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Raeburn, P. (2014). Do Fathers Matter? What Science Is Telling Us About the Parent We've Overlooked. New York: Scientific America/Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Reviewed by: Katrina Augustyn, MacEwan University

For many, the question “do fathers matter?” results in broad responses. For most, the answer is no, due to the focus on mothers being the most important factor in raising children. In “Do Fathers Matter?” by Paul Raeburn, the author applies his work as a journalist and uses similar applications “to replace stereotypes and half-truths [about fathers] with what scientists have discovered to be true” (p. 5). Throughout the book, Raeburn addresses the misconceptions presented in advertisements, the ignorance of fathers in research, and presents resources to discredit negative concepts regarding fathers. This book debunks the myths and stereotypes that linger throughout society by exploring the importance of fathers from the roots of fatherhood, to genes and conception, to the maturation of children into functioning teenagers.

Raeburn begins exploring the roots of fatherhood by revealing the importance of fathers through the contrasts of western concepts with information collected from the Aka pygmies found on the western Congo River basin. Raeburn explains how western families are child-focused; which suggests the desires of the children are the focus of the family. Unlike western families, Aka society is adult-centered; in that adults are unlikely to give their undivided attention to their children. Many people, including myself, would assume that because the Aka society is adult-centered, children would not be properly cared for; however, Raeburn reveals this to be untrue. Through research on Aka fathers, Barry S. Hewlett found that they “intrinsically enjoy infants” (p. 24). Hewlett discovered that many anthropologists disregard Aka

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fathers' presence in child care, solely because these scientists do not witness their involvement at night. Interestingly, Hewlett's research found Aka fathers hold their children for nearly nine percent of the day and twenty percent of the night; this establishes intimate relationships, resulting in fathers' ability to understand their children very well (p. 26). The importance of this research is well described by Raeburn's statement that: "[t]he Aka give us insight into fatherhood from the time of our prehistoric ancestors, but they don't tell us much about how fatherhood might have changed during the past few decades" (p. 27). The research on the Aka society provides western societies with different perspective on parenting in which western families can improve on, and provides insight into how evolution and the environment influence fathers.

Through the research on Aka society and the insight achieved on fathers, Raeburn also explores the importance of the environment of fathers. Raeburn brings interesting insight into the significance fathers have regarding the conception and growth of a child within the mother, by addressing the misconceptions about the impact fathers having on the health of a fetus. The assumption is that fathers have little impact on the growth of the fetus, simply because the father has no physical connection to the child. In spite of this assumption, Raeburn provides evidence against that misconception, including a study at the University of North Carolina which addressed paternal influence on fetal growth. This epidemiological study included large populations of male workers and wanted to identify whether some jobs were associated with health problems in their children (p. 33). This study indicated how environmental influences impact fetal growth through genes passed through the father and concluded that the environment the father's job entailed influenced birth defects in their children. For example, the study found that cataracts and glaucoma were linked to photographers; however, this study can only be interpreted as a warning sign because it cannot be confirmed through experimentation (p. 33).

Through multiple resources, Raeburn brings awareness into how fathers impact their children not only through their environment but more importantly, through their genetic contribution to their child. Raeburn focuses on imprinted genes, which are paternally or maternally marked genes, and the importance of these genes for the development of a healthy embryo. Research by M. Azim Surani reveals that a healthy embryo needs both paternal and maternal genes in order to properly develop. The necessity of imprinted genes is revealed in Surani's experiment in which he combined two sets of mothers' genes, and two sets of fathers' genes of mice. The study found that embryos of mothers' genes developed well but the placenta did not, and the fathers' genes allowed for the placenta to develop well but the embryo did not (p. 46). The finding about the importance of imprinted genes suggests that maternal genes are necessary for embryo development and that paternal genes are necessary for placenta development; both paternal and maternal genes are essential to the proper development of a child, and therefore strengthens Raeburn's agreement for the importance of fathers.

Raeburn explores the influences fathers have on the development of their children into teenagers, and does so by observing how the father's interaction with their children influences important factors such as the child's social development, language development, and behaviour. An example of how fathers influence the social development and language development is apparent in the research conducted by Lynne Vernon-Feagans and her colleague, Nadya Pancsofar. This research revealed that because fathers spend less time with their children compared to mothers, fathers are not as "attuned to their kids, so they use a broader vocabulary, and their children learn new words and concepts as a result" (p. 146). This means that mothers tend to use more child- friendly language simply because they adjust their language to accommodate their children. In addition, children learn more new words and concepts from their

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fathers is because fathers do not interact as much as mothers with their children; fathers provide unique and novel interactions with their children. In addition, Daniel Paquette's research indicates that fathers are more likely to encourage risk-taking behaviour by being less protective than mothers. For example, fathers are more likely to stand behind their children in swimming lessons, rather than in front of children like mothers. Paquette explains that simple elements, such as the father being out of direct visual sight of the child, establishes an "activation relationship" (p. 149). Raeburn emphasizes that this relationship "helps children learn to be brave in difficult situations or when meeting new people" (p. 149). Therefore, this influences children's ability to adapt in unfamiliar environments, such as the transition from home to school. The relationship fathers have on their children provide them with the ability to socialize well with their teachers and peers, be free of behaviour problems, and allows children to be more successful when transitioning into school (p. 149).

Lastly, Raeburn explores the importance of fathers on the behaviour of teenagers. Raeburn elaborates on a study and indicates that teenagers who regularly participate in activities with their families were less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours (such as sexual intercourse at an early age or having multiple partners) compared to children who did not regularly participate in family activities (p. 177). This research also suggests that fathers who were more knowledgeable about their children resulted in less risky behaviour (p. 177). In addition, research by Ronald P. Rohner emphasizes the importance of a child feeling accepted by their parents, and reveals that a "father's love and acceptance are... as important as that of [the] mother" (p. 179). This study is important to address because it confronts the misconceptions that the mother is to blame for a child's inappropriate behaviour; and reveals that both the mother and father are equally responsible in the development of their children's behaviour.

Paul Raeburn seamlessly disputes the myths and misconceptions people have about the importance of fathers by connecting scientific research and observations from the past and present in an interesting and captivating manner. He addresses many fundamental aspects of fathering from the roots of fatherhood displayed in the Aka society, and genetic contributions to children, to the importance of father and child relationships which influence the development of children. A drawback on this book is the research Raeburn has used in this book; most of the research used comes from animal research. Unfortunately, much of the research indicated in this book cannot be tested on humans due to ethics. However, much of the information provided throughout supports Raeburn's argument and this makes it difficult to hold negative beliefs about the importance of fathers after reading the book. In addition, Raeburn does suggest multiple ways in which fathers are important to children, he fails to address whether or not society should be more supportive of both parents in regards to maternal and paternal leave when a child is born. These drawbacks are minor, and I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Raeburn has provided me with substantial information to disregard the misconceptions and stereotypes on the importance of fathers. This book has helped me to understand my relationship with my father in a new perspective. This book would be especially interesting for anthropologists, psychologists, biologists, sociologists, teachers, parents, and anyone who works with children and families or who questions the importance of fathers.