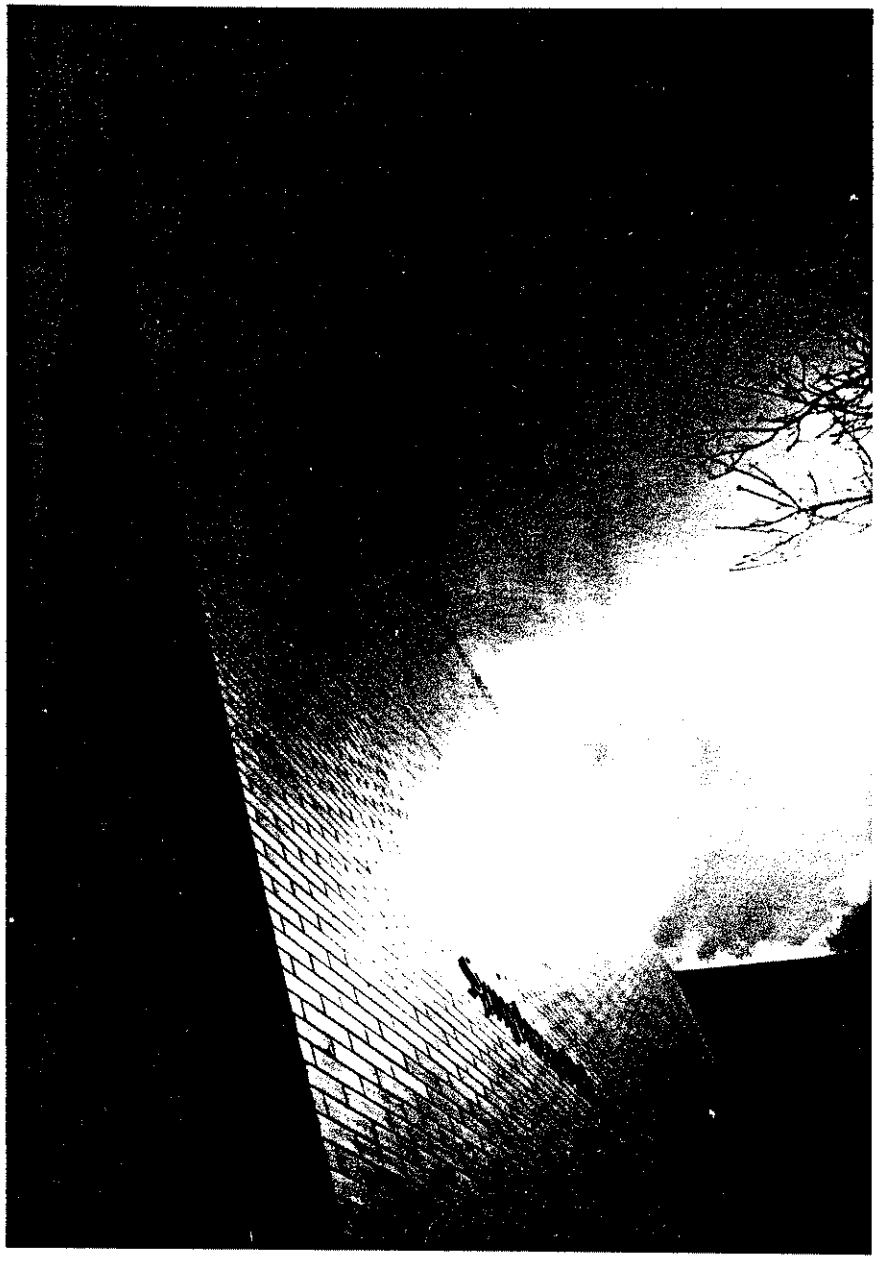

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Objective and Subjective Reality: The Effects of Job Loss and Financial Stress on Fathering Behaviors

Rena Harold-Goldsmith, Norma Radin, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles

To examine the effects of fathers' employment status and subjective view of their financial situation on their involvement with their children, we interviewed and observed 45 working-class, two-parent families with a young child. Analyses of variance and regression were used to analyze the data. It was found that involvement with children for jobless and financially distraught fathers might be characterized as increased quantity but not quality. The similarity in findings among jobless men and men who felt their financial situation was poor, regardless of employment status, highlights the importance of considering the psychological feeling of financial distress. Data suggest that the subjective financial picture relates even more strongly than actual employment status to the proportion of nurturing to total behaviors that fathers demonstrated to their children. Maternal employment status primarily affected mothers' perceptions of some aspects of fathers' involvement in childrearing.

