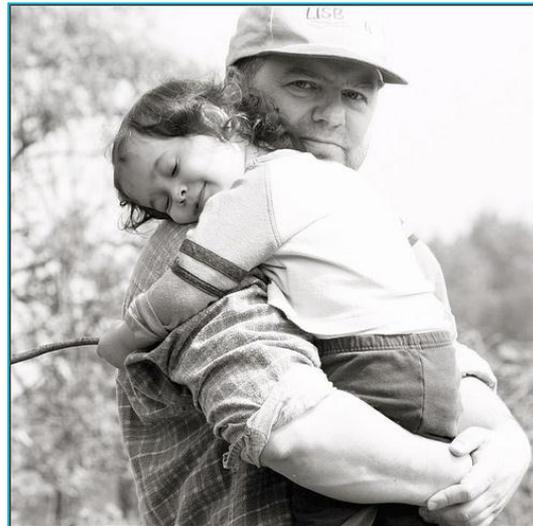# Reflections on Resident Fathering: Meanings, Trajectories, Place, and Nurturance

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Key Social Psychological Orientations and Processes
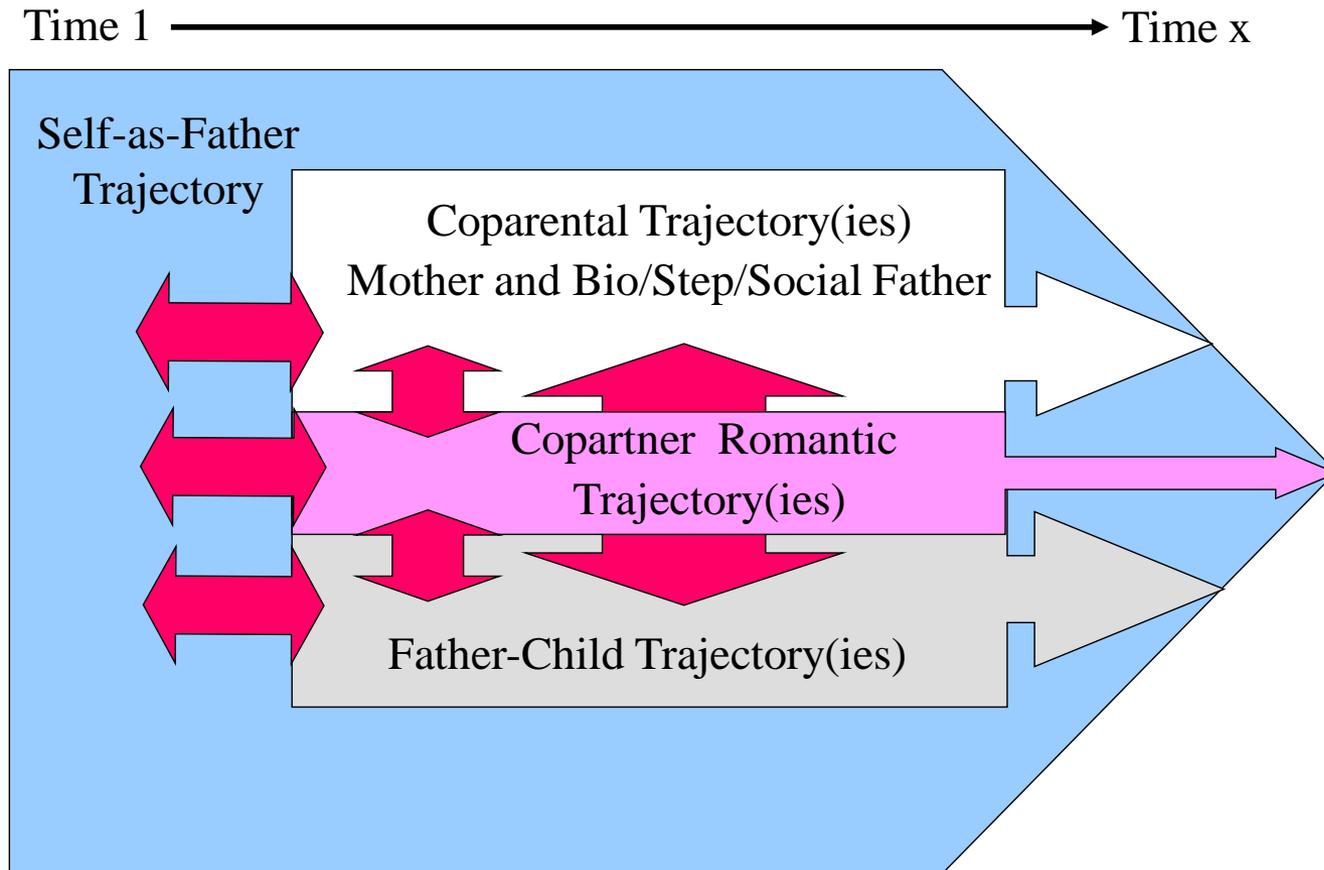
Some of My Specific Interests

