Father's Employment: A Neglected Influence on Children[1]

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> ...children can acquire occupational knowledge directly. As they listen to their parents talk about their jobs, as they see their parents come home tired after a hard day at work, as they spend time at parents' workplaces, they may develop feelings and ideas about work. (Piotrkowski & Stark, 1987, p. 3)

Standing in glaring contrast to the wealth of speculation, theorizing, and research on all aspects of mothers' employment, there is a dearth of empirical research on the effects of fathers' employment on father-child interactions and their children's behavior. The major reason for this is the ideological position that initially prompted research on maternal employment. Consistent with a "deprivation framework," it was assumed that absence caused by maternal employment would harm the child and the mother-child relationship. This "deprivation framework" also minimized the role of fathers in all aspects of child development compared to that of mothers, assuming that fathers were disinterested, or at least less interested in the parenting role. Hence, fathers' employment was presumed not to affect children (Booth & Edwards, 1980). This belief poses practical difficulties for research on the effects of fathers' employment on children. Very few fathers are voluntarily non-employed. Thus, while large groups of voluntarily non-employed mothers can be contrasted with voluntarily employed mothers, large groups of voluntarily non-employed fathers do not exist. Even if groups of voluntarily non-employed fathers could be assembled, socio-economic confounds would restrict the validity of any results obtained: Presumably, voluntarily nonemployed fathers would be either extremely wealthy or exceptionally poor.

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This situation is now changing, and interest is being expressed about the effects of fathers' employment on children's behavior, and on father-child interactions. Several factors account for this change. First, interest in the role of the father in child development in general has increased tremendously (e.g., Booth & Edwards, 1980; Lamb, 1981; 1982). Second, the rising number of employed mothers has forced more fathers to become involved in the parenting role. Third, in considering the link between work and family, the emphasis is moving away from employment status toward a consideration of subjective employment experiences. A focus on fathers' employment experiences rather than their employment status makes it possible to investigate the effects of fathers' employment on children.

Several issues concerning fathers' employment and their children's behavior will be considered in this chapter. These include the effects on children of fathers' job-related absence, whether fathers influence their children's choice of occupation, the effects of fathers' subjective employment experiences, and fathers' unemployment. Lastly, concerns common to all these topics (e.g., the combined effects of mothers' and fathers' employment, the central role of the father-child relationship, causal inferences, and the severity of any effects on children) will be evaluated.

Job-related Father Absence

Concern is often raised about the effects of fathers' absence on children. For example, Hillenbrand (1976, p. 451) noted that "Among the many stresses which assault today's American family, father absence is an increasingly frequent phenomenon." Consequently, it should not be surprising that there is a large body of research investigating this issue. However, the majority of this research has investigated the consequences of nonjob-related fathers' absence, i.e., absence because of death, divorce, and desertion. Before analyzing the effects of job-related father absence, it is important to understand how different reasons for father absence (whether job-related or not) affect behavior.

Piotrkowski and Gornick (1987) proposed a framework for understanding the effects of two types of job-related father absence, namely ordinary and extraordinary absences. Ordinary job-related father absences are predictable and temporary; their stable departure and reunion rituals help children understand and cope with the absence. Thus, if a father consistently leaves for work and returns home at the same time each and every day, this will soon be viewed and accepted as part of the father's occupational role by other family members. On the contrary, the timing of separations (i.e., the pattern of days/nights spent at home and on the job), and the pattern of daily hours spent at home/work (i.e., at what time the father leaves and arrives home) in extraordinary job-related absence are unpredictable and unstable. Hence, for example, children may have difficulty adapting to fathers' rapidly rotating work schedules. Barling (1990b) suggests that ordinary and extraordinary absence also differ in terms of their duration. He classifies protracted absences, such as three month naval tours-of-duty (Marsella, Dubanoski & Mohs, 1974) or nine months at sea (Lynn & Sawrey, 1958) as extraordinary, regardless of whether they are regular and predictable. Another factor that discriminates between ordinary and extraordinary father absence is the emotional connotations associated with different types of father absence (Barling, 1990a). Intrafamily conflict is likely to be greater when fathers' absence is a function of desertion or divorce rather than job-related. When father absence is work-related, the grief and loss experienced would not even be comparable with that associated with father absence as a function of death or desertion. Thus, the subjective meaning of job-related father absence depends on the reasons for the absence and is more important than the objective occurrence of the absence (Pratt & Barling, 1988). Following Piotrkowski and Gornick (1987), therefore, it is likely that ordinary job-related father absence exerts no harmful effects on children, whereas extraordinary job-related absence might.

Ordinary Job-related Father Absence

There is little research on the effects of ordinary job-related father-absence on children. Several factors contribute to this situation. Unlike mothers, fathers are expected to be absent from the family because of employment; indeed, their daily *presence* in the

home because of unemployment is sometimes assumed to be non-normative and detrimental. Also, there is little variability among fathers regarding the amount of ordinary job-related absence: Most fathers spend approximately the same number of hours working each day. For statistical reasons (range restriction), this would decrease the likelihood of uncovering statistically significant effects of father absence on children. In one study of a group of young fathers (M age = 22.9 years), McHale and Huston (1984) showed that the greater the number of hours devoted to their jobs each week, the less fathers interacted with their infants. The lower quantity of time spent with their infants is predictable given the finite number of hours per week. More important is the finding that the number of hours spent on the job each week by the fathers did not predict most aspects of the *quality* of the father-infant relationship. Thus, the data support Piotrkowski and Gornick's (1987) argument that fathers' ordinary work-related absences exert no detrimental effects on their child-rearing behaviors.