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Because of the structural interdependence of work and family life, it is important that the impact of involuntary job loss on family dynamics be understood. Yet evidence linking unemployment with intrafamilial processes is limited, and much of what we know comes from the literature written and data collected during and just after the Great Depression (e.g., Angell, 1936; Bakke, 1940; Jahoda et al., 1971; Komarovsky, 1940). While the attempts of the 1930s and 1940s to link macrolevel economic change to family level variables is instructive (Jahoda, 1982; Moen, 1983), there is a need to explore these issues in

today's world (Hyman, 1979), especially in terms of fathers' relationships with their children (Elder et al., 1985). The recession of 1982–83 provided the opportunity to examine the quantity and quality of the father's involvement in raising his young child.

Research (e.g., Bakke, 1940; Komarovsky, 1940; Briar, 1983; Liem and Rayman, 1982) has documented that job loss creates stress for the worker and that this stress ripples through the family (Ferman cited in Cunningham, 1983). In fact, some researchers (Farran and Margolis, 1983; Margolis, 1982) conclude that the risk of negative effects on children grows exponentially with increasing stress experienced by unemployed adults. Further, the effects are likely to be most salient for younger, e.g., preschool- or kindergarten-aged, children because they are more dependent upon reliable parental nurturance that may be altered as a result of financial, relational, and psychological changes associated with unemployment (Elder, 1974; Maccoby, 1983). In addition, young children should be especially vulnerable to these strains because they are more likely to spend more of time with their unemployed fathers than are older children.

Data based on the depression of the 1930s and data and theories of family dynamics and socialization influences suggest that joblessness will affect three components of paternal participation in childrearing: (1) time available, (2) active participation in socialization tasks, and (3) quality of fathering. Each of these is discussed below.

Unemployed Fathers' Involvement in Childrearing

Despite the fact that unemployed fathers were home more often than other fathers, children from families that suffered significant income or job loss in the Depression were more likely than children in other families to report that their mother, rather than their father or both parents together, decided major issues affecting the family (Elder, 1974). This difference in the father's participation in decision making may have resulted from the loss of power associated with unemployment and/or from the subsequent withdrawal of the father from the family following the loss of his work/provider role (Hymowitz, 1982; Kelvin, 1981; Komarovsky, 1940). Unemployed fathers also participated less in such socialization issues as teaching the child right from wrong (Bakke, 1940) than other fathers, perhaps because income loss often resulted in diminished father authority due to his failure to fulfill the provider role. Resource theory suggests that family power and decision making are often tied to who has the most resources (e.g., Blood and Wolfe, 1960). Thus, despite the increase in time unemployed fathers have to spend with their children, it is predicted that their involvement in socialization tasks and decision making will not be greater, though they will be more available and perhaps more involved in daily child-care tasks than their employed peers.

To the extent that joblessness induces stress and self-doubt, one would expect the quality of fathering to decline following job loss. Data support this prediction: in 37% of Komarovsky's (1940) sample, unemployed fathers experiencing stress appeared to have less energy and patience needed to amiably resolve any problems they experienced with their children. Similarly, recent studies clearly document the relationship between joblessness and child abuse (e.g., Belsky, 1980; Gelles, 1974, 1976; Gil, 1971, 1977; Justice and Justice, 1976; Steinberg et al., 1981). This relationship is often attributed to increased stress associated with a sense of powerlessness resulting from job loss, more time at home with the children, and role transitions from worker to inexperienced child-care provider. These stresses combine to increase negative behavior toward the child. Thus, financial loss appears to increase the frequency of fathers' irritable behavior, e.g., less patience, more yelling (Elder, Liker, and Jaworski, 1984; Moen, 1983), and thus, to decrease the attractiveness of the father as role model, companion, and confidant (Elder, 1974; Elder et al., 1985; Elder, Liker, and Cross, 1984).