- Prenatal frames, bonding, & "we-ness"
- Stepfathers' paternal claiming
- Stepfathers as father allies
- Father-youth work connections
  ◦ Community responsibility, social capital
- Nurturance and bonds
- *Gays' fathering*

Conceptualizing Residency: What Matters in Making Meanings

- Physical place

- Relational ties
  ◦ Genetic
  ◦ Adoptive
  ◦ Step/social

- Time and transitional elements

- Symbolic understandings

Model of Fathering Trajectories Over the Life Course: Social Psychological Domains

Time 1 ──────────────────────────────────→ Time x

Self-as-Father
Trajectory

Coparental Trajectory(ies)
Mother and Bio/Step/Social Father

Copartner Romantic
Trajectory(ies)

Father-Child Trajectory(ies)

Situated Fathering: Places

Situated Fathering Framework Properties
Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox (2005)

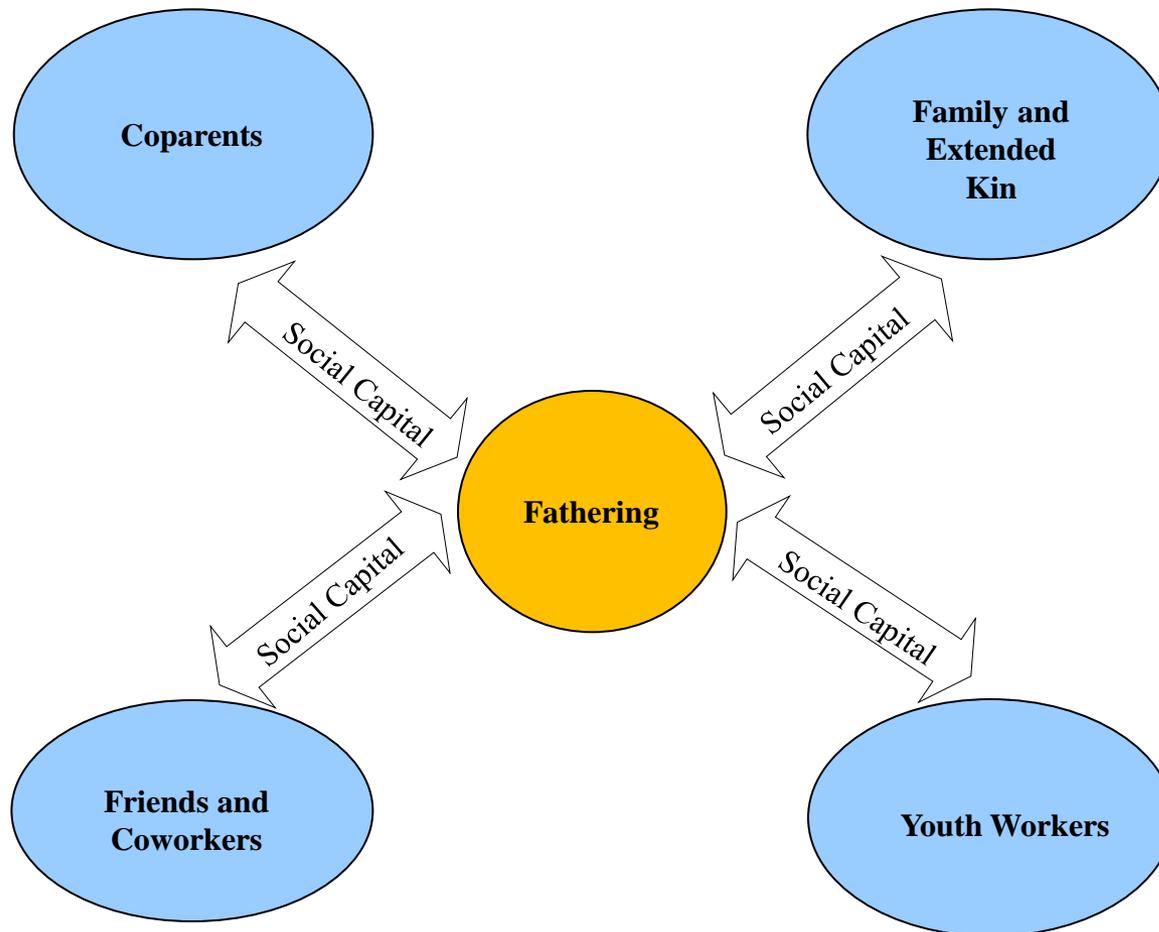| Primary	Secondary
▸ Physical Conditions	◦ Institutional/Cultural
▸ Temporal Dynamics	◦ Transitional Elements
▸ Social Structural	◦ Power and Control
▸ Private/Public	◦ Gender Attributes
▸ Symbolic/Perceptual	◦ Fatherhood Discourses

