



Parent behaviors relating to social competency in a population of preschool children in Bozeman, Montana
by Susan Cook Johnston

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Home Economics
Montana State University
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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among parent behaviors and child social competency in a population of preschool children in Bozeman, Montana. The parent behaviors of involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression (mothers only), and intimacy were examined in relation to child social competency. The study also examined the factors of parental age, parental occupation, parental educational level, and child gender in relation to child social competency.

Parents of children enrolled in the Montana State University Child Development Center laboratory preschool and parents of children enrolled in the Methodist Preschool ($n = 128$) completed and returned the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI). The IPBI was designed to measure parent behaviors in relation to child outcomes for families in rural areas. The head teacher in each preschool group studied completed the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) for each child ($n = 64$) whose parents participated in the study. The CPSCS was designed to measure child social competency in the specific areas of interpersonal behavior, social responsibility, and independence. Results indicated a significant ($p < .05$) relationship between mother responsiveness and child social competency. The results also indicated a significant ($p < .05$) relationship between parental age and child social competency.

Mother responsiveness appeared to be a key factor in relation to child social competency in the study. Low to moderate mother responsiveness may promote social competence and high levels of responsiveness may have a negative effect on child social competence as measured by the CPSCS in the study. Father age also appeared to be a key factor in relation to child social competence in the study. The relationship between father age (30-39 years) and child social competence in the study may be related to developmental interactions between parent and child in the microsystem.

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IN A POPULATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
IN BOZEMAN, MONTANA

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Susan Cook Johnston

This thesis has been read by each member of the author's committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

7-5-90
Date

Jamie Bullock
Chairperson, Graduate Committee

Approved for the Major Department

7/17/90
Date

[Signature]
Head, Major Department

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

July 25, 1990
Date

Henry J. Parsons
Graduate Dean

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among parent behaviors and child social competency in a population of preschool children in Bozeman, Montana. The parent behaviors of involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression (mothers only), and intimacy were examined in relation to child social competency. The study also examined the factors of parental age, parental occupation, parental educational level, and child gender in relation to child social competency.

Parents of children enrolled in the Montana State University Child Development Center laboratory preschool and parents of children enrolled in the Methodist Preschool ($n = 128$) completed and returned the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI). The IPBI was designed to measure parent behaviors in relation to child outcomes for families in rural areas. The head teacher in each preschool group studied completed the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) for each child ($n = 64$) whose parents participated in the study. The CPSCS was designed to measure child social competency in the specific areas of interpersonal behavior, social responsibility, and independence. Results indicated a significant ($p < .05$) relationship between mother responsiveness and child social competency. The results also indicated a significant ($p < .05$) relationship between parental age and child social competency.

Mother responsiveness appeared to be a key factor in relation to child social competency in the study. Low to moderate mother responsiveness may promote social competence and high levels of responsiveness may have a negative effect on child social competence as measured by the CPSCS in the study. Father age also appeared to be a key factor in relation to child social competence in the study. The relationship between father age (30-39 years) and child social competence in the study may be related to developmental interactions between parent and child in the microsystem.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The ability to successfully interact with others has been a valuable asset in our society. This ability has often been referred to as social competence and has required the acquisition of skills normally learned early in life within the home environment. Social competence has included behaviors commonly associated with successful peer relations. The behaviors commonly linked to successful peer relations have included: being friendly, being liked, having satisfying interactions, and being socially responsible which have been considered necessary in order to participate in society (O'Malley, 1977). Socially competent individuals have been those able to maintain positive relationships with others and within society in general (Damon, 1983). For the purposes of this study, social competence has been defined as the adequacy of children's interpersonal behavior, the degree to which they assume social responsibility, and independence (Levine, Elzey, & Lewis, 1969).

Educators, researchers, and parents have been concerned with the ability of young children to achieve an age appropriate ability to successfully interact with peers. Children who failed to develop the ability to establish positive peer relations at an early age were at risk for rejection by peers (Asher, Oden, &

Gottman, 1977), for engaging in delinquent behaviors (Roff, Sells, & Golden, 1972), for becoming academic underachievers (McCandless, 1967), for dropping out of school (Ullmann, 1957) and for developing mental health problems later in life (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973). A number of skills training programs and preventive approaches to mental health have been emphasized as possible solutions for the various consequences related to lack of social competence (Allen, Hart, Buell, Harris, & Wolf, 1964; Asher, Markell, & Hymel, 1981; McFall & Twentyman, 1973). The limitation of the skills training approach was in focusing on specific child behaviors without consideration for the various systems, including the family, which might have influenced and contributed to the child's inadequate social interaction with peers.

Early positive encounters between parents and children have formed the basis for positive interactions within the peer system. Studies reflecting the quality of parenting reported that children reared in warm, secure, and socially active family environments were more successful in establishing and maintaining positive peer relationships (Bullock, 1987; LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985; Krantz, Webb, & Andrews, 1984; Lieberman, 1977; Peery, Jensen & Adams, 1985). Many family scientists (e.g., Bigner, 1989; Murdock, 1949; Ogborn, 1933) have believed that the socialization of children was the principal remaining function of the family unit today and that the success of family life was closely interdependent with that of society at large.

Purposes and Problem Statement

The primary purpose of this study was to expand on previous research which has investigated the relationships between parent behaviors and successful formation of positive peer relations in their young children. As primary agents of the socialization process which began early in life and has continued into adulthood, parents have exerted enormous influence on their children. It was of interest, therefore, to determine which of several notable parent behaviors were related to social competence in children's peer relations.

Specifically, the study examined the relationships among father behaviors (i.e., involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, and intimacy) and mother behaviors (i.e., involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression, and intimacy) and child social competence. Family demographic variables such as father age, mother age, father occupation, mother occupation, father educational level, and mother educational level were examined in relation to children's social competence. Additionally, the study included an examination of the relationship of the gender of the children and children's social competence.

