
Resilient Context of Positive Paternal Engagement: RCT of Child/Family outcomes with special focus on Hispanic cohort

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Kyle Pruett, M.D. Yale School of Medicine

Children of involved fathers tend to

- be more sociable as infants
- be more positive/accepting toward second-born sibling
- have a greater capacity for empathy, better peer relationships
- have fewer behavioral problems

... as they age, they tend to

- solve problems better, higher educational achievement
 - delay onset of sexual behavior
 - have more satisfying adult relationships, adapt better to stress
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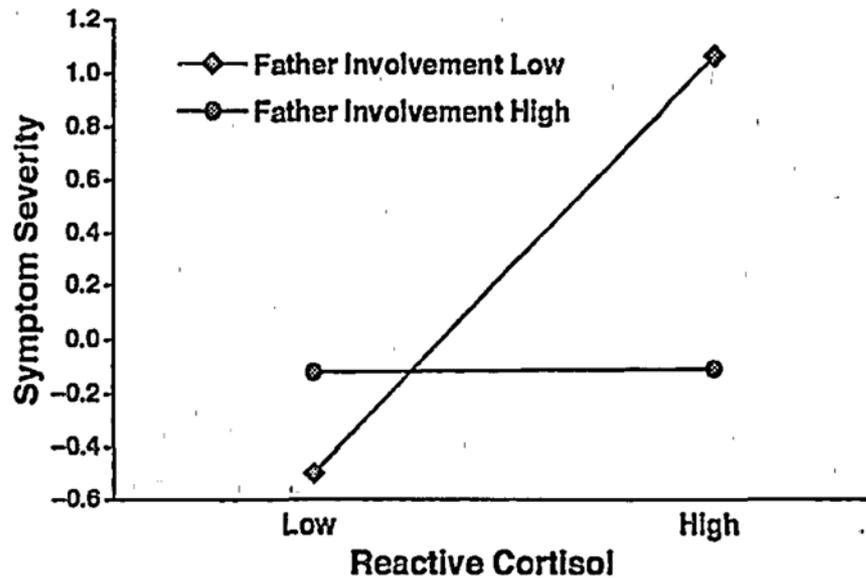


Fig. 2 Interaction of reactive cortisol and father involvement. Slope tests: father involvement low: $\beta = .951$, $t_{108} = 2.171$, $p = .03$; father involvement high: $\beta = .004$, $t_{108} = 0.045$, $p =$ not significant.

- Boyce (2006); early father involvement (by age 1) may later help children (by age 9) cope/adapt to difficult life situations. With high father involvement, higher stress reactivity is no longer a vulnerability factor for later mental health symptoms.

Men who are involved fathers tend to

- be healthier, live longer
- have more positive self image
- be happier with work, reach career success by midlife
- have more satisfying adult romantic relationships

...women paired with involved fathers

- experience lower parenting stress, depression (postnatally)
 - are more sensitive/responsive to their children
 - tend to return to work following birth of baby; less likely to leave workforce
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*ALL lower children's risk of being abused
and/ or neglected!*

Supporting Father Involvement

Development and Evaluation Team

Philip Cowan and Carolyn Pape Cowan,
University of California, Berkeley

Marsha Kline Pruett, Smith College
Kyle Pruett, Yale University

Peter Gillette, University of California, Berkeley
Data Manager

Funders: California OCAP

Random Assignment to:

Information
Session

16 week
Fathers
groups

16 week
Couples
groups

Case management for all families

Bi-monthly consultation for site staff

- Pre-intervention assessment for each parent
 - Post-intervention assessment 9 months after baseline
 - Follow-up assessment 18 months after baseline
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Curriculum

- open ended check-in (any topic: problems, successes)
 - theme for each meeting **based on the 5 areas of risk**
 - short presentations (e.g., parenting styles)
 - discussions (e.g., what to revise from families of origin?)
 - exercises (e.g., role plays, communication styles)
 - video (“Show your love”; clips from movies)
 - “homework” (e.g., plan a \$2 date to nurture couple relationship)
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Phase I (Bio Dads); First 289 Families