Extraordinary Job-related Father Absence

The effects of fathers' extraordinary job-related absence has been examined in studies investigating the link between fathers' shift work and their children and the effects of fathers' prolonged job absence on their children. Because shift work involves irregular, unpredictable patterns that might interfere with the fulfillment of family roles, it can be predicted that father absence due to shift work will interfere with the father-child relationship. In two separate studies, fathers who were involved in shift work and were absent from the family during the evenings (when family participation is critical) reported poorer father-child relationships than employed fathers who were present during these periods (Mott, Mann, McLoughlin & Warwick, 1965; Volger, Ernst, Nachreiner & Hanecke, 1988). Nonetheless, we cannot conclude from either of these two studies that fathers who work shifts actually functioned more poorly. They may have experienced higher levels of guilt regarding child-rearing because of their absence from the family at critical times, which led them to question their adequacy as parents. Supporting this idea, there are no data showing that fathers involved in shift work differ

from those working regular shifts on objective indices (e.g., teacher reports, direct observations) of father-child interaction.

A number of studies have focused on protracted father absence, particularly in the military or merchant navy setting. These studies will be discussed according to whether they focus on the effects of extraordinary job-related father absence on mother-child interactions or on child behavior problems.

Mother-child Interactions. Marsella et al. (1974) proposed that job-related father absence affects children through its direct effects on mothers' child rearing attitudes and behaviors. They studied mothers whose husbands were nuclear submarine personnel and used a longitudinal design to assess mothers during alternating periods of husband presence and absence. They found that mothers showed significantly more maternal domination and control (e.g., strictness and intrusion) under conditions of father presence than father absence. One possible reason for this is that in their interactions with their children, fathers overcompensate their children for their absence. Realizing this, mothers might feel the need to retain some control. Hillenbrand (1976) found that mothers were more likely to be perceived as the dominant parent as the length of the husband absence increased, and Beckman, Marsella and Finney (1979) showed that mothers' depression was significantly associated with their husbands' job-related absence. Specifically, mothers were more depressed during periods of husbands' absence. One implication emerges from these studies. As Marsella et al. (1974) noted, when mothers' child rearing attitudes and behaviors change according to husbands' patterns of job-related presence and absence, their children will be faced with seemingly inconsistent maternal childrearing attitudes and behaviors. These inconsistencies may make it difficult for children to understand, predict and control mothers' responses. However, concerns exist about the generalizability of Marsella et al.'s (1974) findings. Generalizing to nonmilitary populations from military employees or their wives may be hazardous because of the unique chronic stresses they endure, especially given the peculiar fears that arise when one's spouse is on a nuclear submarine (Marsella et al., 1974).

Cotterell (1986) investigated the effects of fathers' prolonged job absence on wives' child-rearing attitudes among working class families in four small rural towns in inland Australia. Fathers were categorized as "absent" if participation in regular family activities and child rearing was restricted by job-related absences (e.g., shift work, or travelling sizable distances that kept them away from their families for days). They were contrasted with a separate group of fathers from the same geographical areas whose jobs did not require these absences. Like Marsella et al. (1974), Cotterell (1986) found that father absence was associated with mother-child interactions. In Cotterell's (1986) study, mothers whose husbands were frequently absent played with their children *less* and provided *less* cognitive stimulation than did mothers whose husbands were present. One plausible explanation for this finding is the greater number of household tasks assumed by mothers under conditions of father absence. These duties would leave mothers with less time to spend with their children. Also, mothers may not have felt it necessary to overcompensate for their spouses' job-related absence, because the absence under study was of shorter duration in Cotterell's (1986) study. Even though Cotterell (1986) notes some limits to the generalizability of the findings because of the attitudes in rural and mining towns in Australia, it would appear that extraordinary job-related father absence might exert some effect on mother-child interactions and/or child rearing attitudes. Both Marsella et al. (1974) and Cotterell (1986) showed that mothers' child rearing behaviors covary with job-related father absence and father presence.

Children's behavior. The question of whether prolonged job-related father absence affects children's social behavior has been examined. Hillenbrand (1976) investigated whether the amount of job-related father absence a child experienced was related to the child's intelligence and social behavior. The length of father absence was significantly correlated with children's quantitative ability: The longer the father absence, the *greater* the child's quantitative ability. In this study, the average length of absence was 26 months. There was also a significant birth order effect, because first born children were most likely to manifest higher levels of quantitative ability. Hillenbrand (1976) also found that this general pattern of results was stronger for sons than for daughters. Hillenbrand's (1976) findings

are the only ones pointing to a beneficial effect associated with extraordinary job-related father absence. However, because of the length of the father absence in this study, the findings may be more consistent with the "downward extension" hypothesis, which suggests that certain children (e.g., first born sons) subsequently will fare better following exposure to periods of hardship, because the additional duties and obligations they must bear prepares them for later responsibilities. This will be considered in more detail later in this chapter, together with findings on the effects of unemployment.