(see handout for sample questions)

Fathering as a Social Arrangement

Stepfathering:

Social Arrangement and Social Psychological Process

Paternal Claiming 10 Properties:

- Degree deliberativeness
- Degree of identity conviction
- Solo-shared identity
- Timing
- Parental role range
- Mindfulness
- Propriety work
- Naming
- Seeking public recognition
- Biological children as benchmarks

Discipline
Breadwinning
Affection
Childcare
Community
   responsibility

Degree of Deliberativeness/Identity Conviction

"It was going to be all or nothing, and that was my negotiation. It was like, if I'm coming into this relationship, then I'm coming in a hundred percent. I'm either going to be an all husband and an all father or nothing at all. I can't have like half a relationship. I can't be half a father. Where do you draw the line? At what point do you stop and say, 'oh well, I'm being a little bit too harsh here.' Or, 'I can't tell you you can't go to baseball tonight. Only your mother can do that.' If I'm going to love you, I'm going to be your father. I'm going to be there all the way."

Eddie: 35 yr old, 9 yr old stepdaughter

Solo-shared Identity

"Sometimes I feel like I'm on the outside looking in because – sometimes I **wish she was mine**. I guess because we're just that close.... **in my heart**, I feel like I'm her father.... I know **in reality, I'm not** but, I'm going to give her all the benefit that a father should. I'm going to make sure she gets those benefits. Even though her dad is giving them to her, she is given a little extra and I figure that extra go a long way."

Father Ally

- Broad Interpretation
- State of mind and relationship orientation
- Practical ways:
  - No "bad mouthing" father
  - Call father encourage him to spend time with child
  - Invite out-of-town father to spend the night
  - Set up speed dial with father's # on child's phone
  - Share information about child
  - Arrange schedule to accommodate father

Father Ally Six Properties:

- Purpose
- Development
- Awareness level
- Reciprocity routines
- Building trust/respect
- Social capital

Herman, 42 yr old, 14 yr old stepdaughter

Purpose

I told him on the phone – 'look man, I don't have a problem with you **calling my house**. I don't have a problem with you **coming to my house**. She's my wife now. I'm not insecure about that. I'm not insecure about anything. **I want you to spend time with your children, because they're your children.**

