime opportunity to make a difference in the child's life and mothers. In doing so, mothers are in a prime position to improve their health and contribute equally to the family unit.



## BENEFITS TO FATHER

The responsibilities of fatherhood can be rewarding and benefit the individual mentally and physically. Understanding how fatherhood helps the father is quite a niche focus and has limited research. While this is understandable, given the surge in fatherhood scholarship at the turn of the century, the lack of research speaks to a more significant trend of seeing fathers as sole providers that do not benefit from the responsibilities of a child. Regardless, a father receives some surmised benefits from nurturing a child that greatly benefits their well-being.

The idea of a baby bolsters a father's happiness and increases the father's attachment to the mother. In successfully and sometimes unsuccessfully, assisting their child, a father gains fulfillment from their achievements and hardships (Brummelman et al., 2013). A parent can bestow their ambitions and see to their child's success; parents receive a boost in purpose, which is associated with many positive health outcomes (Nomaguchi, 2012). Knowing that their partner is carrying their child, fathers may become more protective over the mother and feel a sense of closeness (Alio et al., 2013). Fathers tend to see themselves as responsible and want to be productive for many aspects of the mother's child-carrying process. In doing so, they are likely to research fathering resources and encourage the mother to seek medical help (Giurgescu et al., 2015). This emphasis on care can further increase the mother-father relationship.

A feasible way to look at how father engagement benefits fathers are by abstractly examining the issue. A source of interest for many social scientists is the concept of identity theory. Identity can be defined as 'internalized sets of role expectations' (Stryker, 1987). According to Henley and Pasley (2005), a father's identity relates to their image and

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

expectations of how they think fathers should act. Commitment is necessary to maintain this identity and relies on relationships that allow the desired identity to thrive. Squandering these critical relationships can jeopardize the ability to which the identity can flourish. On the one hand, the mother or pediatrician can be a necessary relationship, pushing the father to fulfill the positive identity; on the other hand, bad influences such as troubled friends can push the father away from the desired identity. As the good and nurturing father identity is cherished by society, a father who fits into this mold may feel acceptance from their peers. A sense of good doing allows the father to better engage with their child and partner, work, and other people or responsibilities. This theory leaves a negative mark when fathers cannot live up to societal expectations and fall into a negative identity, such as the absentee father.

Identity theory can be a possible way to assess the benefits of father engagement to the father. By having fathers feel they are acting to societal standards, they will feel as though they are right. This overarching acceptance from society comes with countless benefits, such as a sense of belonging and stress relief. While looking at identity theory in the context of how a positive father can be perceived as a benefit, the extended use of theories speaks larger to the lack of knowledge relating strictly to how being a father benefits the father. Identity theory can become quite abstract and is contingent on many different factors, such as relationship status, race, and income.

## WHAT FATHERS ARE SAYING

Within the realm of parenthood, fathers' voices are often held second. To fully engage fathers, their voices must be heard. Fathers are vocal and when given the opportunity, have

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

shared their input. Focus groups from multiple states (Louisiana, Texas, and Minnesota) have documented fathers' desires, and below lists some overarching trends:

### Fathers want support and seek it

Fatherhood is not a hard science and is a practice that takes time to gain an understanding. Having community leaders that are fathers to engage other fathers in group discussion sessions is highly beneficial. A complaint fathers have within focus group sessions is the sometimes lack of accessibility between the program organizers. For father-specific groups, fathers want to be heard and realize their input is being used. They seek knowledge from one another and hope to learn from each other's mistakes. Community groups must be receptive to fathers' feedback and adapt to the concerns they may have.

### Inclusionary medical practices

Fathers express dissatisfaction with their exclusion from prenatal medical appointments. While it is understandable for many family planning services to be mother-centric, fathers also want a place at the table to vent their concerns and have their questions answered. Often, fathers are excluded from a mother's medical appointment. This is true for many reasons, as sometimes, fathers are unsure if they are invited, feel tension from the provider, or are simply asked not to come. The opportunity for a father to attend these preliminary appointments is beneficial to both the father and mother and can act as an additional bonding opportunity. Clarity about fathers' attendance from providers is desired to combat the feeling of unwelcomeness a father may experience. The issue of father exclusion may stem from deeper biases within the medical world and too should be addressed.