The second study to investigate the effects of job-related father absence on children's social behavior focused on the families of Norwegian sailors (Lynn & Sawrey, 1958). In that study, absentee fathers were merchant sailors or whalers who were away from home for at least nine consecutive months of each year and a maximum of 24 months. They were contrasted with fathers who were continuously present. All fathers held supervisory jobs. Significant differences existed between the children of these two groups. There was less secure identification with absentee fathers and greater immaturity and poorer social adjustment among their children. However, these two groups differed not only in terms of length of absence but also in terms of the type of job, position in the organizational hierarchy, and socioeconomic status, limiting the extent to which any differences between these two groups can be attributed solely to fathers' absence. Also, it is likely that a selection confound existed in Lynn and Sawrey's (1958) study (and others examining extraordinary job-related father absence). Individuals who are willing to accept job conditions that require such lengthy absences from the family may have specific personality traits and/or family circumstances and expectations. Together, these confounds limit the extent to which any negative effects that emerge in such studies can be attributed solely to job-related father absence.

With only one exception (Hillenbrand, 1976), the studies reviewed above suggest that some negative effects are associated with extraordinary job-related father absence (and the meaning of Hillenbrand's finding will be discussed later). Hence, it is possible that when job-related father absence is prolonged and extraordinary, negative effects accrue to the mother-child relationship, the mother's

child rearing attitudes, and to children's behavior. In contrast, ordinary job-related father absence exerts no negative effects on children's behavior.

A more important issue centres on the conceptualization and operationalization of father absence. In all these studies, the meaning of the father's absence for the father, the mother and/or the child is ignored. Thus, current research on job-related father absence is based on a deficit-oriented deprivation model similar to that invoked when hypothesizing that maternal employment status is synonymous with maternal deprivation (Barling, 1990a). This model can only provide limited information as to why father absence exerts negative (or in some cases, positive) effects (Pederson, 1976). To obtain more comprehensive information, the subjective meaning of job-related father absences for children, for wives and for fathers themselves must be understood. It is possible that children feel the same emotions (e.g., pride, embarrassment) in their absentee fathers' jobs as other children do when their employed fathers are continuously present. This points to the need for further understanding and research on the subjective meaning of job-related father absence for the child, the father and the mother.

Intergenerational Occupational Choice: Like Father, Like Son?

The notion that sons come to resemble their fathers is not new. One question that has intrigued social scientists and the lay public is whether sons tend to choose the same occupation as their fathers. In evaluating whether fathers' choice of occupation influences children in general and sons in particular, two questions will be addressed: Does a link exist between fathers' and sons' occupational choice, and if so, how does it come about?

Similarities between Fathers' and Sons' Occupational Choice

Numerous studies have been conducted assessing whether children choose the same or similar occupations as their fathers. These studies show consistently that the prospect of sons pursuing the same occupation as their fathers is significantly greater than chance.

One of the earliest studies using a large sample of college students (N = 3,211; Nelson, 1939) demonstrated the trend for sons to enter the same occupations as their fathers. For example, Nelson (1939) noted that seven of 54 bankers' children themselves chose banking. Likewise, 124 children of the 570 fathers involved in commerce chose commerce for themselves. Both these statistics far exceed chance expectations given the extensive number of occupational choices open to the children. Nelson (1939) notes further that in male-dominated occupations (e.g., dentistry and the ministry), the probability that children follow in their fathers' footsteps would have been even greater had the sample excluded daughters.

Since then, several studies have replicated and extended Nelson's (1939) earlier findings. Jensen and Kirschner (1955) analyzed a representative sample of 8,000 heads of households in six cities across the United States. Where differences existed between fathers' and sons' occupations, they occurred because sons progressed further up the occupational hierarchy than their fathers. Aberle and Naegele (1952) found that when fathers were asked about their sons' future occupations, fathers first denied holding any specific aspirations for their children. However, it later became apparent that any occupation chosen by sons was acceptable to fathers as long as it was a middle-class, professional, or business occupation, and no father visualized downward mobility for his son. Lastly, in a sample of 70,015 males who had entered college in 1961, Werts' (1968) replicated earlier results that sons follow in their fathers' occupational footsteps. Werts (1968) also raised an issue that will be pursued further in this chapter: The data showing a link between fathers' and sons' occupations provides no information as to how such linkages emerge.

Reinhardt (1970) extended research on intergenerational occupational linkages by investigating whether sons who chose occupations similar to their fathers are more likely to be successful. Reinhardt (1970) studied 105 outstanding military jet pilots. Fathers of two-thirds of these superior jet pilots had served in the military, and 85 percent of them had been affiliated with the same division. Perhaps more importantly, Reinhardt (1970) investigated the occupations of 70 career failures, that is, jet pilots who were

grounded because of unsatisfactory performance or voluntarily stopped flying. Only 3 percent of the fathers of the career failures were active or former military pilots. Because so many of the studies on the intergenerational transmission of occupation have focused on children regarded as successful (e.g., university students and graduates), Reinhardt's (1970) data on career failures are especially important.

Thus, Blaise Pascal's comment in 1656 that "The most important thing in life is the choice of a calling, but that is left to chance" (Jackman, 1984, p. 30) appears to be incorrect. Occupational choice by sons is not a random process. Instead, there is a substantial tendency for sons to follow in their fathers' occupational footsteps, and this tendency generalizes across cultures (Chopra, 1967). However, these studies raise one question that is at least as interesting and important as those that they answer. Specifically, given the existence of occupational intergenerational transmission, how this transmission occurs is a critical question that remains to be answered (Aldous, Hicks & Osmond, 1979).