Rationale

The study of parent behaviors which relate to successful peer relations in children was extremely important for a variety of reasons. First, certain behaviors which were associated with successful peer relations included: being liked, being friendly, having satisfying interactions, and being socially responsible,

are deemed necessary for participation in society (O'Malley, 1977). Those people who were able to maintain positive relationships with others and within society in general were defined as being socially competent individuals (Damon, 1983). Second, variables associated with social competence such as positive interpersonal behavior, the ability to assume social responsibility, and independence might have increased the predictability of academic as well as social success (O'Malley, 1977). In addition, O'Malley's study of social competence presented a clearer picture of social development than was given by the more isolated components such as empathy, locus of control, and self-esteem alone. Third, research (Emmerich & Smoller, 1964) revealed that middle-class parents had clear preferences for behaviors such as assertiveness, friendliness, independence, and obedience which have been strongly linked with social competence.

Identification of significant parent behaviors that were related to child social competence was important because this information could then be used in programs of prevention and intervention to promote the development of healthy relationships. Research (Asher et al., 1977) indicated that peer rejection of socially incompetent children might have more severe consequences for later life than does low achievement.

It was important to examine the relationships among the behaviors of both fathers and mothers to the peer relations of their boys and girls. Much of the research on parent-child relations has either focused on the mother-child relationship to the exclusion of the father-child relationship (Ainsworth, 1967,

1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1969; Brody, 1969; Putallaz, 1987)) or has focused on parent behaviors without making a distinction between mothers and fathers in their interactions with their children (Erikson, 1950; Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 1971; Emmerich & Smoller, 1964). Research (Parke & O'Leary, 1975; Pederson, 1975, 1981) clearly indicated that both fathers and mothers have influenced and contributed to the developing child and might have influenced their children in different ways. Serious consideration of the role of the father in the socialization of children has occurred only in the last few decades (Lamb, 1976, 1977a; 1977b; Lewis, Feiring & Weinraub, 1976; MacDonald, 1987; Pederson, 1981).

While the literature has suggested that satisfactory family life involved positive parent-child interactions which were related to social competence (Baumrind, 1972), more research was clearly indicated to understand the relationships of adult behaviors to children's social competence.

Conceptual Framework

There were three major theoretical approaches applied to the study of social competence in young children. The first theoretical approach has been the ecological view of human development which stresses the importance of relations between the developing person and the immediate surroundings in which the development occurred (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner described the immediate environment as a microsystem composed of the physical space and materials present, the activities that people engaged in with

and without each other, and people in roles and relationships to the child. For the purposes of this study, the microsystem has consisted of female and male adult caregivers in which participants engaged in the particular roles of mother and father, daughter and son.

Social behavior between parent and child has involved direct patterns of interaction in which the child was a participant. The bidirectional nature of parent-child interactions has been recognized (Bigner, 1989), but there have been notable methodological difficulties in properly measuring reciprocal effects. The statistical methods commonly used for analyzing bidirectional effects are mathematically dependent on assumptions which are inherent in unidirectional causal models (Feiring & Lewis, 1978). Therefore, bidirectional influences have been very difficult to measure and describe with any accuracy (Feiring & Lewis, 1978). It has been valid to conceptualize the direct interactions between child-parent and parent-child as unidirectional rather than simultaneous and bidirectional to avoid the methodological and mathematical problems of dealing with reciprocal interactions. Despite problems in quantification, fathers, mothers and children clearly have influenced each other directly by engaging one another in social interaction (Feiring & Lewis, 1978).

Social behaviors between mothers and fathers and their children began as direct interactions in infancy. It was important to note that both similarities as well as differences were revealed in the father-child and mother-child subsystems of the family microsystem beginning in infancy (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Qualitative differences were noted in father-infant and mother-infant

interactions. Researchers (Lamb, 1975; Newson & Newson, 1968) noted that mothers were more likely to engage in caregiving activities and to hold the infant while performing these activities. The researchers also noted that fathers commonly spent more time holding and interacting with their infants during play. Infants have elicited different kinds of interactions with fathers compared to mothers (Yogman, Dix, Tronick, Adamson, Als, & Brazelton, 1976), and older infants were reported to seek a more active role in interactions with their mothers compared to their fathers (Vandell, 1976). Qualitative similarities in mother-infant and father-infant interactions were noted in the numbers of interactions, the number of vocal behaviors, and the percentage of interactions initiated or terminated (Vandell, 1976). These qualitative differences in the functioning of the mother-child and father-child subsystems noted here have perhaps reflected a unique relationship of fathers and mothers to the development of their young children.

The second theoretical approach to social competence concerned the child's acquisition of social skills. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) has generated many hypotheses which view adults as sources of positive reinforcement for socially skilled behavior and as socially competent models for the observational learning of their children. Socially active parents have been highly salient models of social skills. Parental involvement with friends and in the community has provided a directly observable, socially skilled performance and the vicarious reinforcement for socially adaptive behavior which has been related to child social competence (Krantz et al., 1984).

Direct interaction with involved, socially competent and aware parents and with siblings has provided critical opportunities to learn, rehearse, and refine social skills. Social skills such as initiating, maintaining, and conflict resolving were common to successful social interaction in family contexts as well as in peer settings (Asher, Renshaw, & Hymel, 1982).

The third theoretical approach emphasized parenting behaviors in relation to child outcomes. Styles of parenting used in the family and the implications for child social outcomes have been described (Baumrind 1967, 1971, 1973). Baumrind (1973) has found that the development of instrumental competence or capacity for positive social interaction, self-reliance, and self-control in young children was directly related to the style of parenting and the patterns of parental authority. Baumrind (1967) identified three major styles of parenting which she termed authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian. Authoritative parents who exercised high levels of control with warmth and positive encouragement of their child's independent efforts had children who were the most self-reliant and instrumentally competent. Warm, undemanding, permissive parents had children who were the least self-controlled or instrumentally competent of those preschool children studied. Baumrind (1967) also found that detached, controlling, authoritarian parents produced children who were withdrawn, distrustful, and not instrumentally competent.