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

### Less stigma around men seeking family planning resources

Fathers desire less stigma surrounding their access to medical resources. Cultural ideals and practices have associated family planning centers with women's reproductive health and have stigmatized men who seek to use the facilities for their health inquiry. While family planning centers offer an array of resources for both men and women, men may feel judged by using a facility most often used by women. Additionally, many men are not aware of the various resources offered at such family planning centers. Many men believe there are only women's services and occasional STI testing when that is just scratching the surface. Family planning centers can be great outlets for engaging with fathers. Expanding the general public's understanding of such centers and advertising them in a way that is inclusive towards men can better create a community center to promote health.

### Fathers want respect as guardians

The concept of the mother as the sole caregiver has transcended multiple cultural shifts, even as fathers are now expected to partake in an equal nurturing role. The lagging trend is present, for instance, when the mother and father are being instructed to care for their child. In a parent-teacher conference or a doctor's appointment where both the mother and father are present, mothers are often the ones being talked to, whereas fathers are simply listeners; this reflects the idea that mothers will be the ones to care for the child and fathers are secondary to the task. Furthermore, when a father is missing from one of these appointments, he is seen as an absentee father, whereas it is perceived that a mother is busy when unable to attend. Addressing both parents equally and eliminating harmful biases from the scenarios in which both parents are present are a concern for fathers and are crucial in creating a positive environment.

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

While fathers may be praised for their ability to be financial providers, their involvement and input at a child's school or doctor's appointment are often underappreciated. The lack of appreciation for fathers can be defeating and act as a roadblock for many. Addressing these scenarios and altering biases that shroud them is an arduous task, though not an impossible one. The fathers' complaints are addressable.

## HOW FATHER ENGAGEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED

Father engagement is achievable. Various strategies exist to increase father involvement and range from simple interventions to multi-level programs. When assessing mechanisms to increase father engagement, it is essential to look at the target communities directly and recognize that no two communities are the same. Approaching the issue on the community level allows for more robust involvement.

### Prenatal period

The prenatal/perinatal planning process is where fathers may feel alienated. Inclusion is one of the first steps in improving father engagement, and one of the first areas fathers feel excluded. Ensuring that fathers are welcome to these appointments is crucial. Creating a father-inclusive environment within obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN's) and other family planning providers is a proven way to increase father involvement (Albuja et al., 2019). Taking advantage of a motivated father during the birth process is an ample opportunity to engage fathers, with the added benefit of the father's involvement during these appointments relating to better birth outcomes and birth weights (Redshaw et al., 2013). These inclusive practices offer the father exposure to all aspects of the mother's birthing process, allow the father to engage with the provider, and prevent paternal postnatal anxiety (Tohotoa et al., 2012).

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

Altering medical language to be inclusive is crucial beyond issues related to father engagement. Much of the language used within the family world is gendered. Areas of hospitals that focus on maternal-child health are often exclusionary to men and set the tone for the mother's attention to be the most valued. Remedying this is possible by incorporating a non-binary vocabulary which allows for a more welcome environment. Fathers may feel more inclined to participate in programming that is more ambiguous and open to all that wish to participate (Finnbogadóttir et al., 2003).

During a mother's nine-month child-rearing period, she is offered plentiful resources ranging from mental health support to general health assistance. Fathers are not given the same opportunities and are often left to fend for themselves. Studies show that fathers are not equipped with adequate mental and physical health services (Kumar et al., 2018). Neglecting the father of these resources can be highly detrimental to the child as fathers with mental and physical health issues can be potentially dangerous. In screening both parents, providers can rest assured that the child is safe, and both parents can feel supported throughout the pregnancy (Darwin et al., 2017).

### Once Baby is Born

After the baby is born, the mother is given a robust amount of help nurturing the child, from advice relating to breastfeeding/chestfeeding to understanding a baby's cry. The father is often left behind, assuming a position unworthy of understanding this material and unsure how to proceed appropriately with the child (de Santis et al., 2020). Fathers often result in trial and error even though they are regularly accepting of materials. In allowing for father training opportunities, fathers have a better understanding of their child's needs. This education

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

opportunity enables the father and mother to have improved co-parenting skills as both parents are cognizant of the preferred ways of raising a child (Lee et al., 2018).