Process of Influence of Fathers' Occupational Choice

The most direct way in which the intergenerational transmission of occupation might occur is via direct attempts by fathers to influence sons. It is possible that fathers engage in deliberate, conscious behaviors to bias their children's occupational choices. Breakwell, Fife-Schaw, and Devereux (1988) asked 3,160 teenagers in England two questions in this regard: Whether their parents had overtly attempted to influence their career choice, and if so, whether such attempts were successful. The teenagers reported that parents did indeed try to influence their choice of career directly, but they were not successful. Yet, these results may not capture the effects of deliberate attempts by fathers to influence their sons. First, the best way of assessing parents' influence on teenagers' choices may not be to ask teenage children. They might be most inclined to deny that their parents influence their behavior in any way. Second, Breakwell et al. (1988) did not separate their sample by gender of parent or child, even though data from different studies show that

patterns of intergenerational occupational transmission differ for fathers and sons and fathers and daughters.

One alternative is that fathers indirectly influence their sons' choice of occupations. The research of Mortimer and her colleagues (e.g., Mortimer, 1974; 1976; Mortimer & Kumka, 1982; Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka, 1986) clarifies this process. Mortimer's (1974) strategy of focusing on fathers' occupational values was motivated by Kohn's (1977) assumption that the occupational values a father espouses and requires for occupational success will influence his attitudes and behavior. Mortimer (1974) replicated previous findings showing that sons' occupational preferences matched their fathers' occupations. More importantly, she assessed the role of fathers' occupational values, functional similarity, and the father-son relationship in this process. Sons who did not follow their fathers' occupations exactly preferred occupations reflecting similar value structures to those inherent in their fathers' occupations. Functional similarity was important because sons of dentists and scientists who did not select their fathers' occupations expressed greater interest in medicine, and there was little movement away from the scientific/medical field. Similarly, sons of teachers overchose engineering, accounting, and scientific oriented professions, all of which require the interpretation of information as an integral part of the job. Mortimer (1976) replicated these results after controlling for the effects of fathers' and mothers' education, fathers' occupational status, and family income.

Mortimer's later analyses (Mortimer et al., 1986) extend these earlier findings. Mortimer and her colleagues controlled for children's grade point average (as an indicator of intelligence), isolated the role of the father-child relationship, and investigated different aspects of sons' career attainment ten years after the initial assessment. Essentially, Mortimer et al. (1986) showed that the closeness of the father-child relationship moderated the relationship between fathers' socioeconomic status and their children's work values: These occupational linkages were stronger under conditions of a close father-son relationship. In addition, specific values were associated with unique occupational outcomes. For example, intrinsic values were associated with autonomy, extrinsic values with income,

and people-oriented values were linked with the social content of the job.

Thus, there is consistent support for a link between fathers' and sons' occupational choices, and some processes underlying this link have been isolated. Yet the range of moderating factors that have been investigated remains limited. Other factors such as paternal job dissatisfaction should now be investigated (Barling, 1986; Mortimer, 1976). The occupational linkage process may weaken when children with close relationships to their fathers realize that their fathers are dissatisfied with their jobs. Finally, most of the research has investigated occupational linkages between father and son. Although similar results do not emerge when mothers' occupations and daughters' occupational choices are considered (Mortimer et al., 1986), reasons for these differences are not well understood. Role modeling has been suggested as one possible process (see Mortimer et al., 1986). Another possibility is that the range of occupations held by employed mothers was restricted in previous generations, but this is no longer as true for daughters in each successive generation. The consequence of this would be that daughters now have a wider range of occupations from which to choose, and this would influence the magnitude of any correlation between mothers' and daughters' occupational choice.

Fathers' Subjective Job Experiences

There are several important reasons for studying fathers' subjective job experiences. First, as noted earlier, the meaning of fathers' job-related absence may be a more critical determinant of children's behavior than the absence itself. Second, it is not just fathers' occupations that influence sons' occupational choice but their occupational values. Third, Pratt and Barling (1988) have noted that the subjective meaning of job events is more important than the event itself. Consistent with this, research shows that the meaning of employment is a more important determinant of marital functioning than employment status (Barling, 1990b). Similarly, the meaning of employment to mothers is a more consistent predictor of children's behavior than mothers' employment status (e.g., Barling, Fullagar, & Marchl-Dingle, 1988).

Fathers' Job Dissatisfaction

Some research on fathers' subjective employment experiences has considered the role of fathers' job dissatisfaction in child-rearing and child development (Cochran & Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Honzik (1967) reported one of the first studies on the effects of fathers' job satisfaction on children's intelligence, tracking a representative sample of children born between 1928 and 1929 for 30 years. There was a correlation between paternal occupational satisfaction and sons' intelligence but not daughters', and this pattern of results remained consistent across each of the 16 occasions the sample was tested. Honzik's (1967) study, however, has some important limitations. Neither occupational success nor socioeconomic status were controlled; it remains unclear why children's intelligence should be associated with fathers' job satisfaction; and no information is provided on factors moderating the effects of fathers' job satisfaction on children.

Barling (1986) also investigated the effects of fathers' job dissatisfaction on children. He found that fathers' job dissatisfaction was associated with children's conduct problems and hyperactivity. Two aspects of this study are noteworthy, as they enhance its external validity. First, unlike Honzik (1967), Barling (1986) controlled statistically for fathers' level of education in an attempt to control the confounding effects of socioeconomic status. Second, teacher reports of children's behavior were obtained to eliminate biases (e.g., social desirability, autocorrelation) resulting from parents reporting both on their children and their own behavior. However, the issue of how job satisfaction affects specific behaviors remains unanswered.