Conditions Affecting Stepfathers' Perceptions

- Male bonding
- Stepfather's romantic relationship security
- Avoiding threshold of discomfort
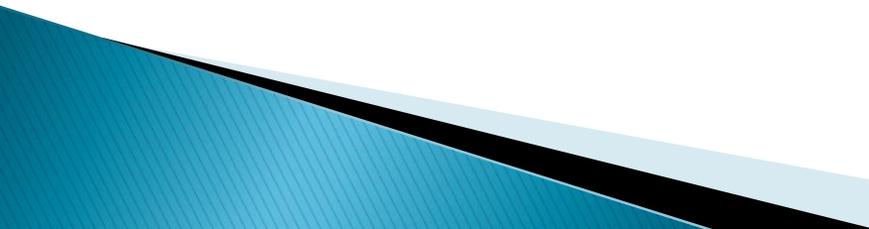- Father's perceived worthiness
- Having biological children

Male Bonding

"I haven't really had that long of a conversation with him. I would like to! I really would, because, believe it or not, I probably more on his side on a lot of things than what I am on Karla's [Simon's resident partner] side. Only because I'm a *male*. And, y'know, I'm being taken advantage of the same way as he is. *Especially* as, y'know, it pertains to child support. . . .Just because of the way that Florida [legal system] victimizes the male. And women, women victimize the male too. . . . I feel bad for Ken because I would be in the same situation as Ken."

Conditions Affecting Stepfathers' Perceptions

▸ Other Possibilities
  ◦ Stepfathers as stepchildren

  ◦ Nurturing personalities

  ◦ Mother's representation of bio dad and management

  ◦ Stepfather commitment to birth mother

  ◦ Moral imperative: child's needs first

  ◦ Stepchild's age

  ◦ Demographic similarities: stepfather/father

  ◦ Father physical proximity

Community Connections

- Youth Workers Fostering Father Involvement
  - Work schedules
  - Custodial arrangements and info access
  - Organizational gatekeeping
  - Practical tasks & liaison

- Fathers as Youth Workers

Nurturance

▸ **Nurturance: Style of Caregiving**

▸ **Bond: Feeling-State & Enduring Sentiment**
  ◦ Behavioral
  ◦ Cognitive
  ◦ Emotional
  ◦ Spiritual/ethical

  ◦ Opens doors to vulnerability, intimacy, nurturance

Building and Sustaining Bonds

▸ **Fostering "We-ness" & "Us"**

◦ Anchored in child's trust & impression of father's responsiveness

◦ Signal attachment

◦ Aspects of the stepfathering process—e.g., advocacy

Moving Forward: Interdisciplinary Research Agenda

- Nuanced focus on men's prenatal experiences

- Process of stepfathers "claiming" children

- Interactions: mothers, stepfathers, and nonresident fathers ("father ally')

- Fathers – youth workers (community responsibility)

- Constructing cognitive maps & negotiating/doing nurturance

- Fathers' orientation to own and children's health

- Gay fathers and children

Prospective Fathers' Prenatal Commitments

- Prenatal involvement with partner [PIP]

- Child-focused prenatal activity [CFPA]

- Prospective father identity construction [PFIC]

  ◦ *To what extent did the prospective father participate in childbirth preparation classes (general, breast-feeding, car safety, infant care, etc.? [PIP, CFPA]*

  ◦ *To what extent did the prospective father read literature about pregnancy, child development, and fathering? [CFPA, PFIC]*

                    (see handout for other questions)

Fathers' & Children's Health

- **American men's gendered health**
  - Men more serious problems, weaker conviction

- **Fathers' own orientation/behaviors**
  - Pre-conception, pregnancy, post-birth
  - Focus on self, child, partner
  - Parental community social capital

