



***COPARENTING, MATERNAL GATEKEEPING, AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT
IN FAMILIES WITH RESIDENT FATHERS***

SARAH SCHOPPE-SULLIVAN, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Scholars from diverse disciplines and perspectives agree that a thorough understanding of fathers is not possible without consideration of the social context in which they are embedded. One critical aspect of the context of fathering is the father's relationship with the child's mother. In particular, current research focuses on the quality of the coparenting relationship, or that aspect of the interparental relationship concerned with the coordination of parenting roles and responsibilities, as the facet of the interparental relationship that most directly affects fathering. Related to the concept of coparenting relationship is the notion of maternal gatekeeping – the extent to which mothers encourage or discourage father involvement in childrearing. This presentation will review research on associations between maternal gatekeeping and resident father involvement, and assess the extent to which maternal gatekeeping provides a partial explanation for the gap in childrearing involvement that continues to exist between mothers and fathers, even in dual-earner families. Challenges in conceptualizing and measuring maternal gatekeeping will also be addressed, with particular foci on the importance of distinguishing attitudes and behaviors and understanding the role of maternal gatekeeping in relation to the broader construct of coparenting. Implications for policy will be discussed, including the relevance of maternal gatekeeping to programs designed to increase fathers' involvement in childrearing.