Mothers typically have the chance to go on paid maternity leave, allowing the opportunity to nurture and bond with the baby. Maternity leave is a great opportunity and a necessary one, as babies are highly reliant on their mothers during the first months of life. Maternity leave centralizes mothers' as preferred parents, more deserving of spending time with their children. In contrast, fathers have historically been seen as financial providers that will see the child when they are available (Petts et al., 2018). Based on a father's biology, the first few months a father spends with their child is the most important, as a father-child bond takes up to six months to create. In creating this bond, fathers are more likely to prioritize their children and assist them throughout their life course; this results in better health outcomes (Teitler, 2001). However, paternity leave is limited and shrouded in stigma. In areas that permit it, paternity leave has proven health benefits for the father, such as improved mental health, better bonding with the child and mother, and lower infant mortality rates (Petts et al., 2018). Stigma accompanies those fathers who request time off relating to their worth within their profession. These notions must be combated, and job security must be offered as nurturing the future workforce is crucial (Wray, 2020). Fighting the associated stigma is vital and allowing fathers the equal opportunity to bond with their child and assist the mother is apparent.

### Father Led Groups

Father-specific support groups also have merit in improving engagement. Fathers appreciate peer advice and promoting programming that targets fathers specifically can be worthwhile. Fathers specifically appreciate when organizers are receptive to their feedback (Panter-Brick et al., 2017). These programs allow fathers to gain knowledge from others with

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

whom they can identify. These programs are integral in creating a community of fathers equipped with tools to succeed in the realm of fatherhood. These groups can offer plentiful resources beyond the scope of parenting – serving as an additional outlet to navigate life as a working adult (Deave et al., 2008).

Engaging fathers is possible so long as institutional and societal barriers are addressed. Allowing fathers equal opportunity to raise their children is achievable and can be done when confronting the various biases and stigma surrounding fatherhood. Through the provider's encouragement of the father's presence to policy-based stances that allow fathers to spend time with their child within the first months of life, father engagement can be emphasized and lead to better health outcomes.

## NATIONAL AND STATE INITIATIVES

Several local and national initiatives exist that aim to engage fathers. These initiatives range from father support groups to educational resource programs – all the initiatives mentioned below are successful ways of engaging fathers.

### National initiatives:

- [Boot Camp for New Dads](#) is a community-based group that equips men with various skills to engage with their infant healthily. The program is an [evidence-based](#) father-to-father educational model that instills confidence among its participants.
- [City Dads](#) groups are in nearly all major US metropolitan cities and are devoted to offering support to new and experienced fathers. City Dads works to connect fathers to fathers and provide a safe space where advice can be shared, and connections can be made.



## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

- [Father Incorporated](#) (FI) is a non-profit organization that collaborates with community organizations around the country. FI's goal is to identify and advocate for social and legislative changes that will assist fathers in healthy involvement with their children. The [evidence-based](#) organization is a pioneer in changing the cultural definition of family and work to be inclusive of fathers.
- [Head Start ECLKC](#) (Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center) has abundant resources and tips for father engagement strategies. This information is a great starting point when attempting to acclimate community partners with larger organizations like the Bureau of Family Health.
- [National Compadres Network](#) is an organization that aids the involvement of Hispanic & Latino fathers within their child's life. The organization has 30 years of experience and works with local community partners to empower men and to reduce the incidence of substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, teen pregnancy, gang violence, homophobia, racial inequity, and other societal issues.
- [National Fatherhood Initiative](#) (NFI) is a leader in providing communities with ample resources to begin father engagement groups with over 430 organizations in 45 states adapting their curriculum. NFI's 24/7 Dad® program is [evidence-based](#) and developed for dads by parenting experts. The program is designed to help fathers obtain valuable skills needed in raising children and to have fathers look beyond themselves and evaluate themes such as masculinity, discipline, and work/family balance. The programs allow fathers to think critically about their parenting skills and adopt positive fathering models.

