

Father Portrait: Adolescent Daughters' Perspective

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Very little is known about adolescent daughters' view of their fathers yet data on this are important inasmuch as these can provide valuable information to fathers as to what daughters at this stage need, wish their fathers to be and how fathers can relate to them. The study focused on the perceived roles played by fathers as experienced by adolescent daughters based on their descriptions, qualities admired most, and lessons learned from them. Forty-four essays on "My father..." of developmental Psychology students were content analyzed.

Positive and negative descriptions were tied to performance of paternal roles. Affect, deficits and excesses were likewise gleaned from the descriptions. Paternal qualities admired by the daughters were mainly personality attributes, achievements, and values. Spirituality and practical wisdom were the main categories of the lessons learned from the fathers. In sum, the portrait painted by the daughters was far from the cold, uninvolved provider of the family.

Fathers have finally arrived, so to speak. They are no longer the "forgotten parent" as called by Lamb (1974). They are now the object of many a study in academic circles and received much attention from media. This is reflective of the recognition of the important role fathers play in the rearing of children.

It cannot be denied that fathers are very important to a family. Without a father, there is no family. A family is defined as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister and creating and maintaining a common culture (Burgess and Lock in Medina, 1991). Father absence, in fact, may be associated with some undesirable behaviors in children among which are poor school performance, poor relationships with peer, problems with impulse control and other adjustment difficulties

especially if father is absent before the age of 5 (Stuart, 1995). Despite the importance of fathers to a family and to each of the members, not many studies have been done on fathers and fatherhood in the Philippines. Much of the descriptions about fathers and fatherhood have been derived from studies of Americans and definitely these cannot speak for all the fathers in other cultures (Lamb, 1974). In fact, owing to the large number of fathers abandoning their responsibility in helping raise their children Blankenhorn (1995 in Harris and Salt) calls America "fatherless America." What about in the Philippines? How are fathers experienced, viewed and described? Few attempts to explore this important social role were done by local researchers like Dalisay (1983); Fallarme, (1988); Tan, (1989), McCann-Erickson, (1995); Chua, Cron, and Laja, (1997); Gutierrez, Tabuena, and Tabuena, (1997); Go, Imperio, and Juan, (1998); Mendoza, (1999) Abear, Jong, and Lu (1999).

Among the studies done on fathers that were reviewed, none focused on how the adolescent daughter views her father and how she relates with him. Relationship of daughters with fathers has been documented by Tessman, (1989), Balsam, (1989), and Harris, Furstenberg and Marmer (1998). Tessman studied father-daughter relationship, its impact in childhood and adulthood whereas, Balsam investigated father's contribution to the development of the adolescent daughter who has a disturbed mother. Harris et al. on the other hand, investigated paternal involvement with adolescents in intact families.

This study limits itself to the perceived roles played by fathers as experienced by adolescent daughters based on their descriptions of their father, qualities admired most and lessons learned from them.

Data on how adolescent daughters view their fathers are important because these can provide fathers with information about what daughters at this stage need, wish their fathers to be in relation to them and how they can relate to their daughters. Furthermore, this should allow a better understanding of the behaviors of fathers as they relate with adolescent daughters. Hopefully, leading to less conflicts in the home front. Fathers, not mothers, according to Biller and Trotter, (1994) help daughters appreciate their femininity and develop their ability to relate with men. It is documented that many fathers do not know how to respond to girls so that the easiest way is to distance themselves from their daughters and hide behind the cultural expected role of provider. Unfortunately, too, perhaps because of this, many fathers have overly rigid sex-role stereotypes and in their zeal to feminize their daughters, actively discourage the development of assertiveness and intellectual competence. Thus, through this study it is hoped that fathers, in particular, can have insights about what they can teach their daughters, such as

expressiveness, warmth, and sensitivity among others. The quality of the father-daughter relationship is crucial if the woman she will be is to be successful in both her relationship with men and her creative and professional life.

