



# Unique Contribution of Fathers in Emotion Socialization

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## Overview

- ❑ Emotion socialization during early childhood
- ❑ The role of fathers and mothers in the emotion socialization process
- ❑ An empirical study
  - Gerhardt, Feng, Wu, Hooper, Ku, & Chan (2020)
- ❑ Implications and future directions



# Emotion Socialization

- ❑ The processes by which children learn to understand, express, and regulate emotions in social contexts
- ❑ Early childhood is a sensitive developmental period for emotion socialization
- ❑ During Early childhood, parents are typically the primary socialization agents

(Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007; Poon, Zeman, Miller-Slough, Sanders, & Crespo, 2017)



# Emotion Socialization in the Family

- ❑ The role of parents in the emotion socialization process
  - Observation/modeling
    - Emotion contagion, social referencing, modeling
  - Emotion-related parenting practices
    - Parents' reactions to emotions, emotion-coaching
  - Emotional climate of the family
    - Family expressivity, parent-child relationships, etc.

(Denham, 1998; Eisenberg et al., 1998; Halberstadt & Eaton, 2002; Morris et al., 2007; Parke, 1994)



# Father's Role in Child Development

- Quantity of father involvement
- Contexts in which fathers are involved with children
- Father's "activation relationship" with child

(Baker, Fenning, & Crnic, 2011; Grossmann, Grossmann, Fremmer-Bombik, et al., 2002; Kahn, Brandt, & Whitaker, 2004; Lang, Schoppe-Sullivan, Kotila, Feng, Kamp Dush & Jonson; Yan, 2014; Feng, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2018)



# Father's Role in Child Development

- Unique contribution of father's parenting to child development?
  - Additive effect of fathers' parenting beyond the effect of mothers
  - Meta-analysis shows that fathers make a unique effect on predicting children's socioemotional outcomes

(Baker, Fenning, & Crnic, 2011; Grossmann, Grossmann, Fremmer-Bombik, et al., 2002; Jeynes, 2016; Kahn, Brandt, & Whitaker, 2004)



## A Naturalistic Study of Parental Emotion Socialization: Unique Contributions of Fathers

Gerhardt, M., Feng, X., Wu, Q.,  
Hooper, E. G., Ku, S., & Chan, H. M.  
(2020)

*Journal of Family Psychology, 34,*  
204-214.



## Study Aims

- Examine the contributions of father's and mother's emotion socialization in predicting children's emotion expression
- Understand the unique role of fathers in the emotion socialization processes





# Emotion Socialization Processes

- ❑ Parents' emotion expressions in everyday life
  - Modeling & family emotional climate
  - Father's and mother's modeling of emotion expression may have differential effects on child expression
  - Differences in the clarity of emotional cues/expressions
- ❑ Parents' emotion-coaching
  - Directly teaches children how to understand and regulate emotions
  - Parents' emotion coaching is associated with positive child emotional outcomes

(Buckholdt, Kitzmann, & Cohen, 2016; Castrol, Halberstadt, Lozada, & Craig, 2015; Dunsmore, Her, Halberstadt, & Perez-Rivera, 2009; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Halberstadt & Eaton, 2002; Poon et al., 2017; Wu, Feng, hooper, & Ku, 2017;



## Naturalistic Observation

- ❑ Little is known about how parents' emotion expression and coaching occur in children's daily lives
- ❑ Unobtrusive naturalistic observation can provide ecologically valid measures of parental emotion socialization and the differential role father and mother play

(Bai, Repetti, & Sperling, 2016; Slatcher & Trentacosta, 2012; Sperling & Repetti, 2018)



# Hypotheses

- Higher levels of father positive expressions and emotion coaching would be associated with
  - Higher levels of concurrent child positive expression and lower levels of negative expression in the home settings
  - Higher levels of child positive expression and lower levels of child negative expression in the lab setting 1 year later



# Method

## Participants

- Fathers, mothers, and preschool-age children (N = 69 families)
- Child age at enrollment: 3.53
- 88.4% couples were married; 86.2% children lived with their biological father
- Family income-to-needs-ratio: 2.85
- 51.0% of fathers and 78.3% of mothers had at least a college degree
- Maternal race: 75.4% White, 20.3% Black or African American, 5.8% Hispanic or Latino, 2.9% American Indian or Alaska Native

