The Horizontal Family Dimension And Children’s Well-being

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Penn State University

Financial Disclosure:
I own a small business, Family Gold that licenses the Family Foundations program from Penn State and disseminates the materials and training. This relationship is overseen by the Conflict of Interest committee at Penn State and reported to NIH.
- Grandparents
- New romantic partners
- Step, half Siblings

- MOTHER
- FATHER/partner
- CHILD
- SIBLING

- PARENT
- CHILD
- SIBLING
Siblings Are Special

Mark E. Feinberg, Susan M. McHale

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EMOTIONAL INTENSITY, AMBIVALENCE

STORY CORPS
“It snowed last year too: I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea.”

Dylan Thomas

Sibling relationships linked to youth development:

- Social cognitive development
- Mental health
- Aggression
- Delinquency
- Substance use
- Academic attainment
- Peer and romantic relationship quality

Bahr et al., 2005; Bank et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2007; Rende et al., 2005
SIBLING VIOLENCE

• 60-80% report past-year physical violence
• 10% of US family homicides are siblings
• Linked to violence with peers, romantic partners
• Psychological abuse:
  • Intimidation, humiliation, bullying, ridicule
  • Sexual abuse/coercion

Ratings of Parent-Child Conflict Frequency
(N = 200; M age = 12.8)

Frequency of conflict

- Chores
- Social life
- Activities
- Siblings
- Appearance
- Curfew
- Schoolwork
- Money
- Health
- Behavior
Sibling Conflict / Aggression → Impaired Parenting → Coercive Style

Sibling Conflict / Aggression → Unsupervised Activities → Depression

Sibling Conflict / Aggression → School and peer problems → Sibling and Peer Deviance Training
SIBLINGS ARE SPECIAL

- Target: Substance use and risky behavior
- For 5th grader with a younger sibling
- 12 weekly afterschool sessions (1.5 hours)
- 4 sibling pairs per group
- 3 family nights (2 hours)
- 2 trained Group Leaders
SAS INTERVENTION TARGETS

Sibling Relationship
- Relationship Skills (emotion understanding, problem solving)
- Relationship Cognitions (blame)
- Joint Activities

Parenting of Siblings
- Behavioral Management
- Mediation of Sibling Conflict
- Parent Engagement

COMPLIMENT CIRCLE

1. Ways People Look
   - "I like your hair."
2. Things People Have
   - "I like your bicycle."
3. Things People Do
   - "You run fast."
4. The Way People Are
   - "You’re a good friend."
5. The Way People Behave
   - "You’re good at sharing."
TRIAL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

• Random assignment, N=174 families
• Attendance:
  • Average 10.4 out of 12 afterschool sessions
  • 81% of families attended at least 2 out of 3 family nights
• Positive ratings and feedback

RESULTS – CHILD ADJUSTMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome (reporter)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externalizing (M)</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td>(.41)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>(.59)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalizing (M)</td>
<td>-0.55*</td>
<td>(.22)</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>(.33)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control (M)</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social competence (T)</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic performance (T)</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (M) = mother-reported; (F) = father-reported; (T) = teacher-reported

* p < .05. ** p < .01.
### Parent Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depressive symptoms (M)</td>
<td>-0.10**</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive symptoms (F)</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>---</td>
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</table>

### Parenting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian control (M)</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian control (F)</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-intervention (M)</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-intervention (F)</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CONCLUSION

- One of few sibling-focused trials aimed at adolescent substance use, behavior problems
- Universal, non-stigmatizing approach is appealing to parents, schools
- Trial underway with Mexican-American families
• Child in Parent argument

PARENT

CHILD

SIBLING

PARENT
INTER-RELATED FAMILY PROBLEMS

- Parent to Child violence
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Parent alcohol, Substance use
- Parent stress depression

COMMON FACTOR: COUPLE CONFLICT

- PCV
- IPV
- Parent alcohol, Substance use
- Parent stress depression
COUPLE CONFLICT \(\rightarrow\) POOR CHILD OUTCOMES

Attachment insecurity  
Child depression & aggression  
School adjustment problems

Couple Conflict

Substance use  
Poor peer relations  
Difficult romantic relationships

A REFINEMENT: COPARENTING

• Defined as “the ways that parents work together in their roles as parents”  
  (Feinberg, 2003)
• Cooperative, mutually supportive relationship focused on raising children  
  (Bonach, 2005; Ahrons, 1981).  

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Domains of Co-parenting

Feinberg, 2003

Clip #HV5
Parents Working Together
class 2

Start at 40 seconds
THE COPARENTING RELATIONSHIP IS THE BEDROCK OF A PARENT’S SENSE OF WORTH, SECURITY, AND COMPETENCE

- Weissman and Cohen, 1977
- Adult Attachment Security
- A Major task of adulthood: Childrearing

IMPACT OF COPARENTING, TWO-PARENT FAMILIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental period</th>
<th>Child Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td>Secure attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>Conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internalizing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Childhood/Adolescence</td>
<td>Externalizing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internalizing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IN DIVORCED FAMILIES:

Coparenting quality explains **30-40% of variability** in
- Parent mental health: anxiety, depression, overall mental health
- Child mental health, and: substance use, oppositional behavior, school performance


CONCLUSIONS:

• “Coparenting conflict turned out to be the nexus”:
  • Bidirectional linkages of coparenting with both couple conflict and child problems
  • No effects of fluctuations in couple conflict on children’s internalizing or externalizing problems
  • “Coparenting as the critical process through which family spillover evolves.”