In view of these findings, then, it is expected that when the father is unemployed, his nurturance of the child will be less than when he is employed. It is also expected that the child will initiate fewer interactions with the jobless father because of the diminished attractiveness of the father.

Subjective Financial View

Strains associated with unemployment are associated with both the objective fact of being jobless and one's subjective sense of economic distress (Kelly et al., 1985), particularly in a vulnerable economy. Consequently, while there is a need to differentiate between the objective experience of income loss and the subjective feelings of being poor (Caplovitz, 1979) or being threatened with job loss, the effects on the father and the child may be quite similar. If a father feels stress associated with a grim subjective financial view, the quality of his involvement and behavior with his child may be undermined in a manner similar to that proposed for job loss, even though he is still employed. Conversely, the impact of job loss may be buffered to the extent that the family has other financial resources and therefore does not experience a negative subjective financial state. Theorists (e.g., Moen et al., 1983; Voydanoff, 1983) suggest that the psychological definition one gives to an event determines, in part, whether that event becomes a crisis. Following this, then, subjective financial state may be as important a predictor of the quality of paternal behaviors as actual job loss. This is an issue that needs exploration as the economy continues to bode uncertainty for workers in the wake of many actual and/or anticipated plant closings.

Mother's Work Status

A variety of samplings from the literature (e.g., Eccles and Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman, 1979; Hoffman and Nye, 1974) have suggested that maternal employment may affect parent-child relationships. This effect, however, does not seem to be in the form of increased father involvement in child care. While some argue that the relative percentage of the father's involvement increases as the working mother's involvement decreases, both time-use data (Eccles et al., 1988; Timmer et al., 1985) and research that asked parents to respond to questions about who usually does certain child-care tasks (Riley, 1987) suggest that fathers are not more involved in childrearing when their wives are working. While it is not expected, then, that the mother's working will significantly increase the father's involvement with his child, the effect of this variable in this sample will be explored.

In sum, this paper examines the effects of

objective employment status and subjective financial picture through the testing of the following hypotheses:

(1a) When the father is unemployed, his overt availability to the child will increase, but his qualitative involvement in socialization tasks and decision making will not. (1b) Poor subjective financial status will have similar effects on the quality of the father's involvement with his child. Its impact on the quantity of his involvement is less clear, given that he may or may not be unemployed and thus may or may not have extra time available.

(2a) Jobless fathers' will evidence less nurturing behavior with their children. (2b) Subjective financial stress will have a comparable negative impact on paternal nurturing behavior.

(3a) The number of observed child-initiated behaviors will be less when the father is unemployed; (3b) Similarly, this will occur when he is subjectively in financial distress.

The effects of maternal employment status on the father's involvement in childrearing will be investigated, though no hypotheses are generated.

Method

Sample

The questions that this study was designed to answer required a sample of families in which (1) both parents were in the home, (2) there was either a preschool- or kindergarten-aged child, and (3) some of the fathers were employed, while others were jobless. To control for socioeconomic status (SES) effects, only working- or lower middle-class families were recruited. To obtain the sample, we contacted three head start programs, one low-fee tuition preschool, and several kindergarten classes in the metropolitan Detroit area. These schools served working- or middle-class communities that had experienced an unemployment rate of between 7 and 13% (Michigan Metropolitan Information Center, 1983).

In the preschool and head start programs, the schools provided a list of children with two parents in the home. In the kindergarten classes, names of two-parent families with a jobless father were obtained from school records. Letters were sent and follow-up calls made to ascertain whether each target family would participate. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the overall response rate was only 30%. Some indication that this response rate is typical for the population comes from other research: a study on unemployment effects conducted in schools near Detroit had a response rate of 9% (Friedmann, 1984). It may be that families who are experiencing or have experienced recent misfortunes, or who feel vulnerable that they may experience them, are not particularly interested in participating in research investigations of these issues.

The sample presented here consists of 45 intact, primarily white, working- or lower middle-class families. In 14 of the families the father was unemployed at the time of the interview. In 31 of the families the father was working, though more than half of these men had experienced unemployment at some point in their adulthood. These families were contacted during the 1983–84 and 1984–85 school years.