Adolescents are, in the words of Mary Pipher (1994), "saplings in the storm" who are in the process of firming up their identity. They need both parents to affirm them in developing womanliness and how to relate to other people of the opposite sex (Stoop, 1992). Stoop specifies a process which allows for good emotional and social development. He calls this "triadic relationship" where an adolescent must learn to relate with both parents without losing one. This is a challenging feat but one is more likely able to relate triadically if father is present and involved in the relationship.

Fathers are expected by society to perform very challenging roles. Among these are economic provider, contributes to the emotional development of children, acts as interpreter, guardian and enforcer of social mores in the home, provides the realistic toughness in his approach to children (Aldaba-Lim, 1966) and stimulate personal and mental development of children.

Stoop (1992) has four role categories, namely, a) The *loving nurturer* who listens with his heart, considers the values that are at stake before beginning a task, genuinely cares for the children and shows love to his children no matter what; b) the *lawgiver* who is characterized as one who thoroughly analyzes the situation and seeks outside advice to assure the right choice, considers the principles involved before embarking on a task, helps children think for themselves and is always clear about his expectations for his children; c) the *warrior* teaches the child to size up the task and "just do it" in making decisions, considers all the facts, stands by them even fights for them if necessary and encourages his children to accomplish their dreams; and finally, d) the *spiritual mentor* who considers the "big picture," takes everything into account, checks all the possible ways of going about it and teaches his child about it, helps them see beyond themselves, and is one who can make his children safe.

Harris and Salt (1999) argued that there is no single way that fathers perform their roles nor is there a single type of father. They presented various types of fathering used in their study on types of paternity: the *breadwinning* role, the *absent* role, the *nurturing* role, and the *care taking* role. The breadwinning role is the traditional role where a father provides for the family. The absent role is where the father is physically and psychologically unavailable to the children. The nurturing role is described as "attending to the feelings of family members" by the father. Lastly, in the care taking role, fathers are seen as

"instrumental in performing tasks required to bring up children." Harris and Salt further stated that the first two roles are traditionally ascribed to fathers whereas the last two are that of mothers.

The performance of these roles is the focus of this study, but from the perspective of the adolescent daughter. It is common knowledge that as the child enters adolescence and early adulthood, closeness with parents declines. According to Harris, Furstenberg and Marmer, (1998) the decline is slightly more with fathers than for mothers. Many times, even with the best intentions, parents, and the father for that matter, may not be aware as to how he is perceived by the children. Even with the children's best interest at heart they can still be misinterpreted, can still be criticized as not caring enough, not understanding enough, not generous enough, not loving enough. It is also, therefore, one other objective of this study to provide fathers an important feedback as to how their daughters view them.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study sought to describe fathers as seen by adolescent daughters. Specifically, the study answer the following questions:

1. How are fathers described by the adolescent daughters?
2. What are the predominant roles played by fathers as perceived by adolescent daughters?
3. What father traits are most admired by the adolescent daughters?
4. What lessons have been learned from fathers by the adolescent daughters in the study?

METHOD

To answer the questions raised, the study utilized the descriptive method. Two Developmental Psychology classes were asked to write an essay to complete the sentence "My father..." Only adolescent daughters were included in the study. Male students and two female students whose fathers have already died were excluded. Forty-four essays were content analyzed using words and phrase descriptors as the unit of analysis.

The father portrait was determined using the descriptions of fathers by the adolescent daughter. Descriptions were categorized according to the questions raised.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Answers to the above questions are presented and subsequently discussed. The description of the fathers were categorized according to positive and negative traits.

Positive and Negative Descriptions of Fathers by Adolescent Daughters

Positive Descriptions	Negative Descriptions
Expressive of affection	Reserved
Good provider	Hot tempered
Fun/loving/funny	Too strict/ overprotective
Knowledgeable and wis	Does not know how to express self
Adviser	Intimidating
Emphasizes education	Overcritical of behavior and activities
Disciplinarian	Always working
Generous with money	Old fashioned
Leader	
Mediator with mother and daughter	
Center of warmth in the family	
Role model/ inspiration	
Trusting	

From the above it can be seen that there are more positive descriptions than negative ones. Furthermore, there are negative descriptions that are tied to the performance of paternal roles like always working, overprotective, critical of behavior and activities.