Nominal Definitions

The following definitions are presented to clarify terminology used throughout the study.

- (1) Free expression -- The parental behavior of expressing the emotions they are feeling, including fear, annoyance, frustration, and disagreement with others where the child can see and/or hear (Crase et al., 1979).
- (2) Independence -- The ability of preschool children to initiate involvement as measured by the CPSCS (Levine et al., 1969).
- (3) Interpersonal behavior -- The ability of preschool children to play with others and to communicate wants as measured by the CPSCS (Levine et al., 1969).
- (4) Intimacy -- The parental behavior of maintaining close physical proximity to the child and openly expressing physical affection to the child and others in the child's presence (Crase et al., 1979).
- (5) Limit setting -- Parental consistency and predictability in defining daily routines and establishing what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior for the child and firmly enforcing the limits set by parents (Crase et al., 1979).
- (6) Microsystem -- The setting, context, and environment in the family. In this study, the microsystem is limited to the female and male adult caregivers and their child (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).
- (7) Parental age -- The chronological age in years of mothers and fathers as reported on the demographic questionnaire.

- (8) Parental involvement -- The extent of parental participation in the child's activities, playing with the child, physically assisting the child with tasks, and facilitating the child's problem solving when the need was expressed despite parental involvement in other activities (Cruse, Clark, & Pease, 1979).
- (9) Parental occupation -- The job reported by mothers and fathers on the demographic questionnaire. In this study, occupations were grouped after Hollingshead (1975) Four Factor Index and analyzed in three groups:
 - (1) major professions (e.g., attorneys, physicians, students preparing for a profession, homemakers);
 - (2) self-employed (owns and runs a business);
 - (3) others (i.e., laborers, clerks, managers, and public school teachers).
- (10) Reasoning guidance -- The parental behavior of helping the child learn acceptable behavior by supplying reasons for why a behavior is acceptable or unacceptable while giving support to the child's emotional expression (Cruse et al., 1979).
- (11) Relationship -- The degree of homogeneity between group means as obtained by one-way ANOVAs in the study (Kerlinger, 1973).
- (12) Responsiveness -- Prompt parental response to a child's expressed or implied need without regard to the immediacy of the need (Cruse et al., 1979).
- (13) Social behavior -- The observable actions, gestures, and verbal exchanges performed by an individual when interacting with another person.

- (14) Social competence -- The adequacy of preschool children's interpersonal behavior, degree to which they assume social responsibility, and independence as measured by the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) (Levine et al., 1969).
- (15) Social incompetence -- The inadequacy of preschool children's interpersonal behavior, the degree to which they spend time in disagreeable peer interactions, the degree to which they assume social responsibility, and independence as measured by the CPSCS (Levine et al., 1969).
- (16) Social responsibility -- The ability of preschool children to help others and to accept limits as measured by the CPSCS (Levine et al., 1969).
- (17) Social skills -- The degree to which an individual was able to function effectively in face-to-face social encounters (Hatch, 1987).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of literature was conducted to examine the relationships among parental behaviors and children's social competence. A review was also specifically conducted on the following topics as they relate to parent-child relationships and the development of children's social competence: (a) the relationships among parental behaviors and children's social competence, (b) social competence in children, (c) the relationships among parental behaviors and social competence in boys and girls, (d) and demographic information such as parent age, parent occupation (mother's job and father's job), and parent educational level (number of years in school). The literature was reviewed using the ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1977), the social learning framework of Bandura (1977), and the framework of parenting styles and parental authority as related to child outcomes described by Baumrind (1967, 1971, 1973).

Relationships Among Parental Behaviors
and Children's Social Competence

The ability to be socially competent has required that children develop certain social skills and behaviors which are learned early within the home environment. Researchers have focused on the role of parents in this early family environment by investigating the relationships between child social competence and parental roles regarding attachment (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth & Bell, 1969), parental styles of child rearing (Baumrind, 1967, 1971, 1972), parental support (Ellis, Thomas, & Rollins, 1976), and a secure environment (Maslow, 1962).

Research (Emmerich & Smoller, 1964) has indicated that middle-class parents value instrumental competence in their young children. Baumrind (1973) defined instrumental competence as behaviors which are independent and socially responsible including: friendliness to peers, cooperation with adults, acting in a dominant rather than a submissive fashion, and seeking achievement of goals in a purposeful manner. Parents value independent and socially responsible behavior in their children because these behaviors contribute in a positive way to effective functioning and survival in society (Baumrind, 1973). Baumrind (1966, 1967, 1973) reported that authoritative parental behavior (high control with warmth and encouragement) produced self-reliant, self-controlled and socially responsible behavior in children. Authoritarian parental behavior (high control with low warmth) and permissive parental behavior (noncontrolling

and nondemanding) did not produce socially responsible behaviors in children (Baumrind, 1967, 1973).

The social participation behavior of parents as a potential influence on the development of socially competent behavior in their kindergarten children has been reported (Krantz et al., 1984). Forty-two kindergarten children were assessed using measures of social behavior, popularity, and social cognitive ability. Parental social contacts were determined by interview. Results were analyzed using the framework of social learning theory. Findings indicated that social participation with friends by mothers and fathers and social participation in the community for mothers was consistently related to child social competency.

The influence of the age of the child on the relationship between parental behaviors and the development of empathy in preschool children aged three, four, and five years from six day care centers has been investigated (Abraham, Kuehl, & Christopherson, 1983). Using the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI), Abraham et al. (1983) reported that maternal behaviors of limit setting, free expression, and reasoning guidance and paternal behaviors of limit setting and reasoning guidance were positively correlated to development of empathy in the children studied with noted differential age effects. For example, mother limit setting behavior was negatively related to empathy for five-year-olds, but not significantly related to empathy for three and four-year-olds. Mother free expression was positively related to empathy for three-year olds, but unrelated to empathy for four and five-year-olds. Mother intimacy was negatively related to

empathy for three-year-olds, and not significantly related to empathy for four and five-year-olds. Father limit setting was negatively associated with empathy for three-year-olds, but positively related to empathy for five-year-olds. Father reasoning guidance was positively related to empathy for three-year-olds, but was not significantly related to empathy for four and five-year-old children. These findings reflected not only developmental changes in children's perception of empathy, but of changing awareness of adult sex roles and a resulting change in their interactions with their mothers and fathers.

