

Still Looking for Poppa

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In 1992, Phares published an article titled “Where’s Poppa?: The Relative Lack of Attention to the Role of Fathers in Child and Adolescent Psychopathology.” Since that time, there have been modest gains in the research literature on clinical child issues, but there remains a wide gap between the inclusion of mothers and fathers in clinical child and family research. This comment provides an update on these issues.

Research on fathers and abnormal child development has historically lagged significantly behind research on mothers and abnormal child development. In a review of clinical child and family research published between 1984 and 1991, Phares and Compas (1992) found that fathers were clearly underrepresented in child and family research that focused on clinical issues.

On the basis of the idea that graduate students are the professionals of the future, Silverstein and Phares (1996) conducted a similar review on dissertation research. Like the Phares and Compas (1992) review, the study conducted by Silverstein and Phares found that fathers were neglected significantly in doctoral dissertation research that focused on developmental psychology and developmental psychopathology. A total of 60% of the studies explored mothers only, 30% studied “parents,” and 10% explored fathers only. It is interesting to note that few personal or professional characteristics distinguished between those graduate students who did and did not include fathers in their research. There were no differences based on topic of research, advisor gender, or academic degree being sought. The only difference that emerged was based on graduate student gender. Specifically, male graduate students were more likely than female graduate students to include fathers in their dissertation research. Overall, Silverstein and Phares concluded that fathers were being neglected in doctoral dissertation research.

Zimmerman, Salem, and Notaro (2000) further documented this underrepresentation of fathers in research on adolescent functioning. On the basis of a review of five journals that focused on adolescent development, Zimmerman and colleagues found that the majority of studies included only mothers as the primary respondent. They also found that two-parent families were significantly overrepresented in family studies, compared with naturally occurring family demographics. Zimmerman and colleagues concluded that more research is still needed on fathers and their families.

Overall, there are indications that research on fathers and developmental psychopathology has remained neglected in dissertation research and in research focusing on fathers and their adolescents. To provide an update of this issue for the field of developmental psychopathology, we conducted an updated review and analysis of the research on fathers and developmental psychopathology.

To reexamine the representation of fathers in the developmental psychopathology literature, we focused on published articles in clinical child and adolescent psychology to determine inclusion of fathers and mothers. The following journals were reviewed for the most recent eight years of publication: *Child Development*, *Developmental Psychology*, *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, and *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. These are the same journals that were reviewed earlier (Phares & Compas, 1992).

To assess whether there were any changes since the time of the Phares and Compas (1992) review, we used the same criteria to determine inclusion in the tally of articles. These criteria were as follows: The research was empirical (not a review article, a discussion of a theory, or a case study), the research investigated issues related to child or parental psychopathology or both (and did not focus solely on normal developmental issues), and the study analyzed some characteristic of the parents (but the characteristics could have been assessed through a variety of mechanisms, including parent report, child report, record review, or direct observation). To maintain the focus on developmental psychopathology and clinical child issues, we did not include studies that were health related (e.g., pediatric issues) or that dealt solely with limited intellectual functioning (e.g., working with the functioning of developmentally delayed populations) in this review.

A total of 514 studies were found to fit criteria for inclusion in this study. Of these, 231 studies (45.0%) involved mothers only; 127 (24.7%) involved both mothers and fathers and analyzed for maternal and paternal effects separately; 145 (28.2%) in-

Ahmed and Boisvert (2005) agreed that psychological treatments are a core strength of psychology and also go on to provide additional interesting examples and to identify other areas of practice in which psychologists may be uniquely qualified. These include addressing developmental behavioral disorders and certain methods for severe mental disorders as well as the assessment and remediation of cognitive deficits. While also recognizing the important overlap among the mental health professions in the delivery of some services (e.g., medication, psychotherapy), Ahmed and Boisvert understand that evidence-based practice of psychology in our health care system is more than simply delivering an empirically supported treatment. Evidence-based practice also involves engaging in the types of functional analyses that would lead to effective practice in areas where evidenced-based treatments do not exist or are not working in the context of the unique or specific case. These are important observations.

In summary, only certain well-defined pathologies will be included in any health care system, and treatment for these conditions will increasingly need to be based on evidence. Both of these issues have been decided. Psychology as a profession has unique treatments derived from psychological science that already meet these requirements. Thus, psychologists should assume a major role in emerging health care systems, sharing this knowledge with other professions where appropriate through training and supervision. In this way, psychologists will make a core contribution to health care around the world.

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cluded both fathers and mothers but did not analyze them separately or more frequently involved “parents” and did not specify parental gender; and 11 (2.1%) involved fathers only. This distribution differed significantly from chance, $\chi^2(4, N = 514) = 286.51, p < .01$. In the category in which mothers and fathers were combined or in which participants were just referred to as “parents,” the specific distribution showed that 45 studies (8.8% of the entire sample) did not analyze for maternal versus paternal effects separately and that 100 studies (19.4% of the entire sample) did not specify parental gender and only referred to participants as “parents.”

These current data were compared with the data from the Phares and Compas (1992) study, in which 577 articles were analyzed. A total of 277 studies (48.0%) included mothers only; 151 (26.2%) included both mothers and fathers and analyzed for parental effects separately; 141 (24.4%) included mothers and fathers but did not analyze their data separately or more frequently only described their participants as “parents” without specifying the parents’ gender; and 8 (1.4%) included fathers only. When compared with the current tally of studies, there were no significant differences over time in the inclusion of fathers in research on developmental psychopathology, $\chi^2(3, N = 1,091) = 3.14, p = .37$.

Thus, there continues to be a dearth of research on fathers and developmental psychopathology. This pattern has not changed over the past 13 years. The lack of fathers in clinical research is consistent with studies of the lack of fathers in research on pediatric psychology (Phares, Lopez, Fields, Kamboukos, & Duhig, in press) and school psychology (Greif & Greif, 2004).

Given that significant relationships are found between fathers and normative developmental issues (Lamb, 2004) and fathers and developmental psychopathology (Videon, 2005), there is a clear need to increase the inclusion of fathers in research related to child well-being.

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