WHY TARGET COPARENTING

Generalizable
More precise target
Stronger impact
Buffer
Elevated rates of depression, stress, marital conflict
Decreased romance, affection, companionship
Irony
Are you going to mention rates of divorce during this time and in the first 7 years?

jag301, 10/27/2008
STANDARD VERSION

- Universal, group, for expectant parents
- Delivered through childbirth education
- Series of 5 prenatal and 4 postnatal 2-hour skills-based classes led by a pair of group leaders
VIDEO CLIP

Facebook/Cherish Sherry

TARGETS FOR CHANGE

Feelings
• Efficacy/confidence
• Stresses are normal
• Aware of feelings, self-soothing

Thoughts
• Information
• Expectations
• Self-talk

Communication/Behaviors
• Skills in communication, problem solving
• Role Coordination
Three Randomized Trials of Family Foundations

FF1: N=169 couples, 2 sites
FF2: N=400, 4 sites
MFF: N=59, Online program
### Outcomes, Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FF1 6mos</th>
<th>FF1 1 year</th>
<th>FF2 1 year</th>
<th>FF1 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coparenting</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Depression</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting Quality</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Self-Regulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Attention</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Sleep</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Soothability</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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</table>

### Outcomes, Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 years</th>
<th>7 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Competence</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internalizing</strong></td>
<td>*Boys</td>
<td>*Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Externalizing</strong></td>
<td>*Boys</td>
<td>*Boys</td>
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Outcomes, Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY VIOLENCE</th>
<th>FF2: 1 year (effect sizes)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPV: Psychological</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCV: Psychological</td>
<td>.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>.62</td>
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</table>

Better Birth Outcomes for Moderate to High Risk Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Indicator (moderator)</th>
<th>Higher birth weight</th>
<th>Less premature birth</th>
<th>Shorter infant stay</th>
<th>Shorter mother stay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trial 1: Cortisol</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial 2: Stress, depression, anxiety</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
Is a coparenting focused approach suitable for higher risk families?
### Outcomes, Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FF1: 7 years</th>
<th>Among higher risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Competence</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalizing</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externalizing</td>
<td>*Boys</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Adaptation</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated Learning</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>*</td>
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Cooperative coparenting consists of three items reported by the custodial mother with respect to how much influence the father had in childrearing decisions (M = 1/4 .72, SD = 1/4 1.19), how much the father helped the mother with raising the child (M = 1/4 .83, SD = 1/4 1.15), and how often (1/4 not at all, 6 more than once a week) the mother and father discussed the child (M = 1/4 2.37, SD = 1/4 1.62). These items were used as observed indicators of a latent construct representing cooperative coparenting. Conflict over childrearing was measured using three items reported by the mother indicating how much conflict there was between the mother and...
IS COPARENTING AS IMPORTANT FOR HIGHER RISK FAMILIES?

Coparenting during infancy → father involvement at age 5

Four groups of mother–father pairs:

• married
• cohabiting
• nonresidential romantic
• nonresidential nonromantic

Fagan & Palkovitz (2011)

A MOTHER...

“I was very young when I had my son. I’ve seen other girls that were ... very rebellious and stubborn towards their baby’s father, and yes, I agree, I was one of those girls that were very, very hard on him. And it’s like back then I felt as though that’s what he needed. But now that I look back on it, he just needed somebody to encourage him more than instruct him, you know. They have feelings just like we have feelings. They just have a harder time showing it.”
A FATHER...

“I feel as though she makes all the decisions, important decisions about him, and I got no say so. And when I've been over and say something to her, she catch an attitude and I just leave it alone because I don’t wanna do it.”

A HOME VISITOR:

“Communication is the biggest thing. A lot of times our parents don’t have the education....to go that deep. We can give them all the tools, we can communicate that we need to be civil, but how do we get them to apply it to their lives?”
FF@Home:

- Manualized curriculum of 11 home visits
- Male-female team
- Delivered alongside regular HV

FF ADAPTATIONS

TRIALS
- FF@Home, home-visiting w/ low-income couples
- Teen Parents: High school course
- FF-Siesta, incorporate family sleep
- FF-Alcohol reduction: Integrate SBIRT

PILOTING, PLANNING:
- Couples with child w/ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- FF-obesity prevention
- FF-gay/lesbian couples
INTERNATIONAL

Adaptations and research:

European countries (Netherlands, U.K., Austria)
Brazil
Australia, Japan
Namibia

Birth of Second Child...
Coparenting + Sibling Relations

Co-Parenting: separately and siblings
Parenting of siblings (coaching, interaction, involvement)
Sibling relationship
Parent adjustment
Child adjustment
Preschoolers argue
Toddlers argue