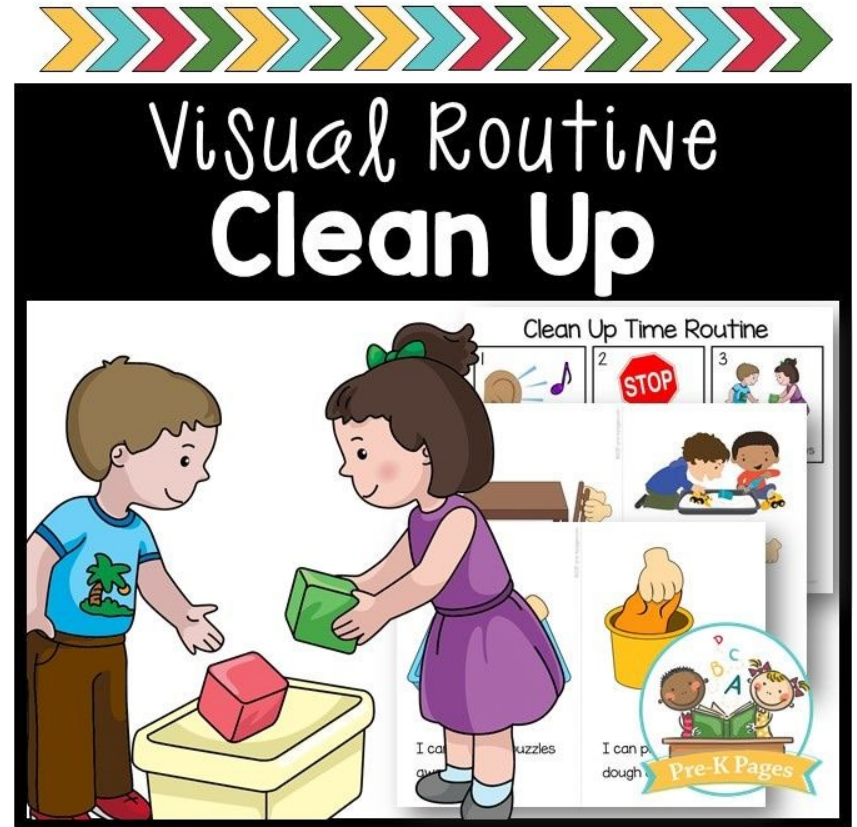
## Procedure

- ❑ **Naturalistic recording (T1)**
  - Audio recording at home on a “typical weekend” day
  - Recording of ambient sound around the child 1 min every 10 min during the day
  - Mothers’ notes on child’s activities and people s/he interacted with every half hour throughout the day



# Procedure

- ❑ Maternal report (T1)
- ❑ Laboratory observation (T2)
  - Children and mothers were observed in a 5-minute clean-up task





# Measures

## □ Home observation (T1)

- Father/mother positive expression
  - Laughing, singing happily, excited tone in voice
- Father/mother emotion coaching
  - Labeling, accepting, validating child's emotion
  - Teaching emotional skills
  - Reasoning about child emotion
- Child positive and negative expression
  - Positive: same as parent's positive
  - Negative: crying, whining, yelling, & sighing



## Measures

### ❑ Maternal report (T1)

- Maternal depressive symptoms
  - Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CESD)
- Child emotional reactivity
  - Emotional reactivity subscale of CBCL

### ❑ Lab observation (T2)

- Child positive and negative emotion expressions
  - Facial expression, tone of voice, gesture, statement
- Mother positive expression
  - Same as child positive





## Results

### ❑ Father's emotion coaching and child expression at home (concurrent associations)

	Child Positive		Child Negative	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
C gender (boy = 1)	<b>-5.04*</b>	2.39	4.11 <sup>†</sup>	2.06
C emotional reactivity	-0.33	0.68	-0.02	0.59
M positive	0.46 <sup>†</sup>	0.26	0.09	0.22
M coaching	-0.74	.45	-0.27	0.38
M CESD	-0.05	0.10	-0.02	0.08
<b>F coaching</b>	<b>2.00*</b>	0.79	1.28 <sup>†</sup>	0.68



# Results

❑ Father's emotion expression/coaching and child expression at home (concurrent associations)

	Child Positive		Child Negative	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
C gender (boy = 1)	<b>-5.90*</b>	2.44	4.05 <sup>†</sup>	2.15
C emotional reactivity	0.03	0.69	0.13	0.60
M positive	0.00	0.31	-0.00	0.27
M coaching	-0.46	0.45	-0.15	0.39
M CESD	-0.15	0.10	-0.04	0.09
<b>F positive</b>	<b>0.87*</b>	0.36	0.11	0.32



# Results

- Father's emotion coaching at home predicting child expression in the lab

	Child Positive T2	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
C positive T1	<b>0.38**</b>	0.11
C gender (boy = 1)	0.68	1.23
C emotional reactivity T2	<b>-0.67*</b>	0.32
M positive T1	0.03	.13
M coaching T1	-0.13	0.21
M CESD T1	0.10 <sup>†</sup>	0.06
<b>F coaching T1</b>	<b>0.99*</b>	<b>0.47</b>



## Discussion

- ✓ The unique contribution of father's emotion socialization over and above mother's emotion socialization
  - Both father's positive expression and coaching were associated with child positive expression at home
  - Father's emotion coaching predicted child positive expression in the lab
  
- ✓ Lack of associations between maternal expression/coaching and child emotion expressions



# Limitations & Strengths

## ✓ Limitations

- Sampling biases
- Limitations in analysis

## ✓ Strengths

- Children are observed in both naturalistic home settings and controlled lab settings
- Modeling fathers and mothers' influences simultaneously



## Implications & Future Directions

- ✓ Considering both mothers and fathers in emotion socialization in research and practice
- ✓ The moderating effect of fathers on the maternal influence in emotion socialization
- ✓ Fathers' role might be particularly important in the context of disadvantaged familial environment or negative maternal influence
- ✓ Differential relations between gender of parents and gender of children in emotion socialization



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**Thank you!**

**Questions?**

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