

April 1, 2004

## **Parenting: Changes**

Read: Hertz: A Typology of Approaches to Child Care  
Hernandez: Revolutions in Children's Lives  
Galinsky: What Children Think about Their Working Parents  
Coltrane and Adams: Men's Family Work: Child-Centered Fathering and the Sharing of Domestic Labor

### I. Parenting

A. We're getting into some areas we all have deep feelings about

1. Which is one reason why you have so much reading on divorce

a. Debates about effects on children of dual-earner families and divorce are passionate

1) Authors disagree

2) You should be able to spell out where these researchers disagree

b. For example, one researcher, Wallerstein, and her collaborators conclude that divorce has long-term very significant impacts on children

1) Others, like Cherlin, suggest that it's conflictive families that are the cause of behavior problems

B. Causes of the disagreements?

1. Clearly some due to different ideological positions—the political and social agendas of researchers

2. Others result from different methodologies or approaches, ways of asking the questions, research design

a. Example Galinsky asks children what they want

1) More children mention wanting more time with their fathers than mothers

2) Yet most of the concern and research have focused on the

effects of employed mothers on their children

- II. Major changes that have occurred in parenting?
- A. Demographic (Hernandez)
1. Fewer children
  2. Are born closer together
- B. Greater numbers of women in the labor force, especially the entry of mothers of small children
1. Doubled between 1960 and 1997
- C. Changes in conceptualizations of what parenting meant for an individual's identity
- D. Changes in mothering: behavior and attitudes
1. Through 1967 little girls resembled their mothers in terms of the centrality placed on marriage, family life, and children
  2. But since then there is much more heightened consciousness, and traditional gender roles are increasingly seen as constraining
  3. Conflicting data about employed mothers
    - a. One image: "latch-key kids" and stressed-out mothers who try to be super moms and fail
    - b. And the opposite: women more satisfied, children more satisfied, full of respect
    - c. Hayes' point in *The Mommy Wars*
    - d. Examples of the debate are in Hertz, make the issue very clear
      - 1) Nice quotes, because they're accompanied by information about how solutions were found
      - 2) Mother works the night shift, can keep up image of her at home for the kids

- 3) Or the solution in the form of blaming the economy rather than the husband who doesn't earn a family wage

## E. Fathering

1. Traditional views:
  - a. Mother's helpers (and were seen as heroes if they did)
  - b. Mainly as breadwinner
  - c. Respected, authority, but sometimes feared
  - d. Offered companionship and emotional support to wives but not directly to young children
    - 1) This minimal nurturing role has been offered as a reason why fathers are sometimes indifferent to, or rejecting of, their children following a divorce
  - e. Bowlby, in his famous studies of the need for maternal care to ensure proper attachment and development, saw no direct caring role for fathers with infants and young children
    - 1) This is generally true for the psychoanalytic tradition
      - a) Although the early Freud saw the father as paramount in the child's psychosexual development—as was the case in the colonial period in the US
      - b) But not small children and infants: the father was limited to *symbolic* importance until later in the child's life
2. Father absence theories (causing delinquency and homosexuality) in the 50s and early 60s: people began research are another source of notions about traditional fathering
  - a. Fathers were seen as important to children's development in 3 areas:
    - 1) Achievement of socially appropriate sex-role identity

- 2) Academic performance
- 3) Moral development (absence of delinquency)
- b. Remember the Moynihan report?
  - 1) Said that “matriarchy” caused black male unemployment—the absence of male role models is the cause of delinquency
  - 2) He protested AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) policy of giving money only to father-absent families, which, he said, encouraged it
- c. Findings about the effect of an absent father
  - 1) Father absence in itself is not likely to result in lower school performance
  - 2) Delinquency: might be slightly higher, but statistically unimportant
  - 3) No solid support that resident father is the only source of masculine identification, or that an absent father affects the boy’s masculine identity
- d. And how do you define “masculinity”? Who are the proper highly masculine role models?
  - 1) Abraham Lincoln? Martin Luther King? Gandhi? Albert Einstein?
  - 2) Clint Eastwood? John Wayne?
3. Evidence of dissatisfactions with traditional (mid-century) roles?
  - a. The father was often depicted as a comic figure, ineffectual, in T.V. shows
    - 1) Two-dimensional roles
4. Literature from men who became the primary parent after divorce reveals dissatisfaction with traditional father/husband roles
  - a. A piece by Boren on what he learned about fathering in general

upon becoming a single father following divorce

- 1) He and his wife hadn't set up a traditional nuclear family
  - a) Both had been students during the entire 10 years
  - b) Both had had part or full-time jobs
  - c) He had always participated in fathering
- 2) He came to realize he'd seen himself as very masculine
  - a) As "the competitive, self-confident, achieving, dominating male, and she the more accepting and supportive female who relied on me, more than either of us would admit, for her feelings of self-worth and sense of identity"
  - b) "What neither of us were aware of during those 10 years was how much I depended on her being dependent on me"
  - c) So part of the separating was to accept her with other men, accept that she could be alone, not dependent, and realize that he was not necessarily a failure, unworthy, unlovable
- b. He found that when he was the sole authority his children disobeyed him and challenged him as they had challenged his wife when she was the primary parent
  - 1) He found out that being responsible differs from the traditional "fathering" role, which requires only financial responsibility
  - 2) The child relates differently to the primary parent, male or female, whoever "mothers"
  - 3) "He didn't seem as cooperative or to respect my authority as much as he used to"
- c. And Boren found that he himself changed: he'd become a nagger and overly sensitive

- 1) What he had accused his wife of when they were married
  - d. Fathers who take primary responsibility often say they come to have more respect for their wives as mothers
    - 1) “You *will feel* inadequate”
  - e. Boren found out that it wasn’t enough to be a firm but fair authority figure
    - 1) And pals
    - 2) And the one who pushes the child to explore
  - f. You have to have patience, sensitivity, warmth, nurturance
- F. Conclusions on male parenting
- 1. Male parenting seems good for both parents and children
  - 2. Have to do careful studies
  - 3. And we have to assume men can parent very young children
  - 4. Findings about how boys and girls turn out in single parent homes are inconclusive
  - 5. Majority of women with small children working outside the home
    - a. Concerned about increased participation of fathers/husbands not only in time with children, but housework
      - 1) Coltrane and Adams piece
    - b. It’s clear that the issue is complicated, not just a question of fairness, but symbolically weighted
      - 1) Coltrane and Adams refer to the idea of “the economy of gratitude” by Hochschild and Machung
      - 2) Feeling indebted to your spouse
        - a) Even to the point of being able to earn more—one woman saw it as a gift from her husband