One model that has been advanced to account for this link is that job dissatisfaction influences the way in which fathers interact with their children. In turn, it is the nature and quality of father-child (and, of course, mother-child) interactions that directly affect child behavior (cf. Barling et al., 1988; Lerner & Galambos, 1985; MacEwen & Barling, 1989). The rationale for this latter link is that the existence of a close father-child relationship enables children to appreciate their fathers' job dissatisfaction and to realize its negative effects on their fathers (Barling, 1986; Piotrkowski & Stark, 1987).

Two separate empirical questions are contained in this argument. First, do father-child interactions mediate the relationship between fathers' job dissatisfaction and child behavior? In other words, does a relationship exist between fathers' job dissatisfaction and father-child interactions, and do these father-child interactions in turn influence children's behavior? Grossman, Pollack, and Golding (1988) assessed the role of fathers' job satisfaction and job involvement in predicting different aspects of the father-son relationship among five-year old children. The only significant predictor of the amount of time fathers spent with their children during the week and on the weekend was their job satisfaction, and this effect was negative: The greater the job satisfaction, the less time the father spent playing with the child. These results partially replicated those of Feldman, Nash, and Aschenbrenner (1983), who found that job satisfaction and job salience predicted lower levels of playfulness between fathers and their infants aged 6-8 months.

Nonetheless, both the quantity *and* the quality of the father-son relationship must be considered before a comprehensive understanding of the effects of fathers' job satisfaction on sons' behaviors can be achieved. Results from studies investigating this show that fathers' job satisfaction is positively correlated with the quality of the father-son relationship. Data from McKinley's (1964) earlier study support the notion that fathers' job satisfaction is positively associated with qualitative aspects of the father-son relationship. Regardless of socioeconomic status, fathers who expressed job dissatisfaction were more hostile in their interactions with their children and used more severe disciplinary techniques. Kemper and Reichler (1976) found that fathers' job satisfaction predicted the extent to which they rewarded their children, while job dissatisfaction predicted the use of punishment. Most recently, Grossman et al. (1988) showed that fathers' job satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated with the extent to which they supported children's autonomy and affiliation. Thus, two distinct patterns exist. Fathers who are satisfied with their jobs spend less time with their children. However, fathers' job satisfaction is *positively* associated with the quality of father-child interactions. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, mothers' child-rearing behaviors (namely, punishment and rejection) that result from employment

experiences (namely, interrole conflict and role satisfaction) influence children's problem behaviors (namely anxiety/withdrawal, conduct disorders and attention/immaturity).

Hence, the second empirical question emerges, i.e., does the father-child relationship moderate the link between fathers' job experiences and child behavior? In other words, irrespective of any effects of fathers' job satisfaction on the father-son relationship, is the relationship between fathers' job satisfaction and children's behavior dependent on the quality of the father-child relationship? One possibility is that it is through a close father-child relationship that children will understand the positive and negative conditions their fathers experience at work and the way in which these conditions influence their fathers (Piotrkowski & Stark, 1987) and thereby be negatively affected.

In an attempt to understand this, Barling (1986) drew a parallel with research on parents' marital satisfaction, parent-child interactions, and child behavior. He noted suggestions in the clinical psychological literature that the quality of the parent-child relationship buffers the negative effects of marital dissatisfaction on children (Emery, 1982). More recently, fathers' experiencing daily work stress reported less positive involvement with their children (Repetti, 1989). Barling (1986) tested 161 fathers who were employed full-time using a composite measure of the father-child relationship that reflected the extent to which the father played with or laughed with, read to, explained or taught things to, and hugged or held the child. After statistically controlling for the effects of socioeconomic status, fathers' job dissatisfaction was associated with higher levels of both hyperactivity and conduct problems when there was a close father-son relationship. When fathers reported job dissatisfaction but the father-child relationship was not as close, scores for hyperactivity and conduct problems were significantly lower. Thus, knowledge about fathers' job dissatisfaction may be transmitted to children through a close relationship with the parent in question, and Piotrkowski and Stark's (1987) hypothesis is supported. Several aspects of this study are noteworthy: First, these results extend previous findings on the effects of mothers' job dissatisfaction on their children (Barling & Van Bart, 1984), and

recent research showing how mother-child interactions mediate this link (MacEwen & Barling, 1989). Second, consistent with MacEwen and Barling (1989), it remains for future research to isolate specific paternal job experiences that influence children's behavior: In Barling's (1986) study, only job dissatisfaction influenced children's behavior. Neither job involvement nor perceptions of the organizational climate exerted similar effects.

A further explanation for the effects of fathers' job dissatisfaction on children emerges from Kemper and Reichler's (1976) finding that fathers who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more punitive. Under conditions of a close father-child relationship, children of dissatisfied fathers would be exposed to a more hostile and punitive child-rearing style, which itself is associated with children's externalizing problems such as conduct problems (e.g., Emery, 1982; MacEwen & Barling, 1989; Patterson, 1982). It remains for future research to identify other mediating mechanisms. This is crucial not only for theoretical reasons but also from a pragmatic perspective. It is doubtful whether job dissatisfaction can be prevented. To alleviate any negative outcomes of job dissatisfaction, therefore, it becomes crucial to isolate the processes through which fathers' job dissatisfaction (and, of course, employed mothers' job dissatisfaction) exerts negative influences on children.