The prosocial behavior (helping and sharing behavior, social actions) of thirty-three preschool children and their families and the relationship to parental reports of guidance behaviors as measured by the IPBI has been studied (Mullis, Smith, & Vollmers, 1983). Limit setting behavior by the mother and the father was a good predictor of sociable acts and sharing in the children. This study indicated that both parents may work together to aid the development of prosocial behaviors in their children by using guidance techniques which focused the children's attention on the effects of their behavior on others.

Children's sociometric status (peer ratings) have been carefully examined among first grade children in relationship to parental behaviors (Putallaz, 1987). The results were analyzed using the framework of Baumrind which has focused on the influence of parenting behaviors on young children, and the social learning framework. The results of direct observations of mother-child interactions, maternal interactions with another mother, and child-child interactions indicated significant relations between maternal social knowledge

and the social knowledge, behavior, and sociometric status of the children. For example, mothers of higher status children were more positive and less disagreeable in interactions with their children than were lower status mothers. The behaviors mothers exhibited with their children were highly related to child interactions both with the mothers and with peers. Findings suggested that children acquired at least some of their social behaviors in interactions with their mothers and that these social behaviors influenced child sociometric status with peers.

Social Competence in Children

Parents, researchers and educators have been concerned with the ability of young children to achieve an age appropriate competence in successfully interacting with peers. For obvious reasons of convenience, social competence has been measured in schools, preschools, or day care center environments. Children have been rated for social competence by parents, teachers, peers, and by self-ratings. Despite the finding that teacher ratings were more accurate predictors of children's behaviors in small groups (Factor & Schilmoeller, 1984), assessment of social competence in young children was consistent across raters whether teacher, peer, or self for preschoolers (Connolly & Doyle, 1981; Dubow & Cappas, 1988), and for kindergartners (Begin, 1983). Teacher ratings were accurate predictors of social competence and peer friendship and likability in first graders (Beck, Collins, Overholser, & Terry, 1984). The research strongly supported the idea that parent report, teacher ratings, peer ratings, and self

ratings are valid predictors of social competence in young children of both preschool and elementary school age.

Social competence has been measured in a sample of over 100 three and four-year-olds and defined as social influence effectiveness (Wright, 1980). The most effective discriminator of social competence was found to be the success of child-child social influence attempts as directly observed in a preschool setting (Wright, 1980). Child-child social influence attempts were measured based on peer social interaction categories developed by White and associates (White & Watts, 1973). The social behaviors measured included: seeking the attention of a peer, using a peer as a resource, leading/following a peer, expressing affection/hostility to a peer, and competing with a peer. Wright (1980) emphasized that social competence in preschool children was more likely to be reflected in interactions with peers than in interactions with adults.

The families of 22 girls and 25 preschool boys were surveyed to assess the relationship between parental factors of indulgent attitude, protective attitude, rejecting attitude, and disciplinarian attitude and child competence in social interactions with peers using the Maryland Parent Attitude Survey (MPAS) (Turner & Harris, 1984). The findings were analyzed using the framework of parent-child interactions in the family microsystem and of parenting behaviors as they relate to child outcomes in learning social competence. Combined scores for mothers and fathers on the MPAS indicated that parental nurturing behaviors were positively associated with the social competence of their

preschool children. Findings also indicated that parental rejecting and disciplinarian behaviors were negatively associated with child social competence.

Parents of 120 preschool children identified by their peers as popular (liked by peers), amiable, isolated (ignored by peers) or rejected (disliked by peers) completed the Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) (Peery et al., 1985). The PARI allowed researchers to report on such maternal behaviors as patriarchal family, self-confidence, use of praise, low preference for young children, promotion of independence, and low use of discipline. The PARI also allowed researchers to measure such paternal behaviors as definite expectations, high child orientation, child rearing is mother's duty, use of threat, low preference for young children, promotion of independence, and reaction to intrusive child behavior. Findings were analyzed using the framework of parenting behaviors as related to children learning social competence, and parent-child interactions in the microsystem of the family. Mothers of popular and amiable children scored lower on patriarchal family structure, were more self-confident, were high on preference for young children, were more apt to promote independence, and were higher in use of discipline compared to mothers of isolated or rejected children. Fathers of popular and amiable children were less likely to have definite expectations for their child's behavior, to have low child orientation, to perceive child rearing as mother's duty, to frequently use threats, and to react negatively to intrusive behavior by the child compared to fathers of isolated and rejected children. Parental responses of child sociometric status (i.e., popular, amiable, isolated, or rejected) correlated

with peer classifications of child sociometric status (i.e., popular, amiable, isolated, or rejected) 49% of the time for mothers and 44% of the time for fathers. Findings indicated a potentially important relationship between parental perceptions and child-peer relations in early childhood (Peery et al., 1985).

Children 35-73 months of age from 36 middle-, upper-middle-, and upper-class families in Ontario, Canada were observed during free play in the regular classroom setting, and again in smaller free play sessions of four children in a small group room (Factor & Schilmoeller, 1984). Actual observational scores using a modified Parten scale were compared to teacher ratings in the areas of peer compatibility, peer responsiveness-positive (accepted), peer responsiveness-negative (rejected), peer responsiveness-neutral (neglected), level of social play, and degree of compliance/aggression. Factor and Schilmoeller reported that teacher ratings were significantly related to children's social ability in small group settings. For example, child social competence was positively related to observed peer compatibility, neutral peer response (neglected), positive peer response (accepted), social maturity. Child social competence was negatively related to peer noncompatibility, negative peer responsiveness (rejected).