The mean age of fathers and mothers was 32.07 and 29.02 years, respectively. Children averaged 60.49 months, and the mean number of children in each family was 2.44. The average amount of education for both parents was completion of high school, while 67% of the fathers had an occupational rating (Hollingshead, 1970) of "4" or less, and the mean family socioeconomic status (SES) (Hollingshead, 1970) was 3.23, indicating the lower middle-class composition of the sample (Elder, Liker, and Jaworski, 1984). At the time of the interview, 17 (or 38%) of the 45 mothers in the sample were employed. With the exception of the father's current employment status and the mean number of times the father had been unemployed in the past five years, the families in the study were demographically comparable on all available information (Goldsmith, 1986).

Procedure

Mothers and fathers in the sample were given identical interviews/questionnaires. The interviews were conducted separately with each parent in the home and lasted approximately one hour. In addition, the father and child were observed interacting for a period of 10 minutes as they were engaged in a structured task, putting a puzzle together and cleaning up the pieces afterward. The purpose of this procedure was to provide an objective source of information about the quality of the paternal-child relationship.

Questionnaire

The interview instrument was designed and pilot-tested for this study. It was developed, in part, to measure the quality and quantity of paternal involvement in child care. The Paternal Involvement in Child Care Index (PICCI) (Radin, 1981) was used to assess this. This index has been found to produce valid and reliable scores (Barahal-Taylor, 1984; Nietfeldt, 1984; Radin, 1985, 1981, 1982; Radin and Goldsmith, 1983, 1985; Sagi, 1982). It includes items tapping the following variables: the father's overall involvement in childrearing, his involvement in socialization and child-care tasks, his participation in decision making regarding his child, and his physical availability to his child.

The score for overall involvement ranged from 0 to 24 and was based on each parent's global rating of a 5-point scale of the amount of the father's involvement in child care, plus an estimate of the percentage of time the father was the primary caregiver when the child was awake and not at a school, center, or with a sitter. The scores for both the father's involvement in socialization and child care ranged from 0 to 12 and were based on each parent's estimate of the percentage of time the father was responsible for activities in these areas weighted by the parent's estimate on a 3-point scale of the frequency with which the activity was performed. Paternal involvement in decision making consisted of each parent's responses on a 5-point scale to two questions pertaining to decision making about child issues; for each question, a score of 6 was given to a response of "husband always," 4.5 to "husband more than wife," etc. Adding the scores from the two questions provided a range of 0–12 for the decision-making variable. The final PICCI component, physical availability, was derived from the summing of each parent's responses on a 3-point frequency scale to four questions concerning times the father was home, yielding a range of 0–12.

As in previous studies (e.g., Radin, 1981; Radin and Goldsmith, 1985; Sagi, 1982), there was general agreement between the parents regarding the father's total involvement with their child ($r = .57$, $p < .001$). While this indicates that parents tend to view the father's role in childrearing similarly, using both the father's and mother's ratings in the analyses takes ad-

Table 1

Intercorrelations Between Mother's and Father's Perceptions of Father's Involvement in Childrearing (PICCI Components)

Perceptions of Father's Involvement	
Overall	37*
In child care	58***
Availability	51***
In socialization	50***
In decision making	43**

Note: N = 45 mothers and 45 fathers
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

vantage of the dual perspectives. Table 1 presents the correlations between these views.

During the interview, information was also obtained about the demographic characteristics of the family, including employment status and work history of both mother and father, as well as the mother's and father's educational rating, the father's occupational status, and the family SES, all scored according to the Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status (1970).

The parent questionnaire also measured several constructs using Likert-type items. Paternal nurturance (Radin and Sagi, 1982) was assessed by asking how often the father shows his love to the child verbally or physically, tries to help the child with his problems, and gives the child a great amount of care and attention. The subjective view of the family's financial situation (Kelly et al., 1985) was calculated by asking how hard it is for the parents to live on their present income and how it compares with their financial situation a year ago. Subscales for each of these sets of variables were formed after doing correlograms (McQuitty, 1957) that demonstrated which variables in a given set were linked. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for each subscale and is used as the estimate of internal consistency reliability. The alphas for paternal nurturance were .87 for mothers and .76 for fathers; for subjective financial status, they were .65 and .58 for mothers and fathers, respectively.

