Book Reviews

Canadian Journal of Family and Youth, 9(1), 2017, pp 169-173
ISSN 1718-9748 © University of Alberta
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Raeburn, P. (2015). Do Fathers Matter? What Science is Telling Us About the Parent We've Overlooked. Scientific American / Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

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Paul Raeburn's book, "Do Fathers Matter?" is an explorative examination of the impact of fathers across every conceivable aspect of a child's life, from conception to adulthood. Raeburn drifts between societal perception and expectation, and scientific statistics and research of fathers over the various topics he examines. The historical growth of the role of a father in humanity is an ever present theme throughout the book, as well as a comparison of human understanding of fatherhood in contrast with fathers in nature, all the while maintaining a personal closeness with the reader through a creative induction of his own experiences as a father. Overall, the book provides Raeburn an ability to show that fathers affect their children in ways not previously understood, and that they are, for the most part, severely underappreciated in terms of importance in a child's life.

The focal point of the book is centered around one key question; the same question which is asked by each of the researchers Raeburn introduces throughout the work: "Is the dad bringing something to the table?" (p. 103). Not limited to money, "it can be social interactions, intellectual strategies, or enriching life in some way" (p. 103). Understanding the historical role of the father as one of a patriarchal, bread-winner position, Raeburn sought studies which examined fatherhood from a parenting perspective. Providing grounds to his hypothesis that fatherhood is underappreciated for its impact, he discovered that a majority of studies in the past strictly focused on the maternal relationship with the child, despite strong correlations being

discovered about fathers in the little research that had been conducted with the father at the forefront. An interesting discovery for Raeburn arises from this research as well, in that fathers themselves face pressures not commonly recognized, and that the damage in the home is not limited strictly to the child. Referencing the findings of Ellen Galinsky, Raeburn cites that "men face an impossible ideal, a 'male mystique' that puts demands on fathers that they can't possibly meet" (p. 214). Coupled with earlier findings talked about in his chapter on infants, these pressures can cause harmful afflictions such as depression to fathers, which then appear to be transferred to their children through interaction in the home.

Given the limited availability of true research conducted on fathers, Raeburn relies heavily on the select few researchers who have published material to support his hypothesis. Notably he includes research done on other mammals in nature, specifically upon animals which remain in forms of "family" such as mice. While this may appear to detract from the significance of these results when applied to humanity, his reasoning brings an entirely new perspective into the understanding of fathers. Focusing on animal interaction eliminates the faux family values humanity constructs their families around, such as home economics. It narrows the scope of investigation strictly to what occurs organically through basic human interaction. By returning the eye examining fatherhood back towards its role in nature, Raeburn allows his readers to once again view fathers outside of the deceptive scope of finance, and appreciate fathers as mentors and role models for their children.

Raeburn's investigation into the effects of fathers on children is broken into five main chapters; Conception, Pregnancy, Infants, Children, and Teenagers. His findings provide the surprising supposition that fathers can influence, and are influenced by their children on a natural, hormonal level before the child is even born. In addition to examining the many ways a

Book Reviews

father's behavior changes throughout the life of the child, Raeburn also explains how the mother can affect a man during this period, and vice versa. Not commonly known, men will undergo hormonal changes in near synchronicity with the mothers (p. 73), and in response to the new needs of the mother as a result of the pregnancy, it's often overlooked that the father must also adapt his lifestyle to accommodate her. After referencing extensive various studies conducted on infant interaction between a mother versus the father, his findings conclude that "father's clearly have important connections with their infants" (p. 134), and in some cases are more important than the mother, such as vocabulary development (p. 145), social development (p. 144), and success in school (p. 145). Naturally, there is discussion about potential negative effects fathers may have on their children as well, including punishment (p. 145) and "internalizing" problems such as depression or self doubt (p. 148), to name a few. Raeburn also dedicates a chapter to older fathers and their effects on children. Findings were mostly centered around health issues such as the increased prevalence of sperm containing genes for autism and other mental disorders such as schizophrenia.

What truly makes this book unique in comparison to other investigative texts is Raeburn's consistent returns to his own experiences as a father. The tone of the writing itself appeals to the reader as less of an educational text, but rather a man retelling his life experience to a younger man. This, in itself, seems to suggest the intended demographic for the book is men considering becoming fathers, and when read with this pretense, makes it feel as though the reader is being spoken to by their father. Passages such as the introduction to the book itself, a recollection of the origins of Raeburn's interests in fatherhood, are spoken in a drastically relatable way; one which any young man having wondered about being a father could understand. A quote from the end of chapter five: Infants, encompasses everything Raeburn seeks to accomplish through the

Book Reviews

book, from examining the pressure on a father in modern society, to the need for a father to be there for his child, to keeping it personable and relatable:

These sleepless nights seem as though they will never end, until, without warning, they do. The kids grow up and find other ways to console themselves in the middle of the night. So I decided I would enjoy our time on the night shift together. The research on the connections between fathers and infants is catching up with the experiences many of us have had with our own children. It's nice to know that these feelings of attachment, for so long denied by orthodox psychologists, are not some delusion, but are supported by the facts. I don't remember what happened at work the day after that sleepless night – whether I was tired or missed a meeting. But I remember the hours with my son. (pp. 140-141)

Encompassing sound data and unassuming research about the relationship between fathers and their children, from conception to adulthood, this book serves as an excellent source of information. Raeburn has managed to successfully craft a work which can be implored both as an academic research tool about the effects of fatherhood on children, the family, or the fathers themselves, and as a guide on what to expect and how to prepare yourself for parenting.

Avoiding becoming a difficult scholarly read, this book maintains a stout personable tone while managing to convey thoroughly constructed arguments which dismantle societal preconceptions about fathers. Particularly in the rarely examined relationship of fathers with their children pre-birth. Raeburn's work is the first of its kind to discuss the correlations discovered about said relationship, as well as the first to suggest that pregnancy is not exclusively maternally influenced.

Book Reviews

Conclusively, "Do Fathers Matter?" is a simple, yet enriching read. Outside of its uses as a parenting guide, this book could be utilized as a research tool for anyone investigating family dynamics, the history of fatherhood, the development of children, gender studies, or any family based sociological undertaking. Given my own personal experiences, I found this book greatly informative, engaging and above all relatable.