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

- [Parenting Inside Out®](#) is an [evidence-based](#) parenting skills program specific to those incarcerated or on parole or probation. The program provides an established network for which children have a means for communicating and engaging with their parents. In creating a program to educate parents and connect them to their children, PIO pushes to break any stigma around incarcerated parents and improve the child and parent, regardless of the circumstance.
- [Strong Fathers Strong Families](#) is an organization that seeks to engage fathers and families to improve societal health. The organization has an array of resources and programs that are effective in grabbing fathers' attention.
- [The Fatherhood Project](#) is an organization in the Department of Psychiatry at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Their goal is to improve the health and well-being of children by empowering fathers to be active, informed, and emotionally engaged. They offer [evidence-based](#) research to aid in father engagement interventions.
- [The Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit Resources from the Field](#) is a manual provided by the HHS's fatherhood.gov domain, which offers organizations the steps to form male engagement programs. This in-depth handbook is a free tool that guides organizations step-by-step, from program development to one-on-one activities.
- [WATCH D.O.G.S.](#) is a national program that connects thousands of fathers and father figures to local schools. Schools host their own WATCH D.O.G.S program, where fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, uncles, and other father figures can volunteer to serve at least one day a year in a variety of school activities. This program emphasizes a father's

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

role in the child's education and helps build a relationship between local schools and fathers.

### State initiatives:

- [Dedicated Dads Program](#) is an off branch of Family Road of Baton Rouge. The program's mission is to promote responsible fatherhood through education. The program gives fathers resources to better their socio-economic status and become positive role models within their families and community.
- [Fathers Matter Program](#) is an organization that seeks to fight the narrative of deadbeat dads. This local organization offers an array of programs such as Dad Discussions and the Men Empowerment Network. Additional services such as Daddy Bootcamp and Organizational Consulting exist to assist the programs' goal of engaging fathers.
- [New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium](#) (NOFC) is an organization that develops social supports, programs, public awareness, and policies that assist fathers in reaching their fullest potential. The NOFC is a collaborative group of organizations and individuals that enable fathers to be present, engaged, and active in the lives of their families.
- [NOLA Dads](#) is a group offered by the Family Service of Greater New Orleans using the NFI's training model. This free program hopes to empower fathers and offer them an abundance of resources relating to parenthood.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Father engagement is both beneficial and achievable. Based on the literature, Bureau of Family Health (BFH) should invest in community-based programs run by fathers for fathers.

Fathers overwhelmingly enjoy support groups and appreciate direct communication with their

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

peers. When fathers make and see their input be utilized, builds trust in community institutions and health officials that endorses the programming. These programs offer a plethora of resources that scope beyond fatherhood needs, such as understanding how to navigate the increasingly technological world, which is a concern of many fathers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. These support groups act as outlets for fathers to share their concerns, learn from one another, and pursue a healthy life for themselves and family.

Additionally, the researcher recommends that BFH work with providers to engage fathers without biases. Diminishing biases is a significant hurdle that must be addressed and one that takes time to combat. By increasing provider training and altering mother-centric literature, fathers can engage fully with healthcare professionals without discomfort. For the father to have access to health resources along with feeling welcome during the mother's child-rearing process is invaluable. Equal engagement with the mother and provider allows fathers to build trust in their partner and a sense of caring for the child. Revamping literature to be family-friendly amongst all family planning centers is an easy and necessary fix to allow fathers to feel present.

An extension to the hospital and school setting is implementing devoted spaces where fathers can learn skills to improve parenting. These programs range from breastfeeding/chestfeeding education to the proper style of reading to a child. Utilizing an established setting as the meeting ground for disseminating valuable information is practical and sets a formalized tone where engagement is central. Moreover, profoundly personifying the father as an active caretaker within these settings further develops identities fathers may seek to replicate. As evaluated in the benefits to father section, identity theory is an influential

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

psychological vehicle public health practitioners can utilize to emphasize positive parenting.

Any means by which a father is educated and encouraged to engage better with their child, the stronger the father's identity becomes.

Finally, it is recommended that BFH continues its work and research of father engagement. As alluded to throughout this review, father engagement is a complex issue, and solutions vary based on fathers' health and social determinants. Furthermore, it is also vital to focus on fathers with physical and legal barriers preventing them from adequately engaging within a child's life, such as incarcerated and custody-denied fathers. This literature review merely scratches the surface, as so much more can be extracted from the subject. Continuing to devote resources to fathers is crucial and allowing for the work within the department to endure is essential.