Observation

Both the observation and PICCI measures are taken at one time and are seen as being complementary methods by which to gain information about the paternal-child relationship (Block, 1978; Matas et al., 1978; Reid, 1978; Wolfe et al., 1981). The observation measure was created for this study because it allowed observers to record actual father-child interactions, including child-initiated interactions, paternal nurturing, and restrictive behaviors, and then to calculate the proportion of nurturing to total behaviors (Radin, 1973; Radin and Epstein, 1975). Observers also gave global ratings of the father's general ability to parent and his emotional supportiveness.

These global ratings were given on 5-point scales with all points behaviorally anchored, based on work by Easterbrooks (1982). Table 2 gives further details regarding the components of the observation measure.

Following, or between, the two parent interviews, the father was asked to work on a puzzle with his child and then to work together in putting it away at the end of the period. The mother was not in the room during the interaction. The puzzles were selected with a degree of difficulty appropriate for ages three to six years and were pictures of interest to this age group (i.e., the Smurfs or Sesame Street). The observation was limited to 10 minutes. Observers began counting every occurrence of the specified behaviors after a 2-minute warm-up, desensitization period. The two global ratings of the father's general ability to parent and his emotional supportiveness were completed at the conclusion of the observation period. When the father and child had finished their task, the observer gave the child stickers to express appreciation for participating. Observers were trained through the use of videotapes that depicted parent-child interactions as they worked on puzzles and other tasks together. Interrater reliability checks were conducted during these training periods. Acceptable interrater reliability for each component of the observation measure was achieved and maintained at an average of .85, and ranged from .81 to .88.

Results

Nature of Paternal Involvement

One-way analysis of variance tests examined the hypothesized differences between the unemployed and employed father's availability to the child and his specific involvement in socialization and decision-making tasks. As shown in table 3, unemployed fathers stated that overall they were more involved in childrearing than employed fathers, were more involved in child-care tasks, and were more available to their children. Similarly, mothers whose husbands were unemployed perceived their spouses to be more involved in child-care tasks and more available. Neither the men nor the women saw unemployed fathers as being significantly more involved in socialization or decision making than the fathers in the employed group.

While the unemployed men were more involved in some aspects of childrearing than their employed counterparts, it was hypothesized that these men would be less nurturant toward the child on both the questionnaire and the observation measures, and that during the observation, the child would initiate fewer interactions with the unemployed father. As table 3 illustrates, only one indicator of nurturance was found to be significantly different. Unemployed fathers had a lower observed proportion of nurturing behaviors to total behaviors than did employed fathers.

When the father's subjective financial views were examined, some similar patterns emerged. The questions in this scale allowed for a three-level variable with fathers being grouped according to whether they subjectively viewed their financial situation as *bad, moderate,* or *good.* One-way ANOVAs, with specific planned comparison, indicated that a significant difference existed for the father's view of his availability, with those fathers who felt their financial picture was grim (i.e., bad) being more available than men who felt their financial picture was good ($F(2,42) = 3.54$, $p < .05$; mean = 9.75, 7.83, respectively, for bad and good; $s.d.$ = 2.26, 2.06). Once

