

# Dads making up time, researchers say

By Ted Burnham  
Emerald Contributor

The gap between father and child is growing smaller, but kids still spend much more time with mom than with dad, a University researcher says.

"The big change in fathering is that the father has gone from being totally uninvolved to being a playmate," said Beverly Fagot, a University psychology professor and early-childhood specialist.

"From very early in the child's life, fathers do more of the playing and less of the care providing than mothers," Fagot said.

Fagot recently lead a study at the Oregon Social Learning Center in Eugene, where she learned that even in families that decided to take an egalitarian approach to child-rearing, fathers remained significantly less involved with their children than did mothers.

The study, which involved more than 300 families with children who were 12 months, 18 months and five years old, showed that a mother employed outside the home will spend an average of seven to eight hours a day with a young child, compared to the father's average of 30 minutes.

Researchers also found that in all three age groups, fathers are more likely than mothers to engage in positive interaction, especially play, with their children.

The study, which was funded in part by the National Institute of Child Health and Development, surveyed homes with fathers. Local families volunteered to be interviewed and studied.

The study itself was comprised of four one-hour home observations, three telephone interviews and two three-hour labs involving each parent.

In an article Fagot and graduate student Richard Hagan published in the journal *Child De-*

velopment last year, the study found the biggest gap between parents was the amount of time they spent instructing their children.

Fagot says her research indicates that mothers need to remember the importance of playing and that fathers need to help more with the routine care of children.

Fagot said children appear to do best when both parents are actively involved in both aspects of parenting.

Fagot also said the study suggests this is why two parent homes tend to produce better-adapted children.

"Those children get two chances to get a parent," she said, which can help when both parents are working. Fagot said in 70 percent of the families surveyed, both parents worked, although many of those parents did not work full-time.

Fagot also emphasized that negative responses can muddle parent-child instruction. Researchers noticed that critical and negative instruction disrupts the learning process.

"Parental instruction is a lot of things," Fagot says. "If a parent cannot be positive in teaching the child then they can't be successful."

Carol Hurd, a water fitness instructor for the Eugene Parks and Recreation Department, said she has observed many differences between fathers and mothers in her parent-child swimming classes.

"Usually when the fathers are there, the children do more," Hurd said of her classes, which typically include eight to nine mothers and one or two fathers.

Hurd is reluctant to say whether this may be because fathers push their children more than mothers or because the child wants to "show off" to the father.

"The few fathers that come have an excellent relationship

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— Beverly Fagot,  
University psychology professor

with their child," Hurd said. "(The children) laugh and have a good time."

Others findings by Fagot show parents spend more time in positive interaction with a 12-month old than when the child is older. There is more play, more positive physical behavior and more encouragement.

Parents, particularly mothers, start to use more direction and instruction when the child reaches 18 months, undoubtedly because of the toddler's increased language skills, the researchers found.

By the time children are five, both parents are directing equal amounts of instruction at them.

Hurd said this makes sense. "A two-and-a-half year old needs more input than a one year old," said Hurd, whose parent-child classes typically include children ages 12 to 24 months.

"A one year old won't get out and run over to get toys," Hurd said.

Safety becomes much more important when the child is older and therefore more active, she said.

The examination of parental interaction with children is part of Fagot's ongoing research, conducted over a period of 10 years, to study various aspects of childhood behavior and family dynamics.

Fagot's next study will focus on parents and three-, five- and seven-year-old children.

# Keisling affirms Roberts' pro-choice stance

PORTLAND (AP) — Any legislative attempt to restrict abortion in Oregon will be met with a veto from Gov. Barbara Roberts, Secretary of State Phil Keisling told a pro-choice rally Tuesday.

"Yesterday the U.S. Supreme Court sent a printed invitation to every state in the nation to restrict a woman's right to the most personal decision she can make," Roberts said in a statement read by Keisling.

"The court has left the fundamental right to choose a fragile and hollow shell."

In a 5-4 ruling Monday, the court preserved the legality of abortions, but also voted to uphold restrictions Pennsylvania has enacted.

A woman must delay an abortion for 24 hours after visiting a clinic in Pennsylvania, and teenagers under 18 must have the consent of one parent or a judge. Women also are required to get detailed counseling about abortion and alternatives in that state.

"As a parent, if I ever have a daughter who is faced with the wrenching personal choice of what to do in difficult circumstances, I would want her to talk to me," Keisling said.

"But if I had a daughter who felt she could not talk to me about that, I would not want to leave her fate up to the state legislature and to the Reagan-Bush Supreme Court nominees."

The Supreme Court Monday gutted its landmark Roe v. Wade ruling, which legalized abortion, Keisling said.

"The lifeless body of Roe v. Wade has been delivered up to us in this decision. The ghost of it is still there, but if you touch it, it disappears into thin air," Keisling told a crowd of about 1,000 pro-choice supporters at a downtown park.

Diane Lynn, executive director of the Oregon

chapter of the National Abortion Rights Action League, said the court's decision was an insult to women.

"For two decades women were deemed capable, competent and trustworthy to control our own lives," she said. "For two decades the right to choose has been our right and our freedom."

"Yesterday, the Supreme Court said 'Not anymore.' You are no longer capable, you are no longer trusted in that most personal domain."

"Now we are only one vote away from the overturn of Roe, which will send women back to the back alley."

Dean Roberts of Portland handed out pro-choice signs to the crowd before the speeches began.

"It's the same old battle for women," Roberts said. "We gave them the right to vote but we don't give them their own reproductive rights."

A 27-year-old Portland woman who identified herself only as Cybele carried a sign reading, "I'm not mother material."

"We're really upset about the court's decision that minors must get parental permission," she said. "Some minors have bad relations with their parents."

"It's not the parents say. What makes minors lesser people?"

Vicki Turner, 36, of Portland, came to the rally with her 2-year-old son, Michael. A sign on his stroller read, "We Will Not Go Back."

"In 1950, my mother had to go from Oklahoma to California to get an abortion," Turner said. "She nearly died."

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