Teacher reports were used to assess social competence in children from 31-64 months of age in four day care centers serving middle- and lower middle-class families in Quebec, Canada (Connolly & Doyle, 1981). Data from a peer-rated picture sociometric measure, teacher ratings, and behavioral observations was collected. Social competency was linked to verbal assertiveness, to positive activity, positive initiation, and successful assertion in interactions with peers.

Social competence was negatively related to negative assertiveness, and negative initiation during interactions with peers. Connolly and Doyle found that teacher ratings were more highly predictive of actual social competence than the picture sociometric measure based on comparison with actual observational data.

A sample of four to five-year-old first-born children in two preschool groups were assessed for peer social competence by teacher ratings, peer sociometrics and behavioral measures of social participation, attention structure and social dominance (LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985). Findings indicated that social competency with peers was positively related to emotional warmth, social maturity, and peer popularity. Findings also indicated that children with secure attachment histories were highest in social competence and peer status.

Three hundred and sixty-six second, fourth, and sixth grade students completed peer nomination instruments in order to establish peer social competence over a variety of social situations including: attending birthday parties, having friends, eating lunch, and playing together after school (Luftig, 1985). Children were evaluated as popular (liked by peers), neglected (ignored by peers), and rejected (disliked by peers). The stability of peer social competence across social situations of birthday parties, ongoing friendship, eating lunch, and playing together after school was found to be quite high for all age groups surveyed.

In a classic study, social interactions for each of 19 preschool children were recorded by McCandless and Marshall (1957). The children were assessed by their peers using pictorial sociometric methods and by teacher report of

friendships. McCandless and Marshall reported that child social behaviors, specifically, the degree of the child's participation in friendly, spontaneous social interactions was positively related to social acceptance and positive peer and teacher perceptions of social competence.

Groups of third, fourth and fifth grade children from four lower-middle-class urban and rural schools were identified by teachers, peers and by self-report as popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average in social status (Dubow & Cappas, 1988). The findings confirmed previous research (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982; French & Waas, 1985) in which teachers and peers viewed popular children as the most socially competent, neglected children as having relatively little difficulty, and rejected children as having the most severe adjustment problems. The results indicated that the social problems for neglected children were limited to peer report of lack of group cooperation and leadership ability. There were limitations on generalizing of these results and a very small sample size among the children labeled as controversial.

Direct observation of the social interactions in a sample of 164 children from three to six years of age from four Head Start Centers revealed that the chief predictor of sociometric acceptance for a child among peers was a high incidence of positive social interactions (Quay & Jarrett, 1984). It is important to emphasize that these findings support previous research (Hartup, Glazer, and Charlesworth, 1967) on the correlation between these two variables. The findings also stress the efficacy of intervention programs which focus on helping

children with poor social competence develop the ability to interact in a positive manner with their peers.

Recent studies (Ladd, 1983; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981) of social behaviors in third and fourth grade children revealed that children who spent less time in positive social interactions and more time in antagonistic and unoccupied activities were not liked and were rejected by their peers. Direct observations of behaviors and peer evaluation of social behavior also indicated that rejected children conducted their social interactions in small groups with younger children or children who were not well liked by classmates (Ladd, 1983). Children who were well liked and were popular were frequently named as friends by classmates.

Second and third grade children whose social behaviors were disagreeable and who were not likely to offer a general rule or reason for disagreement or for criticism of peers were unpopular with peers (Putallaz & Gottman, 1981). Unpopular children were unskilled at group entry, were disagreeable, stated their own feelings, called attention to themselves, and asked more informational questions than popular children. Findings indicated that popular children used some of the same entry strategies as unpopular children (i.e. asking questions) but used them less frequently than did unpopular children. Popular children were less likely to disagree or to call attention to themselves by stating their opinion. Popular children were more skilled at integrating themselves into the group and timing their questions to gain some information without calling undue attention to themselves.

Direct observation and peer assessment of social interactions among children enrolled in a university-based laboratory preschool program revealed that unpopular children were excluded from social interactions with their more popular peers who are more socially competent (Roopnarine & Adams, 1987). Roopnarine and Adams defined this exclusion from social interaction as social segregation. Social segregation related to actual peer assessment only for children of moderate social competence compared to those children assessed by peers to have poor or very good social competence.

Relationships Among Parental Behaviors and Social Competence in Boys and Girls

Child outcomes for social competence and instrumental competence have been related to parenting styles. Instrumental competence was defined in a classic study (Baumrind, 1967) as the behaviors of positive social interaction, self-reliance, and self-control. The related concept of social competence has been defined as the adequacy of interpersonal behavior, the degree of social responsibility, and independence (Levine et al., 1969).

Baumrind (1967) found that children who lacked social responsibility and were not very instrumentally competent had permissive parents. Baumrind also found that children who were not independent and were only moderately socially responsible had authoritarian (high control, low warmth) parents. Children who had the highest degree of social responsibility and instrumental competence had parents who were authoritative (high control, high warmth and discipline with

induction). These general outcomes for boys and girls were noted, but some sex differences in the effects of parenting styles were apparent in subsequent studies (Baumrind, 1971, 1973, 1977). Authoritative parenting was strongly associated with being friendly and cooperative for boys (Baumrind, 1971, 1973). In the same two studies, Baumrind reported that authoritative parenting seemed to be correlated with self-reliance, achievement orientation, and a tendency to perform in a domineering fashion in social interactions with peers for girls. In families where the predominant parenting styles were either permissive or authoritarian, boys were less likely than girls to develop strong social skills, self reliance and instrumental competence, and were more likely than girls to exhibit angry and defiant behaviors in social interactions (Baumrind, 1971, 1973).

Sex differences were again observed in the effects of style of parenting on child outcomes in a longitudinal study of forty-two girls and fifty-six boys rated on assertiveness and boldness of social interaction (Baumrind, 1977). Boys were much more likely than girls to experience loss of achievement orientation and social withdrawal during the early school years if the major style of parenting had been authoritarian in nature. Girls were more agentic (assertive and capable in solving social problems) and more likely to actively contribute their own ideas to family discussions in cases where interaction patterns were argumentative, abrasive and more authoritarian in nature.