Table 2

Summary of Observation Measure

Components	Behaviors
1. Child Initiated Verbal or Nonverbal Interaction with Father	Counting any activity on part of child that attempts to make contact with the father, including questions, touch, hug, beseeching look.
2. Paternal Nurturing Behaviors	Counting any of the following: sharing the activity with the child, asking the child questions, consulting with child, initiating and engaging the child in conversation, specific direction or correction in a positive tone, demonstrating correct way to do puzzle or teaching new strategy in a positive way, reward or encouragement, communicating affection, listening to child, etc.
3. Paternal Restrictive Behaviors	Counting any of the following: negative statement about the task or the child's ability to do the task, criticism and aversive correction, refusing or ignoring child's request for help, ordering without explanation, taking over task, aversive verbal or nonverbal behavior, etc.
4. Total Paternal Behaviors	Sum of #2 and #3 above
5. Proportion of Nurturing to Total Behaviors	Total from #2 divided by #4 above (Range = 0–1)
6. General Ability to Parent	Rated by observer on a Likert-type scale of 1–5 where 5 = highest ability, e.g., father seems relaxed with child and controls child through calm directions; 3 = moderate ability, e.g., father seems less able to really control child, but is making an effort to do so; 1 = low ability, e.g., father seems overwhelmed by child and may yell or appear apathetic.
7. General Paternal Emotional Support	Rated by observer on a Likert-type scale of 1–5 where 5 = highly supportive, e.g., father is emotionally accessible and gives frequent, spontaneous encouraging remarks and displays of positive affection, whether or not child was indeed successful at task; 3 = inconsistent support, e.g., not as consistent in providing support or encouragement and may be aloof or somewhat overbearing; 1 = unsupportive, e.g., not accessible, may be accompanied by gruff tone, reprimands, etc.

Table 3

Mean Ratings of Father's Involvement in Childrearing by Father's Employment Status

	Employed		Unemployed		
	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	*F*
Father's Perceptions of His					
Overall involvement[1]	12.86	2.91	16.62	3.38	14.04**
Involvement in child care[1]	2.66	1.61	4.65	1.46	14.94***
Availability[1]	7.91	1.99	10.62	1.50	19.48***
Involvement in socialization[1]	3.14	1.88	3.65	1.33	.80
Involvement in decision making[1]	5.59	1.86	5.69	1.75	.27
Mother's Perceptions of Father's					
Overall involvement[1]	13.28	3.84	14.68	4.14	1.16
Involvement in child care[1]	2.92	1.64	4.11	2.04	4.20*
Availability[1]	7.88	1.68	9.92	1.66	13.85***
Involvement in socialization[1]	3.27	1.61	3.49	1.44	.18
Involvement in decision making[1]	5.85	1.30	6.19	2.01	.44
Proportion of Observed Father Nurturing to Total Behaviors[2]	87.72	11.37	74.27	22.04	6.47*

[1] $N = 31.14$, $df = 1.43$
[2] $N = 29.11$, $df = 1.38$
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

again, these men did not differ significantly with respect to their involvement in socialization ($F(2,42) = 1.01$). As with the unemployed fathers, the men who felt their financial situation was bad had a lower proportion of observed nurturing to total behaviors than men who felt their financial situation was good ($F(2,42) = 4.89$, $p < .05$; mean = 74.79, 91.38, respectively, for bad and good; *s.d.* = 19.43, 8.20). In addition, children whose fathers felt their financial situation was bad initiated significantly fewer interactions with their fathers than did children whose fathers thought their financial status was good ($F(2,42) = 5.05$, $p < .05$; mean = 6.28, 12.50, respectively, for bad and good; *s.d.* = 5.33, 7.83).

The similarity of patterns found between the effects of the father's objective and subjective financial status is particularly important when one considers that there is almost an equal number of employed and unemployed fathers in the "bad" grouping. It appears that having a job does not guarantee that the father will feel his financial situation is sound: 21.9% of employed fathers felt their subjective financial picture was bad, and 28.1% felt it was only moderate. Fewer unemployed fathers perceived that their financial situation was other than grim, though 15.4% thought it was good.

Table 4

Mean Ratings of Father's Involvement in Childrearing by Mother's Employment Status

	Employed		Unemployed		
	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	*F*
Father's Perceptions of His					
Overall involvement[1]	14.71	3.59	13.48	3.38	1.32
Involvement in child care[1]	3.83	1.21	2.86	2.02	3.16
Availability[1]	8.29	1.93	8.93	2.39	.86
Involvement in socialization[1]	4.29	1.55	2.68	1.59	11.10**
Involvement in decision making[1]	5.68	.79	5.59	2.23	.02
Mother's Perceptions of Father's					
Overall involvement[1]	16.27	2.98	12.12	3.63	15.75***
Involvement in child care[1]	3.87	1.48	2.89	1.93	3.19
Availability[1]	9.18	2.10	8.04	1.67	4.07*
Involvement in socialization[1]	3.89	1.27	3.00	1.63	3.75
Involvement in decision making[1]	6.20	1.41	5.80	1.60	.74
Proportion of Observed Father Nurturing to Total Behaviors[2]	83.38	19.85	84.46	13.19	.04

[1] $N = 31.14$, $df = 1.43$
[2] $N = 29.11$, $df = 1.38$
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

(For father's objective and subjective financial status, chi-square = 9.21, $p = .01$.)