Results compared groups for fathers, couples, and a one-time meeting (control):

- **Control** parents didn't change/got worse; children's behavior problems increased
 - **Fathers** groups helped men increase involvement in children's care; children's problem behaviors remained stable
 - **Couples** groups increased father involvement, reduced parenting stress, depression and anxiety, kept couples' satisfaction/children's behaviors stable
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Phase II (Father figures incl): Fathers and couples groups as, or more, successful with improved...

- parents' adaptation as individuals
 - fathers' involvement in caring for children
 - couple relationship quality
 - parenting stress
 - children's behavior problems
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SFI Intervention helps break the spillover cascade of negative family relationships:

COUPLE → PARENTING → CHILD OUTCOME

Worth the trouble ...

- * Findings in children:

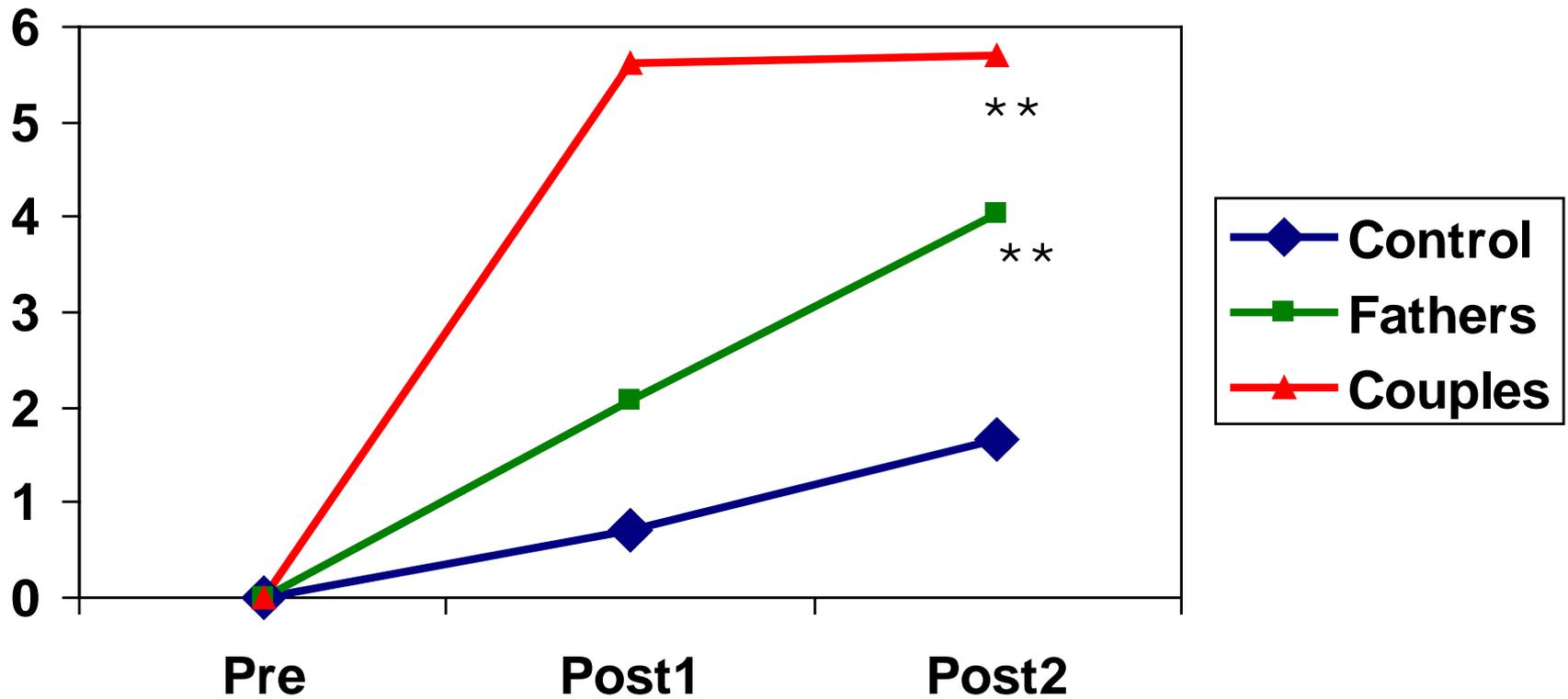
- reduced hyperactivity

- reduced aggression

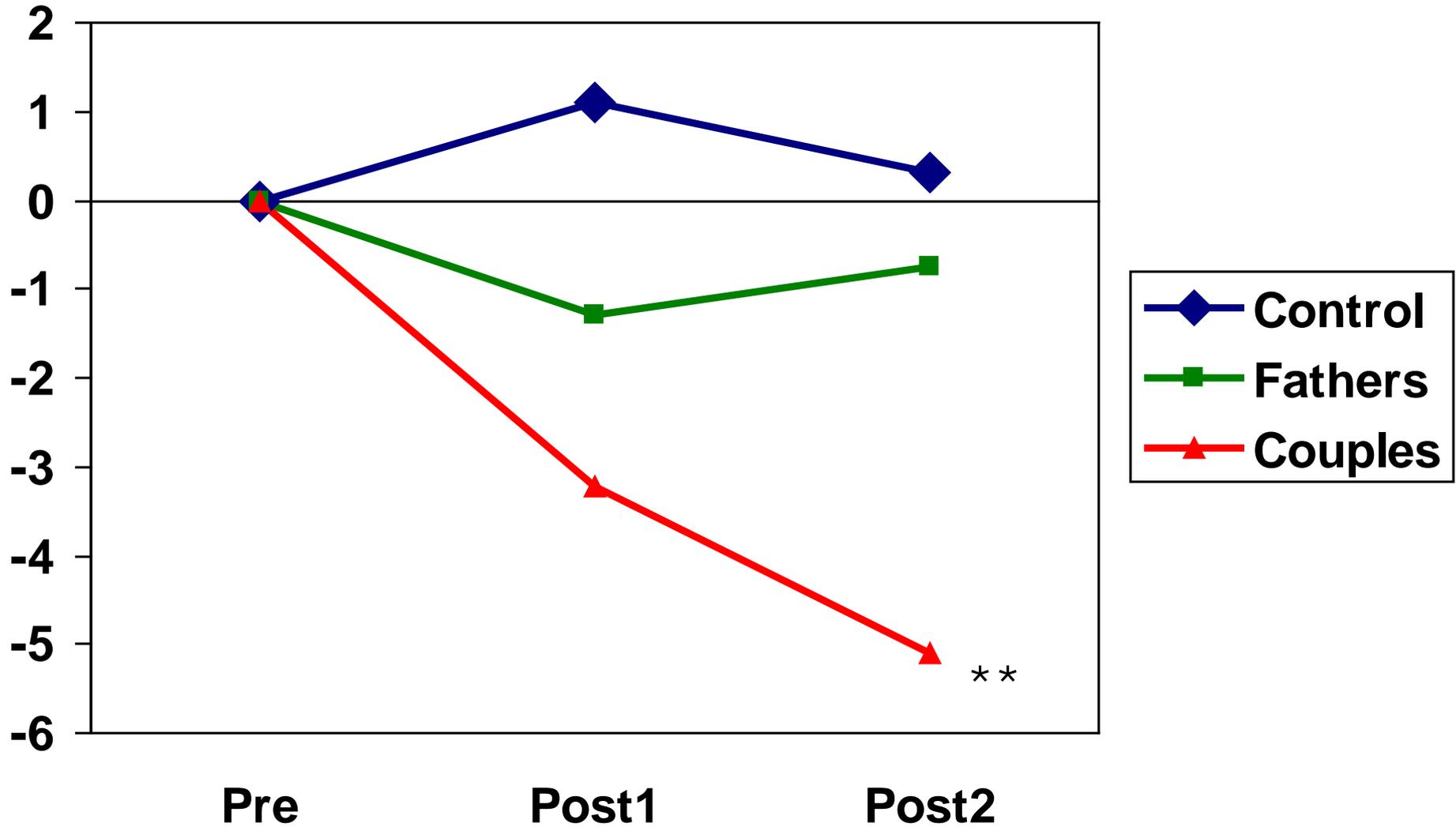
- * Findings in institutions:

- improved overall 'Father Friendliness'
for the life of grant (5 years out)

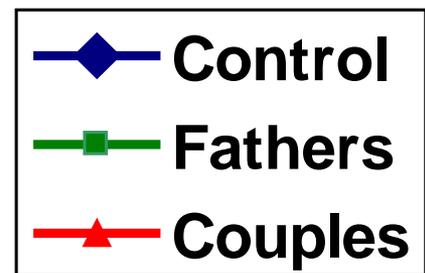
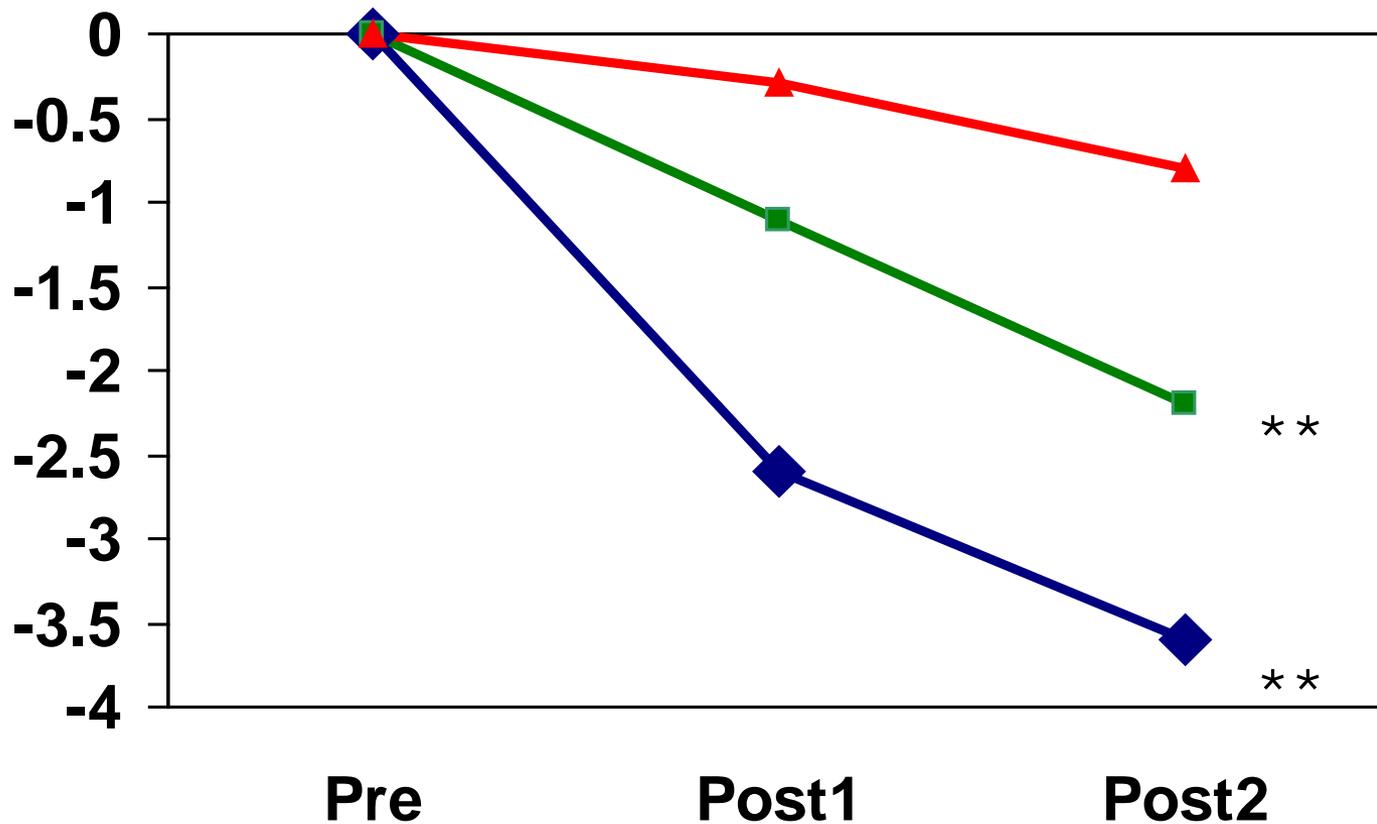
Increase in father involvement with child