Fathers' General Employment Experiences

In evaluating the effects of fathers' subjective employment experiences, most research has focused on their job satisfaction. There have also been some studies on the effects of other subjective employment experiences on children's behavior, all of which have focused on its effects on child rearing attitudes and behaviors or the father-child relationship. Coburn and Edwards' (1976) results from a large sample are consistent with Piotrkowski and Katz' (1982) findings on employed mothers. Coburn and Edwards (1976) found that fathers experiencing high job autonomy valued self-control and independence for their children more than fathers experiencing low levels of job autonomy. In contrast, fathers experiencing little autonomy on the job were more likely to value obedience and good manners by their children than their counterparts high in job-related

autonomy. Piotrkowski and Katz (1982) showed that mothers' autonomy on the job was negatively associated with children's voluntary attendance at school, whereas mothers' skill utilization was positively associated with their children's scholastic achievement. These studies support Kohn's (1977) hypothesis that job-related values are consistent with child-rearing values. However, the causal nature of the relationship is unclear. While it is possible that occupations mold values, it is equally possible--as Coburn and Edwards (1976) note--that individuals choose occupations that are consistent with their preexisting values.

Interrole conflict involves the experience of psychological stress and discomfort that arises when role demands from home or family inhibit or prevent successful role fulfillment in the other domain. The experience of interrole conflict for fathers and husbands and its consequences for children has received substantially less attention than mothers' interrole conflict or fathers' job satisfaction. In one study, Baruch and Barnett (1986) showed that fathers' family roles and employment roles interfered with each other. Their results demonstrated further that fathers' participation in typical child care tasks was significantly and negatively associated with fathers' feelings that they required more time for their careers. Given the degree to which fathers are now participating in both family and job-related responsibilities, future research might profitably focus more on fathers' interrole conflict.

Thus, there is consistency across studies focusing on the effects of fathers' subjective work experiences on their children. While fathers' job satisfaction is associated with less time devoted to children, both job satisfaction and general employment experiences positively influence the quality of father-child interactions. In turn, father-child interactions mediated the link between fathers' employment experiences and children's behavior.

Fathers' Job Loss

So far, the effects of different aspects of fathers' jobs on their children have been considered. It is also appropriate to consider what happens to children when fathers lose their jobs, as

this highlights two issues that have already been raised. First, it is not fathers' employment *status* (whether they are employed or not) that affects children's behavior. Instead, it is fathers' subjective experience of unemployment (or employment) that affects children. Second, the father-child relationship plays a critical mediating link between fathers' unemployment and children's behavior (e.g., McLoyd, 1989).

Despite concern that fathers' unemployment directly affects children's behavior, there is not much research assessing this specific issue. What research has been conducted can be categorized according to whether children's social behaviors or children's perceptions of employment are affected. With respect to the latter, some research has shown that children whose fathers are unemployed have a greater understanding of unemployment than children whose fathers are employed (Radin & Greer, 1987). Likewise, children with some exposure to fathers' unemployment expressed greater concerns about family-economic issues (Pautler & Lewko, 1984). In contrast, children of employed and unemployed fathers do not differ consistently with respect to their social or scholastic behavior (e.g., Madge, 1983; Friedemann, 1986). These findings suggest that children learn about the occupational world through their parents' experiences (cf. Piotrkowski & Stark, 1987) but that these effects do not necessarily generalize to non-occupational domains. Thus, there are no consistent differences between the children of employed and unemployed fathers regarding social behavior. Two factors might account for the lack of differences between the social behavior of the two groups. First, an inappropriate model has been invoked when investigating this issue and, second, the relationship between fathers' unemployment and children's behavior is indirect.

In the same way that it is now argued that maternal employment experiences are more important than maternal employment status (e.g., Barling, 1990a; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982), fathers' experience of unemployment is a more important determinant of children's behavior than whether or not they are unemployed. This is an important distinction. Contrasting employed and unemployed fathers implies considerable variation between these two groups yet very little variation within each group. Investigating

only unemployed fathers implies considerable systematic variation within their experience of unemployment. With respect to children's behavior, there is variation among children of unemployed fathers. For example, Friedemann (1986) found no differences in the peer relationships of children of employed and unemployed fathers, but there was a greater range of scores for children of unemployed fathers. Although not assessed, it is possible that this within-group variation is systematic and is associated with their fathers' experience of unemployment. Thus, focusing on fathers' *experience* of unemployment may be more appropriate than a focus on unemployment *status*.

The second factor accounting for no differences in social behavior between children of employed and unemployed fathers concerns the father-child relationship during periods of unemployment. On a quantitative level, data from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989; Ray & McLoyd, 1986; Shamir, 1986; Warr, 1984a; Warr & Payne, 1983) show that unemployed fathers interact more with their children. On regaining employment, there is a decrease in the amount of interaction between fathers and children (Shamir, 1986), suggesting that changes in employment status are responsible for changes in time spent with children. More importantly, on a qualitative level, the nature of the father-child relationship changes when fathers become unemployed, and specific parenting styles mediate the relationship between unemployment and child behavior problems. As McLoyd (1989) notes, unemployed fathers who become less nurturant, more punitive and more inconsistent in their interactions with their children tend to affect their children most. Boys in such situations develop more externalizing disorders, while adolescent girls feel more inadequate, are hypersensitive, and manifest lowered aspirations (Elder, Nguyen, & Caspi, 1985; McLoyd, 1989). Also, the likelihood of children being physically abused increases when fathers are unemployed (Barling, 1990a; McLoyd, 1989). This again is important. Clinical impressions and empirical research show that children who are physically abused perform poorly academically and manifest significant behavioral problems, including conduct problems, aggression, withdrawal, anxiety, and depression (Ammerman, Cassisi, Hersen, & Van Hasselt, 1986).