It is interesting to note that the fathers are viewed by a good number of daughters as able to express their affection and are fun/ funny/ friendly. This is contrary to the common belief that fathers, Filipino fathers at that, are cold, business-like and detached from their daughters. Perhaps this belief stems from the traditional child rearing practice of not showing affection. One traditional admonition, in fact, was never to kiss the child while awake. This practice seems to have lost sway because the fathers are now perceived to be loving, kind, understanding and expressive of their feelings. One respondent mentioned that her father is the center of warmth in their family.

This concurs with the description of the "new father" (Bozett & Hanson, 1991, Furstenberg 1998, Lamb, 1987a, Pleck, 1987, Rotunda, 1985, Wilkie, 1993, in Harris, Furstenberg and Marmer, 1998) who is more expressive, nurturing and intimately involved with children's daily lives. The new father is the image that emerged as contrasted from the stereotyped "disengaged breadwinner and unemotional disciplinarian."

The descriptions can also be viewed another way. Roles performed as well as affect can be gleaned from them. To cite a few, adviser, disciplinarian, mediator are some roles identified. On the other hand, being expressive of affection, being fun, loving, funny are some of the affect listed. Looking at the negative descriptions, one can see excesses and deficits like being too strict, overcritical, reserved and so on.

The negative descriptions are tied mainly to personality attributes giving support to the truism that one cannot choose one's parents. The other negative descriptions, however, seem to have to do with over zealotry over the welfare of the daughter.

The perceived role of fathers as seen by the daughters are presented below. Sample descriptions are provided after each role. These roles were extracted from the descriptions provided by the daughters about what their fathers did or performed in relation to them. Several categories were formed.

Predominant Roles Performed by Fathers

Provider

- ☞ He is a good provider.
- ☞ He works very hard for the family.

Nurturing

- ☞ Expressive of affection
- ☞ Loving
- ☞ Openly tells me he loves me

Role Model

- ☞ He is my inspiration.
- ☞ He is my role model.

Protector of Values

- ☞ He is very conservative.
- ☞ My father is old fashioned.
- ☞ He is overcritical of behaviors and activities.

Purveyor of Wisdom

- ☞ He is very knowledgeable/wise.
- ☞ He answers my questions, shares his abilities and skills.
- ☞ He is the consultant for major decisions.

Motivator/Encourager

- ☞ ... allows me to act on my own initiative
- ☞ Encourages me to develop myself
- ☞ He always gives moral support.

Friend

- ☞ ...gets along with my friends
- ☞ Treats me like an adult
- ☞ Goes out of his way to talk to me.

Boss

- ☞ He should always be followed.

Peace Keeper

- ☞ He is the mediator between me and my mother.

Absent Father

- ☞ We practically do not see him.
- ☞ He is a stranger to me.
- ☞ I do not know him very well.

From the descriptions, new categories were formed such as role model, protector of values, purveyor of wisdom, motivator/encourager, friend, boss, and peace keeper. Three categories, however, concur with the roles described by Harris and Salt. These are the provider role, nurturing role, absent father role. It should be noted that the nurturing role is also one of the roles in Stoop's paradigm.

The provider role did not come as a surprise because this role in fact is the traditional role associated with father. If they are viewed as always working and spent much of their time outside the home, it could be because they are performing their role of providing for the family (Dubeau, 2002).

Harris, Furstenberg and Marmer (1998) underscored the fact that fathers do matter not only for girls but for boys as well especially in so far as their effective role modeling and the emotional relationships they have with the children are concerned. Mackey and Coney (2000) reported that proneness to anti-social behavior can be a consequence if a responsible and continuous adult role model is not available.