Change in parenting stress



Decline in couple relationship satisfaction



Compare to Impact Study on HS Parenting Practices...

3 yr old cohort

- ❑ Less likely than control to have spanked
- ❑ More likely to have read to child previous wk
- ❑ More likely to have involved children in cultural enrichment activity

4 yr old cohort

- Less likely to have used time-out as disciplinary technique previous week
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SFI Hispanic Cohort

- 600 of 850+ SFI families
 - as effective with Caucasian cohort across all phases
 - as ineffective when mothers and fathers insecurely attached to *their* parents:
 - higher incidence of symptoms
 - be in less satisfying couple relationships
 - show harsher parenting
 - children doing less well (more internalizing, externalizing, and lower cognitive skills)
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Hispanic Cohort...

- entered the study slightly better off than A-A and Caucasian families (symptomatically, economically)
 - at baseline, take-up rate into study: 70% Caucasian, 58% A-A, 81% Hispanic
 - in CWS (Phase IV), they showed greatest reduction in violent problem solving
 - retention rates were slightly better across entire study
 - as couples, more satisfied with their relationship, less DV, fewer symptoms of depression
 - fathers more involved than Caucasian, less than A-A
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SFI and Head Start: *Papas* of Santa Cruz

- 15 HS and 3 EHS centers share SFI umbrella
- 90 % Hispanic families, mostly migrant workers
- baseline assessment by SFI staff of HS parental engagement patterns:
 - staff cautious reaching out to fathers ('avoid coming on...')
 - staff warmer and more active with moms than dads
 - initial meetings held at times fathers work
 - not told by mother re: meeting ('it's my job...really for me')
 - interested fathers didn't come ('don't want to be the only one')

System, Personnel, and Environmental Barriers

Engagement strategies 101

- SFI/HS joint father friendliness committee
 - support the Organizational Self Assessment (OSA), addressing staff concerns re: father involvement
 - issue an invitation environmentally (signs, posters, magazines), administratively (father's contact info, 'Father Facts' brochure), and interpersonally (ask mother re: father/child)
 - parental engagement training for HS staff seems less than effective
 - Parenting Policy Councils 'mixed bag' re: decision making power in the hands of parents, or informing 'how to get/stay involved as HS/EHS mom or dad'
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Practice Recommendations

- Paternal engagement
 - systems barriers (hours, staff education, supervision, specific welcome)
 - environmental barriers (posters, intake)
 - Hispanic fathers
 - maternal support (father/child?), warm welcome ('Dads welcome here')
 - sensitivity re: literacy, affection
 - honor strengths (guidance, temper control, supervision –Toth '99)
 - Hispanic parental engagement
 - Emphasize *familismo* (loyalty to roles, personable relationships) and *respeto* (elders, extended family, esp. grandparents)
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