A multimeasure and a multicontext study of the relationship between father-child and mother-child play and children's competence in a population of preschool children ranging in age from 3-4 years and their parents was

performed (MacDonald & Parke, 1984). Maternal verbal behavior and paternal physical play were positively related to child peer relations, especially for boys. Maternal directiveness was positively linked to popularity for girls and paternal directiveness was negatively linked to popularity for boys and girls. The researchers (MacDonald & Parke, 1984) emphasized obvious linkages between family and peer social systems.

The parent-child interactions of preschool boys three to five years of age who were popular, neglected, or rejected in their social interactions with others have been compared (MacDonald, 1987). Fathers of popular and rejected boys engaged in less physically affectively arousing, physical play than did the fathers of neglected boys. In physical play among popular boys, there was less overstimulation and avoidance of stimulation than for rejected boys. The researcher (MacDonald, 1987) emphasized the importance of proper regulation for effect, and illustrated the strong links between the parent and peer social system.

Demographic Information

A review of the literature (e.g., Abraham et al., 1983; Factor & Schilmoeller, 1984; Fowler, 1980; LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985; MacDonald & Parke, 1984; McCandless & Marshall, 1957; Mullis et al., 1983; Pettit, Dodge, & Brown, 1988; Putallaz, 1987; Turner & Harris, 1984) on social competence revealed that reporting of demographic information such as parent age, parent educational level, and parent occupation was often merely descriptive in nature.

The factors of parent age, parent educational level, and parent occupation are family demographic factors which affect the ways in which mothers and fathers interact with their sons and daughters (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Interactions of family members in their roles as mothers, fathers, sons, or daughters have formed an integral part of the microsystem which shapes child outcomes in social competence (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

In a study of parent behaviors related to child social competence, parent age was negatively correlated to the parent factors of intimacy and reasoning guidance as measured by Crase, Clark, and Pease (1980). Demographic data were collected on visits to each family and included parent ages, parent education, family size, farm size, family income, child's age, sex and birth order. The findings supported the idea that as mothers and fathers increased in age and children became older, there was increased resistance by children to parental display of affection. The resistance by children was accompanied by the parental perception that the children needed less intimate physical contact (Crase et al., 1980). The findings also supported the idea that the older the father and the mother, the less likely mothers were to engage in reasoning with their children. Since fathers tended to use reasoning more with increasing age of the child, the researchers (Crase et al., 1980) suggested that mothers may relinquish their reasoning guidance role as children become older.

Children attending 56 primary schools and 57 secondary schools in Australia were studied in order to determine the relative contributions of family structure resources (i.e., parental income, education, occupation, health, and

household density or number of people living in the house/number of rooms) and family process resources (i.e., parental help, time, and attention) to child competence in the four areas of reading ability, self-esteem, everyday skills, and social competence (Amato & Ochiltree, 1986). Findings for family structure resource items sampled indicated that reading ability was positively related to parental income, parental occupation, and mother education for primary students sampled. Reading ability was positively related to father education and mother education, but was negatively related to household density for secondary students sampled. Self-esteem was positively related to parental occupation, mother education, and parental health, but was negatively related to household density for primary students sampled. Self-esteem was positively related to parental health for secondary students sampled. Skills performance was significantly and positively related to mother employment for primary students, with no significant relationships emerging for secondary students sampled. Social competence was significantly related to parent health for primary students sampled.

The findings of Amato and Ochiltree (1986) for family process resources revealed that parental help, time, and attention was positively related to high self-esteem in the children sampled. Results showed that skills performance was positively related to mother help for both primary and secondary students sampled. Results also revealed that social competence was positively related to parental attention, specifically, parental educational aspirations for primary and

secondary students sampled. Father interest was positively related to social competence for secondary students sampled.

The components of the personality (i.e., independence, ego resilience, and ego undercontrol) of one hundred forty Swedish preschoolers were assessed by mothers and care providers according to a scale developed by Block (Lamb, Hwang, Bookstein, Broberg, Hult, & Frodi, 1988). Findings revealed that parent occupations (Hollingshead, 1975) together with support from maternal grandparents were major determinants ($R = .40$) of components of child personality directly related to social competence.

Preschool children were grouped according to socioeconomic status (SES) by parent occupation and were assessed for social competence by both teachers and peers (Ramsey, 1988). The middle-SES children used reassuring and sharing social strategies more frequently than did low SES children. Aggression was negatively related to social competence for the middle SES group, but not for the low SES group. High social competency ratings were related to reassurance for both middle- and low-SES children. Social competence reported by peers was related to teacher assessments for the middle SES group, but not the low SES group.

Summary

In summary, several salient points emerge:

1. Early family history and attachment patterns were significant in predicting social competence.

2. Parent behaviors may be highly predictive of social competence in young children, and yet studies of parental influences on their children have often disregarded the unique relationship between the behaviors of mothers and fathers and the development of social competence in their boys and girls.
3. There was a body of research information which supported the efficacy of using teacher evaluations as predictors of social competence in the classroom for preschool and elementary school children.
4. Demographic factors in the family including parental age, parental occupation, and parental educational level were related to child outcomes for social development.

Based on a literature search, the need exists to further explore parent behaviors and perceptions which may be related to social competence in young children, and the possible unique contribution of mothers and fathers to the social development of their boys and girls.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the review of literature and the population studied, the following research hypotheses were postulated:

- (1) There is no significant relationship between father scores on the subscales of the IPBI and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (2) There is no significant relationship between mother scores on the subscales of the IPBI and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.

- (3) There is no significant relationship between father age and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (4) There is no significant relationship between mother age and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (5) There is no significant relationship between father occupation and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (6) There is no significant relationship between mother occupation and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (7) There is no significant relationship between father educational level and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (8) There is no significant relationship between mother educational level and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.
- (9) There is no significant relationship between gender of the child and child social competency as measured by the CPSCS.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The methods used to gather the data on parent behaviors and child outcomes with regards to social competence included: (a) a description of the sample of parents and children; (b) a description of the procedure followed in conducting the research; (c) a complete description of the instruments used to measure parent behaviors and child outcomes; (d) operational definitions of critical constructs with appropriate analysis; (e) reductions and transformations of the data used; and (f) data analyses used in the study.