According to Bronstein (1988) in Papalia and Olds (1998), fathers are seen to promote gender-typing more than mothers. Gender typing is the "process by which children learn the behavior that their culture considers appropriate for each sex. More specifically, Yang (2000) found that among Korean girls femininity is related to father's masculinity. This concurs with Biller's (1981) finding that fathers play a significant role in encouraging daughters' feminine development through their differential treatment of boys and girls. By watching and interacting with fathers, girls learn to react to males and how males will react to their femininity.

Fathers, in the study, were described as conservative and old fashioned. Sometimes in the fathers' fear that some untoward events can happen to their daughters they opt to play it safe by being conservative, old fashioned, and critical of activities especially the present day manner of dress of young people, dating behavior, to name a few. Parents often worry about the influence of peers and oftentimes feel powerless against it, thus, resorting to the above strategies much to the chagrin of the adolescent daughters.

The absent father role cannot be ignored. Some daughters complained that they do not see their fathers as often as they wish. In fact, some fathers were described as a stranger. This can very well happen if father is away from home working in foreign lands. Of course, there are also fathers who busy themselves and make themselves physically and psychologically unavailable for reasons of their own but hiding under the guise of working for the benefit of the family. There are also fathers who have totally abandoned the original family and cohabiting with a new one. "I do not know him very well" was how 4 daughters described their fathers. One daughter pines for her father as she says "I miss him and feel jealous when I see him with another family."

It is interesting to explore the idea as to what in the father-daughter dynamics contribute to such descriptions. Viewing from the psychodynamic perspective, one can surmise that at adolescence, the daughter is now

blossoming into a young woman with all the attributes of youth whereas, mother is possibly at the stage where she is losing these same qualities. Thus, daughter may be seen as a competitor. Daughter senses this and turns to Dad. Dad on the other hand is now sensitive to the young men who are starting to pay court to the young woman and must, therefore, do everything in his power to counter the attentions lavished by the young men lest he loses out to them. He is, thus, reported to be generous with money, generous with time which can be seen as another way of making the adolescent see the father's "power."

Another way of making sense of the findings is to look at gender roles. Men in the Philippines are socialized to be kind to women, who are generally regarded as the weaker sex. Men are socialized to be kinder still to children. Being cold and distant and unexpressive of feelings as some fathers were described, may be more a function of not knowing how to deal with girls or lack of experience, lack of training, or simply being awed by the mystery of having off-springs who are now almost adults.

A father may be always out of the house, always working and may even be hot tempered can still be considered as a nurturing father. Stoop (1992) explains this by saying that a father who is predominantly a nurturer may be "afraid of his own feelings so he lashes out at those close to him in an effort to keep his emotions at arm's length. He may also turn to work as a means of running away from his loved ones or retreat into silence because the "emotions aroused by his family are too intense and make him afraid" (p.51).

The father is viewed as one who is willing to protect the daughter from anything untoward that may befall her thus, he acts as the adviser, disciplinarian, friend. One interesting response is seeing the father as the mediator between mother and daughter – a peace keeper. Earlier it was noted that the mother may unconsciously compete with daughter who may emerge as prettier, more well endowed, whereas, mother may be struggling with the telltale signs of midlife. Thus, father is seen as the one who makes peace between mother and daughter.

Despite the fact that father may overdo his being too strict, overprotective, too conservative and often times confusing, he is still described as a role model, one who inspires. Communicating one's interest in what is going on in the life of the daughter, being genuinely interested in her welfare will earn the daughter's respect. In a manner of saying, despite being the object of complaints, he still emerges as the role model, even perhaps venturing to say that in the choice of a mate, someone of his caliber, someone with his principles will be the benchmark.

For the adolescent experiencing secure attachment to their parents, are confident about their affection and support make them trust their own worth and in their ability to make their own decisions. Being separate and yet being accepted and allowed to express their opinions and views contribute to the emergence of individuality and a sense of autonomy (Papalia and Olds, 1998). One of the daughters in the study averred that her relationship with her dad made her a stronger person, independent and able to make decisions.