## CONCLUSION

The research relating to family and maternal child health is inadequate when not also devoting energy towards fathers. As evident from this review, fathers are important, and when circumstances allow, a father offers immense benefits to himself, the mother, and the child. From mothers' enjoying a healthier birthing process to children's achieving better physical and social health outcomes from the fathers' play, fathers are critical in improving the health of the family. Societal expectations have set standards for which fathers have quickly learned to adapt. The multiple motifs that fathers have filled have created confusion for many. The constantly changing perception of fathers is challenging and has left many men scrambling to obtain acceptance from their peers.

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

Father engagement is a difficult issue to address. Strategies to engage fathers vary, and one must consider many factors, such as the father's age, race, socio-economic status, and marital status. This literature review is cognizant of the complexity of fatherhood and merely scratches the surface of the various issues fathers encounter. Using this review as a starting point for father engagement issues is ideal. Understanding these benefits and considering a father's impact when creating programming and policy is critical. To better understand the father's role in family and maternal-child health, it is imperative to continually survey the literature relating to the topic. By learning of the benefits of fathers and initiatives to that will increase engagement with them, organizations such as the BFH can create better planning and programs to increase father involvement.

### Work Cited

- Albuja, A. F., Sanchez, D. T., Lee, S. J., Lee, J. Y., & Yadava, S. (2019). The effect of paternal cues in prenatal care settings on men's involvement intentions. *PLOS ONE*, *14*(5), e0216454. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216454>
- Alio, A. P., Lewis, C. A., Scarborough, K., Harris, K., & Fiscella, K. (2013). A community perspective on the role of fathers during pregnancy: A qualitative study. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, *13*, 60. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2393-13-60>
- Anderson K. G. (2017). Establishment of Legal Paternity for Children of Unmarried American Women: Trade-Offs in Male Commitment to Paternal Investment. *Human nature* (Hawthorne, N.Y.), *28*(2), 168–200. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-017-9284-0>
- Atzil, S., Hendler, T., Zagoory-Sharon, O., Winetraub, Y., & Feldman, R. (2012). Synchrony and specificity in the maternal and the paternal brain: Relations to oxytocin and vasopressin. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *51*(8), 798–811. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2012.06.008>
- Brody, L. R. (1996). Gender, emotional expression, and parent-child boundaries. *Emotion: interdisciplinary perspectives*, 139-170.
- Brummelman, E., Thomaes, S., Slagt, M., Overbeek, G., Castro, B. O. de, & Bushman, B. J. (2013). My child redeems my broken dreams: On parents transferring their unfulfilled ambitions onto their child. *PLOS ONE*, *8*(6), e65360. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0065360>

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

Clarke-Stewart, K. A., & Hayward, C. (1996). Advantages of father custody and contact for the psychological well-being of school-age children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 17*(2), 239–270. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973\(96\)90027-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973(96)90027-1)

Darwin, Z., Galdas, P., Hinchliff, S., Littlewood, E., McMillan, D., McGowan, L., & Gilbody, S. (2017). Fathers' views and experiences of their own mental health during pregnancy and the first postnatal year: A qualitative interview study of men participating in the UK Born and Bred in Yorkshire (Baby) cohort. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 17*(1), 45. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-017-1229-4>

Davidson, N. (1990). Life without Father: America's Great EST Social Catastrophe. *Policy Review*.

de Santis, L., de Carvalho, T. R., de Lima Guerra, L. L., dos Santos Rocha, F., & Barham, E. J. (2020). Supporting fathering: A systematic review of parenting programs that promote father involvement. *Trends in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.9788/s43076-019-00008-z>

Deave, T., Johnson, D., & Ingram, J. (2008). Transition to parenthood: The needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 8*(1), 30. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2393-8-30>

Erlandsson, K., Dsilna, A., Fagerberg, I., & Christensson, K. (2007). Skin-to-skin care with the father after cesarean birth and its effect on newborn crying and prefeeding behavior. *Birth, 34*(2), 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-536X.2007.00162.x>

Feldman, R., Gordon, I., Influx, M., Gutbir, T., & Ebstein, R. P. (2013). Parental oxytocin and early caregiving jointly shape children's oxytocin response and social reciprocity. *Neuropsychopharmacology, 38*(7), 1154–1162. <https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2013.22>



## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

- Finnbogadóttir, H., Crang Svalenius, E., & K Persson, E. (2003). Expectant first-time fathers' experiences of pregnancy. *Midwifery, 19*(2), 96–105. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0266-6138\(03\)00003-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0266-6138(03)00003-2)
- Flanders, J. L., Leo, V., Paquette, D., Pihl, R. O., & Séguin, J. R. (2009). Rough-and-tumble play and the regulation of aggression: An observational study of father-child play dyads. *Aggressive Behavior, 35*(4), 285–295. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20309>
- Fletcher, R., May, C., George, J. S., Morgan, P. J., & Lubans, D. R. (2011). Fathers' perceptions of rough-and-tumble play: Implications for early childhood services. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 36*(4), 131–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911103600417>
- Garwood, S. K., Gerassi, L., Jonson-Reid, M., Plax, K., & Drake, B. (2015). More Than Poverty: The Effect of Child Abuse and Neglect on Teen Pregnancy Risk. *The Journal of adolescent health: official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine, 57*(2), 164–168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.05.004>
- Gettler, L. T., McDade, T. W., Feranil, A. B., & Kuzawa, C. W. (2011). Longitudinal evidence that fatherhood decreases testosterone in human males. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*(39), 16194–16199. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1105403108>
- Giurgescu, C., & Templin, T. (2015). Father involvement and psychological well-being of pregnant women. *MCN. The American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing, 40*(6), 381–387. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMC.0000000000000183>
- Hansen, E., Tesch, L., & Ayton, J. (2018). 'They're born to get breastfed' - how fathers view breastfeeding: A mixed method study. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 18*(1), 238. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-018-1827-9>

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

- Henley, K., & Pasley, K. (2005). Conditions affecting the association between father identity and father involvement. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 3(1), 59–80. <https://doi.org/10.3149/ftth.0301.59>
- Hixson, R. (2008). Roots of uncertainty. *Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association*, 11(1), 16-18.
- Jessee, V., & Adamsons, K. (2018). Father Involvement and Father-Child Relationship Quality: An Intergenerational Perspective. *Parenting, science and practice*, 18(1), 28–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295192.2018.1405700>
- Kim, P., Rigo, P., Mayes, L. C., Feldman, R., Leckman, J. F., & Swain, J. E. (2014). Neural plasticity in fathers of human infants. *Social Neuroscience*, 9(5), 522–535. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470919.2014.933713>
- Kleiman, D. G., & Malcolm, J. R. (1981). The evolution of male parental investment in mammals. In D. J. Gubernick & P. H. Klopfer (Eds.), *Parental Care in Mammals* (pp. 347–387). Springer US. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-3150-6\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-3150-6_9)
- Kumar, S. V., Oliffe, J. L., & Kelly, M. T. (2018). Promoting postpartum mental health in fathers: Recommendations for nurse practitioners. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 12(2), 221–228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988317744712>
- Lamb, M. E. (2000). The history of research on father involvement: An overview. *Marriage & Family Review*, 29(2–3), 23–42. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v29n02\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v29n02_03)
- Lee, J. Y., Knauer, H. A., Lee, S. J., MacEachern, M. P., & Garfield, C. F. (2018). Father-inclusive perinatal parent education programs: A systematic review. *Pediatrics*, 142(1), e20180437. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-0437>

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

Lee, S. H., Lazebnik, R., Kuper-Sassé, M., & Lazebnik, N. (2016). Is the presence of the father of the baby during first prenatal ultrasound study visit associated with improved pregnancy outcomes in adolescents and young adults? *International Journal of Pediatrics*, 2016, 1–4.

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/4632628>

Levy-Shiff, R., Hoffman, M. A., Mogilner, S., Levinger, S., & Mogilner, M. B. (1990). Fathers' hospital visits to their preterm infants as a predictor of father-infant relationship and infant development. *Pediatrics*, 86(2), 289–293.

Main, M., & Weston, D. (1981). The Quality of the Toddler's Relationship to Mother and to Father: Related to Conflict Behavior and the Readiness to Establish New Relationships. *Child Development*, 52(3), 932-940. doi:10.2307/1129097

Mascaro, J. S., Hackett, P. D., & Rilling, J. K. (2014). Differential neural responses to child and sexual stimuli in human fathers and non-fathers and their hormonal correlates. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 46, 153–163.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2014.04.014>

Martin, A., Ryan, R. M., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2007). The joint influence of mother and father parenting on child cognitive outcomes at age 5. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22(4), 423–439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.07.001>

Martin, L. T., McNamara, M. J., Milot, A. S., Halle, T., & Hair, E. C. (2007). The effects of father involvement during pregnancy on receipt of prenatal care and maternal smoking. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 11(6), 595–602. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-007-0209-0>

McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. D. (1994). *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps*. Harvard University Press.