Sample

The initial population for this research project consisted of fifty preschool children and their families currently enrolled in the Child Development Center laboratory preschool in Herrick Hall on the campus of Montana State University. Participants also consisted of fifty preschool children and their families currently enrolled in the Methodist Preschool program at Bozeman United Methodist Church in Bozeman, Montana. The children were between the ages of three and five and one half years. Families selected for the sample were intact with both mother and father present in order to measure the unique relationship of mother and father behaviors to children's social competence.

The sample, therefore was not random. Data from the Child Development Center and the Methodist Preschool was combined for the purposes of statistical analyses.

Procedures

The study was conducted in a like manner for both preschool facilities. The parents received an introductory letter informing them of the research project and inviting them to participate. After a period of approximately one week, parents received copies of the appropriate version(s) of the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI).

Copies of the IPBI mother form and father form were assigned a subject number for matching parents and children and was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purposes of the research study and instructions on returning the completed instrument forms. After a period of approximately two weeks, parents who had not returned the measure were contacted by phone and encouraged to participate. Parents were provided with additional copies of the initial research measures if needed.

Head teachers in the Child Development Center and at the Methodist Preschool received copies of the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) for each child whose parents had completed the IPBI parent survey. The teacher rating sheets were collected approximately one month after being received by the teachers to allow sufficient time for completion.

Response rate for fathers and mothers on the IPBI was calculated on a simple percentage basis of total instruments mailed. Out of 100 instruments sent out, 64 were returned for a response rate of 64% for both mothers and fathers. Since the CPSCS was completed by teachers only for children whose parents had returned the IPBI, a response rate of 100% was obtained.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

Socioeconomic status for each family was established by classification of the occupations of both the husband and wife according to a nine-point scale for each parent adapted after the work of Hollingshead (1975) Four Factor Index. Preliminary investigation indicated that the population was predominantly Caucasian, middle-class, and composed of individuals who were self-employed or who were occupied in a major profession.

The Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory

The Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI) (Cruse et al., 1979) was used to measure parental perception of their behavior towards their child. Each item represented an actual behavior situation which was rated on a five-point scale. A score of one indicated that the parent almost never behaves that way; two meant that the parent seldom behaves in this manner; three indicated that the parent behaves that way almost one-half the time or is not sure how often; a score of four meant that the parent often behaves in this manner; while a five indicated that the parent almost always behaves that way. Each item received a

number score and each of these scores was entered on a score sheet under the appropriate factor heading. The items within each factor were summed and this composite score was the factor score and the number used in data analysis (Cruse et al., 1979).

Childhood socialization has been highly influenced by the environment of the child throughout the early years (White and Watts, 1973), and a large body of research on significant parent attitudes and behaviors has been limited to the urban family (Gecas & Nye, 1974; Hess, 1970; Kohn, 1969). Cruse et al. (1979) responded to the need for a comprehensive assessment of critical parent factors in a more rural and midwestern setting by developing the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI). The IPBI was developed specifically to measure the salient parent factors of parental involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression (mothers only), and intimacy on outcomes for young children.

Separate factor scores were used in analysis and since the mother and father forms were composed of different items in addition to some items in common, it is not possible to make a direct comparison between factors. The mother form consisted of 36 items from six subscales (parental involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression, and intimacy) (see Appendix A). The father form of the IPBI also consisted of 36 items and included all of the above six subscales except free expression (see Appendix B). The mother and father forms contained some similar items as well as some items which are different, reflecting the contribution to child development

offered by both parents as well as possible unique relationships of the mother and the father to the child.

The researchers (Cruse et al., 1979) conducted factor analysis on the IPBI subscales, and after examination of the factor intercorrelations for both mother and father forms, reliability estimates were computed for both "total variance" and "unique variance" reliability. The resulting total variance reliability was determined (Cruse et al., 1979) using the Spearman-Brown formula. Actual figures were reported for each of the subscales in the IPBI manual. The validity of the scale, or the reliability with which the scale measured the factors they were designed to measure, was reported as unique variance and was found to be valid and reliable. A variation of the Spearman-Brown formula was used to determine the correlations among items from the loadings on a single factor. These correlations were then averaged and used in the Spearman-Brown formula (Cruse et al., 1979).

The California Preschool Social Competency Scale

Children of parents who had completed the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory were then assessed by teachers on aspects of social competency using the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS). The CPSCS was used to assess children's interpersonal behavior and social responsibility as perceived by the teacher. The scale consisted of 30 items covering a variety of observable behaviors which included: the child's ability to help others, play with others, initiate involvement, accept limits, and communicate wants. Each item

contained four descriptive statements ordered from 1 (low degree of competence) to 4 (high degree of competence). The total social competency score was the sum of all the level ratings for the thirty items. According to the CPSCS manual, validity was based on independent judgments of professionals in early childhood education and the instrument was determined to be valid. Reliability data (Pearson r 's) from independent observers ranged from .75 to .79 (Levine et al., 1969).

Operational Definitions

Parental involvement was measured by the total numerical response for items 1, 5, 8, and 10 on the mother form and by items 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 17, and 33 on the father form of the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (see Appendix B).

Limit setting was measured by the total numerical response from items 2, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 21 on the IPBI mother form (see Appendix A) and from the sum of items 1, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20 on the IPBI father form (see Appendix B).

Responsiveness was measured by the grand total from items 3, 4, 22, 23, 26, 27, and 29 on the IPBI mother form (see Appendix A) and the sum of items 2, 3, 24, 25, 27, 29, and 30 on the IPBI father form (see Appendix B).