Maternal Employment Status

Table 4 illustrates the effects of mothers' employment status on fathers' involvement with their children. The pattern is quite different from that suggested in table 3. Fathers whose wives are working see themselves as being more involved in socializing their children than fathers whose wives are not employed, though they are not more involved in other areas nor more available, as the literature had suggested. On the other hand, working mothers see their husbands as being more involved overall, and as being more available to their children. No significant differences were found among the nurturing variables based on mother's working status.

A similar pattern is obtained when entering father's and mother's employment status and the subjective financial view simultaneously into a regression equation. Table 5 presents the significant relationships that were found. Significant betas were not found for either father's or mother's perceptions of paternal involvement in decision making or mother's perception of paternal involvement in socialization.

Consistent with the results found in tables 3 and 4, the majority of the variance was accounted for by father's working status in the case of his perception of his overall involvement and his availability. Maternal employment status accounted for most of the variance in the mother's perception of his overall involvement and the father's perception of his involvement in socialization tasks. However, when controlling for the effects of the mother's working status and the subjective financial view, it is whether the father is working that accounts for most of the variance in the mother's perception of how available he is, while in accounting for the variance in the father's view of his involvement in child care, both parents' employment statuses have opposite, but important effects, i.e., when the father is not working and the mother is working, the father perceives himself as being more involved in child-care tasks. Lastly, the majority of the variance in the proportion of nurturing to total behaviors is accounted for by the subjective financial view.

Discussion

In sum, the first hypothesis regarding the nature of the father's involvement was supported in full. This held both for those fathers who were unemployed and for those who thought their financial picture was grim. The relationship involving the extent of the father's nurturing behaviors proposed in hypothesis 2 was confirmed using the measure of the proportion of observed paternal nurturing to total behaviors for fathers in both the objective and subjective measures of financial status groups, but not with the other measures of nurturance. The third hypothesis was confirmed only for the relationship between the father's subjective financial appraisal and child-initiated interactions, rather than for both subjective view and objective situation. Maternal employment status did relate to some aspects of the father's involvement with his child.

The results of this study suggest that the quality and amount of paternal involvement with children are indeed related to employment status as well as to feelings of financial stability or instability. As hypothesized, both unemployed fathers and those who thought their financial situation was grim were more available in terms of being physically accessible. There are also indications that these men were more involved in day-to-day maintenance activities, such as feeding and bathing their children. It may be that the absence of work outside the home leaves the father freer to participate in these tasks, or that those fathers who are working but still think their families are not well off feel a sense of responsibility to "provide" care in the home as a way of compensating for their lack of ability to be a good provider in the traditional breadwinner sense.

Also, as predicted, these same men were not more involved in socialization or child-related decision making. These tasks may be seen as privileges, not duties, that can only be engaged in when one is fulfilling a defined family role (e.g., successful providers have the right to be involved in decisions regarding the child). Or, it may be that these two domains involve more of an emotional commitment to the child, a commitment that may have been drained by the economic stress.

On one hand, the latter explanation receives support in that a lower proportion of nurturing behaviors to total behaviors was demonstrated by the fathers in these groups; on the other hand, the lack of difference in other assessments of paternal nurturance may suggest that these men are not totally unable to provide warmth to their

Table 5

Significant Multiple Regression Analyses
with Father Involvement Variables as the Dependent Measures