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

Meuwissen, A. S., & Carlson, S. M. (2018). The role of father parenting in children's school readiness: A longitudinal follow-up. *Journal of Family Psychology, 32*(5), 588–598.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000418>

Nomaguchi, K. M. (2012). Parenthood and psychological well-being: Clarifying the role of child age and parent-child relationship quality. *Social Science Research, 41*(2), 489–498.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.08.001>

Nord, C. W., & West, J. (2001). *Fathers' and mothers' involvement in their children's schools by family type and resident status*. U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement: For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O.

Palmer, L. F. (2002). Bonding matters: the chemistry of attachment. *Attachment Parenting International News, 5*(2), 1-4.

Panter-Brick, C., Burgess, A., Eggerman, M., McAllister, F., Pruett, K., & Leckman, J. F. (2014).

Practitioner Review: Engaging fathers – recommendations for a game change in parenting interventions based on a systematic review of the global evidence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 55*(11), 1187–1212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12280>

*Psychology and Psychiatry, 55*(11), 1187–1212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12280>

Petts, R. J., & Knoester, C. (2018). Paternity leave-taking and father engagement. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 80*(5), 1144–1162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12494>

*Marriage and Family, 80*(5), 1144–1162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12494>

Redshaw, M., & Henderson, J. (2013). Fathers' engagement in pregnancy and childbirth:

Evidence from a national survey. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 13*(1), 70.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2393-13-70>

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

- Shiono, P. H. (1986). Smoking and drinking during pregnancy. Their effects on preterm birth. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 255(1), 82–84.  
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.255.1.82>
- Sihota, H., Oliffe, J., Kelly, M. T., & McCuaig, F. (2019). Fathers' experiences and perspectives of breastfeeding: A scoping review. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 13(3), 155798831985161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988319851616>
- Swain, J. E., Kim, P., Spicer, J., Ho, S. S., Dayton, C. J., Elmadih, A., & Abel, K. M. (2014). Approaching the biology of human parental attachment: Brain imaging, oxytocin and coordinated assessments of mothers and fathers. *Brain Research*, 1580, 78–101.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainres.2014.03.007>
- StGeorge, J. M., Campbell, L. E., Hadlow, T., & Freeman, E. E. (2021). Quality and quantity: A study of father–toddler rough-and-tumble play. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 30(5), 1275–1289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-01927-1>
- Teitler, J. O. (2001). Father involvement, child health and maternal health behavior. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23(4–5), 403–425. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-7409\(01\)00137-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-7409(01)00137-2)
- Tohotoa, J., Maycock, B., Hauck, Y. L., Dhaliwal, S., Howat, P., Burns, S., & Binns, C. W. (2012). Can father inclusive practice reduce paternal postnatal anxiety? A repeated measures cohort study using the hospital anxiety and depression scale. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 12(1), 75. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2393-12-75>
- Tohotoa, J., Maycock, B., Hauck, Y. L., Howat, P., Burns, S., & Binns, C. W. (2009). Dads make a difference: An exploratory study of paternal support for breastfeeding in Perth, Western

## Existing Literature on Father Engagement

Australia. *International Breastfeeding Journal*, 4(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1746-4358-4-15>

Turner, H. A., Finkelhor, D., & Ormrod, R. (2006). The effect of lifetime victimization on the mental health of children and adolescents. *Social Science & Medicine*, 62(1), 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.05.030>

Winston, R., & Chicot, R. (2016). The importance of early bonding on the long-term mental health and resilience of children. *London Journal of Primary Care*, 8(1), 12–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17571472.2015.1133012>

Wray, D. (2020). Paternity leave and fathers' responsibility: Evidence from a natural experiment in Canada. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(2), 534–549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12661>

Yogman, M. W., Kindlon, D., & Earls, F. (1995). Father involvement and cognitive/behavioral outcomes of preterm infants. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 34(1), 58–66. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00004583-199501000-00015>