Children’s and Fathers’ Perceptions of Fathers’ Use of Structure, Negative Control, and Autonomy Support

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The current study investigated fathers’ and children’s perspectives of fathers’ use of structure, negative control, and autonomy support parenting behaviours in relation to children’s internalizing, externalizing, and adaptive behaviours, and father-child
Mothers’ perceptions of their children as more or less trusting and secure predict children’s peer acceptance in preschool (Wood, Emerson, & Cowan, 2004). Both mothers and fathers perceive similar amounts of hassle in their relationships with their children (Crnic & Booth, 1991). Despite calls for studies of the entire family system (Parke & McDowell, 1998), the majority of research on emotion in parent-child interactions has focused on the mother-child dyad. Validity of CPRS Structured interactions between parents and study children were videotaped at 54 months and first grade. Videotapes of 499 index children and their mothers or fathers during structured interactions were coded by trained observers.

Researchers interviewed 55 children (34 boys; 75% Canadian/Caucasian) between the ages of 5 and 12 years old and their fathers using hypothetical scenarios about their daily interactions (e.g., completing chores, doing homework). Children completed verbal questionnaires about their attachment security with their father (i.e., Security Scale, Kerns et al., 1996), and fathers completed a questionnaire on the daily functioning of their child (i.e., the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition, BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). Transcripts of the interviews were coded on a scale from 1 (absent / never / very low) to 4 (several / frequent / high) for the quality and presence of three parenting behaviours (i.e., structure, negative control, and autonomy support). Results from the current study suggest that fathers’ perceptions of their use of autonomy support predicted a decrease in externalizing behaviours in children, \( F(1, 53) = 4.7, p = .035, R^2 = .08 \), and an increase in children’s adaptive behaviours, \( F(1,53) = 4.19, p = .046, R^2 = .07 \). Father-child attachment was not found to have a moderating effect on children’s functioning through parenting behaviours. Results are discussed in the context of the emerging literature on fathers’ parenting in relation to children’s functioning.

Subjects / Keywords
- Autonomy support
- Parenting
- Controls
- Middle childhood
- Father
- Interview
- Interrater coding
- Structure

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