This raises the question of how to account for the fact that some unemployed fathers manifest poor parenting styles, while others do not. One possibility is that fathers' differential experience of unemployment predicts their parenting style. There is wide variation in the way fathers experience unemployment. For example, where job dissatisfaction existed prior to the layoff, the experience of unemployment may not be negative (O'Brien, 1985), and there are numerous demographic, personality, and social resource factors that reduce any negative effects of unemployment (Warr, 1984b). In contrast, fathers who suffer greatest income loss may be most inclined to experience unemployment as negative (McLoyd, 1989). This lends more support to the argument that it is not unemployment status that should be examined but rather the subjective perception or experience of that event (McLoyd, 1989; Pratt & Barling, 1988). In this respect, Jahoda's (1982) interpretation of the manifest and latent functions of employment provides a framework for conceptualizing the subjective experience of unemployment. Within this framework, it is predicted that there are differences among unemployed people in their loss of income, the extent to which they structure and use their time, the nature and number of their social contacts, their sense of purpose, and their personal identity and social status. Other factors not identified by Jahoda (1982) include the experience of bereavement associated with job loss (Archer & Rhodes, 1987), which is associated with psychological well-being (Barling, 1990a; Jahoda, 1982).

Elder's (1974) analyses of longitudinal data collected during the Great Depression cast further light on factors that moderate the effects of unemployment on children. For example, first born children, especially sons, are most likely to *benefit* from their fathers' job loss in the long term. They are more likely to do better at school, to enter college, and show greater satisfaction with their jobs, marriages, and lives. Elder and his colleagues (e.g., Moen, Cain, & Elder, 1983) have offered the "downward extension hypothesis" to account for this phenomenon. They argue that children who are exposed to paternal unemployment encounter new challenges and perform new tasks. In families where the breadwinner is unemployed, first born sons may well have additional responsibilities thrust upon them. During the Great Depression,

> ...older children were called upon for household activities as families shifted toward a more labor intensive economy.... Adult-like responsibilities became more a part of the lives of both boys and girls. Boys tended to seek gainful employment, while girls helped with domestic responsibilities, including child care, meal preparation, house cleaning, sewing and ironing. The involvement of boys in work roles accelerated their liberation from parental control. (Moen et al., 1983, pp. 231-232)

This explanation may also account for Hillenbrand's (1976) finding that exceptionally prolonged job related absence of the father (M length of absence = 26 months; range = 0-63 months) was associated with positive benefits, especially for first born children. When father absence is so prolonged, first born children may be required to assume some of the same family and income role responsibilities as do children of unemployed fathers. Future research might investigate whether this is indeed the case.

Thus, there is some consistency in the effects of fathers' employment and fathers' unemployment on children. Whether we consider employment or unemployment, fathers' subjective experiences are more influential in determining children's behavior than is their employment status. The direction of the relationship is also consistent: Fathers' experiences of employment or unemployment are associated with their child-rearing styles and children's behavior. Also, the way in which the father-child relationship is affected by fathers' employment or unemployment experiences is a critical determinant of children's behavior.

Fathers' Employment and Job Loss: Conclusion

In reevaluating the effects of fathers' employment on children, several topics emerge. These include a contrast of objective and subjective employment characteristics, the combined effects of mothers' and fathers' employment on children, the specific nature of the employment experience, the importance of the father-child relationship, and the need to identify causal paths in the relationship between fathers' employment experiences and their children's behavior.

In terms of the relative effects of fathers' objective and subjective job characteristics on their children, the data are clear. First, fathers' ordinary job-related absences exert no negative effects on mother-son interactions or on children's behavior. Fathers' extraordinary job-related absences may exert negative effects on children, although methodological questions (e.g., selection factors, noncomparability of control and experimental groups) need to be answered. Second, fathers' occupational choice influences sons' occupational preferences, and fathers' personal work values exert direct and indirect influences in the process of occupational linkages (Mortimer, 1974, 1976; Mortimer & Kumka, 1982; Mortimer et al., 1986). Third, the meaning of paternal unemployment or job-related absence to fathers, mothers, and children is likely to be a more significant determinant of parent-child interactions and children's behavior than is fathers' employment status or job-related absence.

The next issue that emerges is whether the effects of mothers' and fathers' employment experiences are additive. This question is especially important because of the large number of mothers who are now employed. Research should now focus on the combined effects of mothers' and fathers' employment experiences on their children. If mothers and fathers both experience their jobs positively, is the effect on their children greater than when only one parent is satisfied with his/her work? Alternatively, what are the effects on children if both parents are extremely dissatisfied with their jobs? Despite the importance of this question, there are still very few studies on mothers' *and* fathers' employment experiences (e.g., Greenberger & Goldberg, 1989).