Dependent Variables	Predictor Variables	Partial Correlations	Standardized Betas	R^2	F
Father's Perceptions of his involvement:					
Overall[1]				.26	4.79**
	F. Work Status[a]	.44	.48**		
	M. Work Status[b]	−.17	−.15		
	Subj. Finance[c]	−.03	−.03		
In child care[1]				.36	7.39***
	F. Work Status	.39	.39**		
	M. Work Status	−.36	−.33*		
	Subj. Finance	−.25	−.25		
Availability[1]				.37	7.97***
	F. Work Status	.54	.57***		
	M. Work Status	.11	.10		
	Subj. Finance	−.06	−.06		
In socialization[1]				.22	3.83*
	F. Work Status	.07	.07		
	M. Work Status	−.46	−.48**		
	Subj. Finance	.00	.09		

children. Similarly, children whose fathers felt good about their financial situation initiated more interactions with their fathers than did children whose fathers perceived that their financial situation was bad. Elder et al. (1985) found that economic hardship increased rejecting behavior by fathers. Thus, while the father's nurturance might foster child-initiated interactions, it is possible that inconsistencies in the father's behavior (e.g., recurrent, yet unpredictable, hostility from the financially stressed father) might lead his child to shy away from interactions with him (Elder, Liker, and Cross, 1984), as was hypothesized.

Maternal employment status affected the father's view of only one father involvement component: his feeling that he was more involved in socializing his child when his wife was working may stem from the notion that if his wife is not home full-time, his role in teaching the child right from wrong, for example, must be greater. What is interesting, however, is the wife's view that when she is working, her husband is more involved in childrearing. Given the time-use data (e.g., Eccles et al., 1988) that suggest the father's actual involvement is not affected to a great extent when his wife is working, it may be wishful thinking on

Table 5 Continued

Significant Multiple Regression Analyses
with Father Involvement Variables as the Dependent Measures

Dependent Variables	Predictor Variables	Partial Correlations	Standardized Betas	R^2	F
Mother's Perceptions of Father's Involvement:					
Overall[1]				.31	6.10**
	F. Work Status	.05	.05		
	M. Work Status	−.55	−.58***		
	Subj. Finance	−.19	−.19		
In child care[1]				.18	2.95*
	F. Work Status	.16	.17		
	M. Work Status	−.31	−.32*		
	Subj. Finance	−.22	−.24		
Availability[1]				.36	7.34***
	F. Work Status	.55	.60***		
	M. Work Status	−.23	−.20		
	Subj. Finance	.24	.24		
Proportion of Observed Father Nurturing to Total Behaviors[2]				.28	4.65**
	F. Work Status	−.23	−.22		
	M. Work Status	.16	.15		
	Subj. Finance	.40	.42**		

[1] $N = 44$, $df = 3.40$
[2] $N = 40$, $df = 3.36$
[a] Father's Work Status: 1 = employed, 2 = unemployed.
[b] Mother's Work Status: 1 = employed, 2 = unemployed.
[c] Subjective Financial Picture: 1 = bad, 2 = moderate, 3 = good.
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

her part to assume that if she is not there all the time, he will help out by doing more. This view is supported by the fact that this relationship is found only with the mother's perception of the father's role.

Small sample size and a low response rate make it difficult to generalize from the findings of this study. However, in view of the major gap that has existed in the literature regarding the effects of employment status on family dynamics, this preliminary research suggests some important relationships that call for further investigation and consideration of possible interventions that

might buffer some of the negative effects. For this sample of intact, primarily white, lower middle-class families of preschoolers and kindergartners, involvement with children for jobless and financially distraught fathers might be characterized as increased quantity but not quality. In fact, the economic stress appears to create a somewhat less nurturing environment for the child.

The clinical and policy implications of these tentative findings for professionals working with children and their families are considerable. For example, Shamir (1986) found that unemployed men who were more involved with the care of their children were more likely to be seen as having relatively good psychological well-being. Programs might be designed to teach jobless fathers about child development and child-care skills in order to enhance their interactions with their children and increase their own sense of psychological well-being.

In addition, the similarity in the findings among men who were unemployed and men who felt their financial situation was not good, regardless of their employment status, points up the importance of the psychological feeling of financial distress, particularly in light of its relationship with paternal nurturance. In these times of economic uncertainty and rising costs, the loss of overtime, the experience of underemployment, the threat of unemployment, and the feeling of not being able to fully support oneself and one's family may take their toll. Finally, the role of maternal employment status as it relates to the father-child relationship when the father is both employed and unemployed needs further investigation, as more and more mothers join or return to the labor force.

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