Following Stoop's paradigm, some daughters viewed the father as a warrior or protector based on affiliation with the daughter while maintaining the authority as a parent. This is consistent with the role as a disciplinarian. Fathers may be harsh but their intention of protecting their daughter and guiding them every step of the way, was seen in their being strict and overprotective. "I can easily forgive him knowing that he does not really mean what he says" was how a daughter viewed her father. The daughters added that their father was intimidating and difficult to understand but as the daughters recognized the father role as protector, a parent as well as a companion, the fathers and daughters related well with each other. This formed the basis of the father-daughter association where they exchanged views and maintained an open relationship. The daughters explained that when they began to share their secrets about relationships with the opposite sex, they observed that their father became very emotional.

One daughter stated, "I am daddy's girl but he never spoiled me." The daughters continued to assert that he encouraged the development of talents and skills while demonstrating that he was available to support the daughter. One daughter explained that "He always gave me moral support to make me stronger."

From the data, qualities that the daughters admired of their fathers were also extracted. They were categorized according to personality attributes, achievements and values. Giving equal priority to work and family ranked high among the paternal attributes.

Admired Qualities of Fathers

Personality attributes

- Ability to balance work and family
- Diligence
- Strength of character
- Principled, honest
- Knowledge

Achievements

Status achieved

Values

Faith in God

Emphasis on education

Being selfless, religious and capable of loving their children unconditionally, capable of accepting fault and weaknesses were among the admired qualities of the fathers. One daughter said that what she likes about her father is that "he treats me like an adult". To be treated like an adult is a recognition of her capabilities. This is a prized accolade conferred upon the adolescent.

Reflecting on the qualities admired one can have the sense of what adolescents would want fathers in general to be. Furthermore, it could also be surmised that these are also the same qualities which they would probably like to have for themselves and their own families in the future.

Lessons Learned from Fathers

Kindness and respect for everyone

Economic independence

Spiritual development

Make the most of what you have

Keep cool; use common sense

Value of life

Family unity

Discipline

From the essays the daughters shared the lessons they learned from their fathers. Reading through the lessons one can sum up the lessons into two main categories: spirituality and practical wisdom – practical tricks that one can use as one goes on through life. These lessons can be considered as the fathers' legacy to their daughters. It can be clearly seen that these legacies are in keeping with the role of protector of values and concerns for the welfare of the daughter in the days to come.

In sum, the portrait painted of the father by the adolescent daughters in the study is far from the cold, uninvolved provider of the family. He is warm, genuinely concerned with the welfare of the daughter and predisposed to

give her all the support both material and psychological to insure her full development. He models what it is to be an upright, principled man with integrity. It cannot be denied that the fathers, realizing perhaps the awesome responsibility of raising a daughter to be successful as a woman endowed with feminine qualities and able to relate harmoniously with the opposite sex as well as be successful in the career she chooses can sometimes be filled with angst, apprehensions and trepidations finding expression in negative descriptions of the father. Perhaps the fathers can draw much assurance from Tessman's findings where she noted that the daughter for whom the father played a pivotal positive role was highly motivated in later adulthood. In particular, she pointed out that the daughter's specific interest tended to echo what the father supported in childhood.

The findings of the study do not coincide with the literature. It was noted earlier that at adolescence, especially at late adolescence, the closeness with fathers declines. The contrary was found among majority of the daughters in the study. Admittedly, no measure of closeness was used but such could be inferred from the descriptions of the fathers. To cite some responses: "I love my father no matter what." " He tells me that he loves me." " I am very open to him." Perhaps, this is a function of the method used where the data were limited to an open description of fathers or a function of the sample which was made up of psychology students of De La Salle University. The sample consisted of daughters who come from more affluent and educated families, thus, the fathers may be more aware of their responsibilities in raising children.

It is, therefore recommended that the study be replicated with a broader sample to include other socioeconomic groups and adolescents from rural areas to complete the picture. It would also be interesting to investigate ordinal position of the daughter as an added dimension.

Turning the tables, it would also be worth exploring to ask fathers to complete the sentence " My daughter is" What roles will emerge and will there be complementary roles can be an exciting research venture.

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