- **Fathers' experience ⇄ child outcomes**
  - Risk-taking, smoking, drinking, using drugs, eating, obesity, exercise
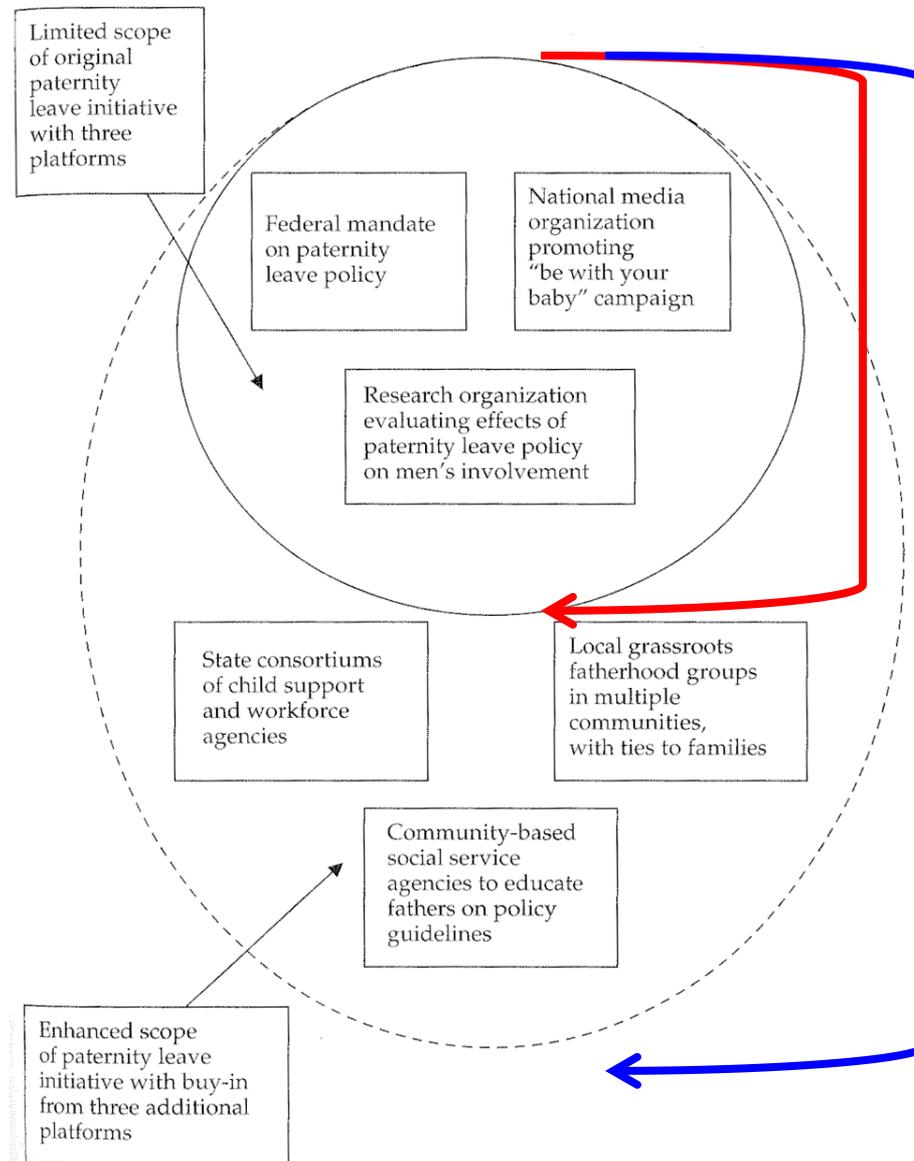 - Managing chronic health problems

Research Agenda
(Qualitative Methods Issues)

- Studies combining fathers' and children's voices

- Longitudinal studies focused on transitions

- Strategies needed to access and understand fathers' cognitive maps

Take Home Messages

▸ **As researchers and professionals working with resident fathers, we need to look for ways to:**

- More fully understand the meanings of "residency"

- Concentrate on fathering across the life course from preconception to postconception

- Examine intersections in fathering trajectories

- Study fathers' cognitive maps & related actions while accounting for cultural and physical contexts

- Design public/private initiatives to promote a more engaged, nurturing style of male caring for children—especially fathering

Figure 8.3 Collaborations Among Platforms to Promote Paternity Leave

An Expanded Lens to View Fathering

Men and Kids Realm

Procreative Realm & Reproductive Health

BLENDING

Fathering Realm