Third, recent research suggests that it is critical to focus on specific employment experiences if we are to understand their effects on children's behavior. MacEwen and Barling (1989) showed that mothers' interrole conflict and employment role satisfaction exerted different effects on personal strain: Interrole conflict resulted in cognitive difficulties and negative mood, but maternal employment dissatisfaction only resulted in negative mood. In turn, these two indices differentially influenced mother-child interaction: Cognitive difficulties resulted in mothers' using more rejecting behaviors with their children, while negative mood led to an increase in the use of

both rejecting and punishing behaviors by the mother. Finally, maternal rejection was associated with children's internalizing behaviors (namely, anxiety/withdrawal), whereas mothers' punishment was associated with children's externalizing behaviors (specifically, conduct disorders and inattention/immaturity). Future research should investigate whether similar differential effects are obtained with fathers.

Fourth, one critical variable identified in this chapter is the father-child relationship. Whether the intergenerational transmission of occupation, fathers' employment or unemployment experiences are considered, the father-child relationship serves a critical and consistent mediating function. It is through a close father-child relationship that children learn about their parents' occupational experiences, and it is this knowledge that influences their behavior. Future studies on the effects of fathers' (and mothers') employment experiences cannot afford to ignore this variable. Because of the importance of such research, it may be worthwhile to supplement self-report measures of parent-child interactions with observational data. This would add greater credibility to any such findings. Fifth, although research on parental employment and children typically takes account of the child's gender, the age of the child is invariably ignored. Future research and theorizing should explicitly consider the child's age, because specific parenting styles and child behaviors may be appropriate for children of different ages.

Sixth, in studying the effects of fathers' employment experiences, the question of causality must be confronted. The overwhelming assumption is that fathers' employment affects children, directly or indirectly. But other alternatives remain possible. For example, problem or sick children could detract from parents' attention, effort, and success on the job, making it is less likely that they will experience job satisfaction. Alternatively, in the same way that marital functioning prior to unemployment predicts marital functioning following unemployment (Komarovsky, 1940), preexisting problems in children may be uncovered or exacerbated in the presence of negative parental experiences. In addition, the relationship between fathers' employment experiences and children's behavior could be spurious, with variables such as negative affect

influencing both (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, & Webster, 1988). Yet with very few exceptions (e.g., Mortimer & Kumka, 1982; Mortimer et al., 1986), both the literatures on mothers' and fathers' employment experiences are characterized by cross-sectional research designs which do not allow causal inferences to be tested.

One final question concerns the interpretation of the relationships between fathers' employment and their children. Invariably, these statistical relationships are modest in magnitude. This implies that while these relationships are statistically significant and conceptually interesting, their clinical impact is questionable. However, there is one instance in which fathers' employment characteristics exert a clinical effect on children. Specifically, children whose fathers are unemployed are more at risk of suffering physical abuse. Yet some caution is appropriate in interpreting this as a causal relationship. It remains unclear whether unemployment triggers new instances of child abuse or uncovers preexisting problems. Also, the relevant research has not isolated whether it is necessarily the unemployed father who is the abuser (Barling, 1990a).

In conclusion, therefore, several consistent patterns emerge. Fathers' ordinary job-related absence exerts no harmful effects, whereas extraordinary job related absence is more likely to be associated with child behavior problems. Fathers' and sons' choice of careers are linked, and fathers' experience of their jobs influences their children. The father-child relationship plays an important role in linking fathers' work to children's behavior. Thus, Abraham Lincoln's admonishment in 1858 that "My father taught me to work; he did not teach me to love it" (Jackman, 1984, p. 224) should not be taken to mean that fathers *cannot* teach their children to love their work. Instead, through the father-child relationship, fathers influence their children's attitudes toward their work both directly and indirectly.

Annotated Bibliography

Barling, J. (1990). *Employment, unemployment, and family functioning.* Chichester: Wiley.

An in-depth and current discussion of the relationship between men's and women's employment and family functioning. Topics discussed include the effects of job absence, job mobility, shift work, job satisfaction, Type A behavior, acute and chronic work stressors, and employment role experiences on several aspects of marital functioning. The effects of mothers' and fathers' employment on children are dealt with, as are the effects of unemployment on marital functioning and children. The effects of family functioning on employment are also considered.

Cleary, B. (1977). *Ramona and her father.* NY: William Morrow.

There are numerous books targeted at children that are meant to explain stressors that children might be exposed to (e.g., divorce, death of parent). This particular book describes what happens to a family when the father loses his job, the changes all family members experience when he is unemployed, and what happens when he is re-employed. This book is highly recommended because the situations depicted faithfully reflect the "academic" literature on unemployment.

McLoyd, V. C. (1989). Socialization and development in a changing economy: The effects of paternal job and income loss on children. *American Psychologist, 44,* 293-302.

This is a very recent and comprehensive summary of the effects on children and on the father-child relationship of fathers' unemployment.

Mortimer, J. T., Lorence, J., & Kumka, D. S. (1988). *Work, family, and personality: Transition to adulthood.* Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.

Arguably, Mortimer's research has contributed most to our understanding of the intergenerational transmission of occupations. This book sets out be describing the results of the earlier work in this area, and then presents in considerable detail the 10 year longitudinal study.

Voydanoff, P. (1987). *Work and family life.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

This book presents an overview of the interdependence between work and family. All the major issues are covered, and this

book would serve most adequately as an introduction to the literature on work and family.

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