Reasoning guidance was determined by adding responses from items 6, 9, 14, 18, 20, 25, and 31 on the IPBI mother form (see Appendix A) and from the total for items 6, 12, 15, 22, 23, 26, 28, 32, 34, and 35 on the father form (see Appendix B).

Free expression was measured by the total of responses from items 15, 24, and 28 on the IPBI mother form (see Appendix A).

Intimacy was determined through summation of items 19, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 on the IPBI mother form (see Appendix A), and by summation of items 21, 31, and 36 on the IPBI father form (see Appendix B).

Child social competence was determined through consideration of the total raw score of teacher responses from the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) on a variety of behaviors such as ability to help others, play with others, initiate involvement, accept limits, and communicate ideas.

Reductions and Transformations

The data from Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI) was entered directly into a dBase III file in fields indicating subject number, sex of parent, husband's occupation, wife's occupation, years of schooling, parent involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression, and intimacy, followed by parent responses to the 36 item instrument using a five-point Likert Scale. Total raw scores for each factor item were generated by the computer from the totals of the salient item responses and entered as parent involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression, and intimacy.

Items on the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) were entered directly into a dBase III file based on a four-point Likert scale and the total raw score was computer generated and added to the ASCII file.

A computer printout of the dBase III files created for the data collected from the IPBI and the CPSC was verified to the original data sheets by the investigator and a trained coder for accuracy. An accuracy rate of 100% for 10% of the data was expected for the data verified. Totals and scoring functions were performed by computer according to a program developed by Robert H. Johnston of the Department of Plant Pathology, Montana State University. Complete analyses of data for the study was conducted using programs from SPSS-X (SPSS, Inc., 1983).

The data obtained from the demographic information, the IPBI responses, and the teacher ratings given on the CPSC was placed in a dbase III file, computer scored, and the information stored in an ASCII file ready for application of statistical analysis.

Data Analyses

The independent variables in the study were: (a) father mean scores on the subscales (i.e., involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, and intimacy) of the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI), mother mean scores on the subscales (i.e., involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, free expression, and intimacy) of the IPBI; (b) father age, mother age, father occupation, mother occupation, father educational level, mother educational level; and (c) gender of the child. The dependent variable in the study was child mean score on the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS).

The data was subjected to 19 separate one-way ANOVAs to determine whether relationships exist between the following variables:

- (1) Father involvement and child social competence.
- (2) Father responsiveness and child social competence.
- (3) Father limit setting and child social competence.
- (4) Father reasoning guidance and child social competence.
- (5) Father intimacy and child social competence.
- (6) Mother involvement and child social competence.
- (7) Mother responsiveness and child social competence.
- (8) Mother limit setting and child social competence.
- (9) Mother reasoning guidance and child social competence.
- (10) Mother free expression and child social competence.
- (11) Mother intimacy and child social competence.
- (12) Father age and child social competence.
- (13) Mother age and child social competence.
- (14) Father occupation and child social competence.
- (15) Mother occupation and child social competence.
- (17) Father educational level and child social competence.
- (18) Mother educational level and child social competence.
- (19) Child gender and child social competence.

A minimum significance level of $p < .05$ was established based on convention (Kerlinger, 1973) and was used as an acceptable probability level for rejecting a true null hypothesis. Rejecting a true null hypothesis has been

referred to as a Type I error (Huck, Cormier, & Bounds, 1974). A minimum significance level of $p < .05$ established the probability of .05 that sample data was extreme enough for a Type I error to occur. In the present study of social competence where small differences were expected between the independent variables and the dependent variable, a Type I error was more likely to occur than a Type II error (accepting a false null hypothesis) (Huck et al., 1974).

Significant differences were subjected to Scheffe's multiple comparison test in order to determine where significant differences existed between the means of the independent variables and of the dependent variable because this statistic allows tighter control over Type I error (Huck, Cormier, & Bounds, 1974).

For the independent variables, groups were established according to father scores and mother scores on the subscales of the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory, father age, mother age, father occupation, mother occupation, father educational level, mother educational level, and gender of the child. The scores for the fathers and scores for the mothers on the subscales of the IPBI were grouped into three categories for each of the parent behaviors of involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning, expression, and intimacy. The three categories were low, medium and high for all subscales based on groupings across the range of scores for each subscale. Groupings were balanced in number for the purposes of statistical analysis. For purposes of analysis, age for the fathers and mothers were formed into three chronological groupings (under 30, 30-40, and 40-50 years of age). Occupations of the fathers and the mothers were assigned to three groups modified after Hollingshead (1975) Four Factor

Index. Group one contained major professionals (e.g., attorneys and physicians); group two contained those mothers and fathers who were self-employed or owned their own businesses. Group three comprised all others not included in the first two groups (e.g., managers, clerks, service people, and laborers). Educational level for the mothers and for the fathers comprised three groups (High school graduate, college graduate, post graduate work).

Social competency scores were grouped into three categories. The three categories were low, medium, and high for social competency based on groupings across the range of CPSCS scores. Groupings were balanced in number for the purposes of statistical analysis. Social competency was established as the dependent variable and was compared by one-way ANOVA to each of the independent variables to determine existing relationships.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The independent variables of father mean scores on the IPBI subscales (i.e., involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, and intimacy), mother scores on the IPBI subscales (i.e., involvement, limit setting, responsiveness, reasoning guidance, intimacy, and free expression), father age, mother age, father occupation, mother occupation, father educational level, mother educational level, and gender of the child, as they relate to child social competence were examined in the study. Child mean scores as rated by teachers on the California Preschool Social Competency Scale (CPSCS) formed the dependent variable in the analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

A preliminary analysis was conducted on the father form of the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory (IPBI). Each subscale was analyzed separately and the means, ranges and standard deviations for each subscale were reported separately. The scores for father involvement revealed a mean of 25.22, a minimum of 18.00, a maximum of 32.00, and a range of 14.00 points over scores ($SD = 3.57$). The scores for father limit setting revealed a mean of 37.81, a minimum of 28.00, a maximum of 40.00, and a range of 12.00 points over scores

