

Comparison of Paternal Warmth Among Alcoholic and Non-alcoholic Fathers

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Purpose

- This study examined the relationship between father's alcohol use and fathers' warmth during play interactions. The differences in paternal warmth between male and female children were also analyzed.

Method

Sample Selection

- This longitudinal study recruited participants when the children were 12 months old. Participants were excluded if the children were prenatally exposed to alcohol.
- The dyads were assigned to the Control or Father Alcoholic group based upon several measures of alcohol abuse.

Participants

- The sample consisted of 150 father-child dyads assessed when the children were in 4th grade (68 male; 82 female). At the time of recruitment all parents cohabitated and ≈ 11% were not married. Demographics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics

Variable	Alcoholic Father		Control	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total number of alcoholic symptoms	11.49 ^a	18.46	0.15 ^b	0.40
QFI	1.46 ^a	1.22	0.28 ^b	0.54
Frequency of 6 or more drinks in the past year	5.73 ^a	1.89	8.49 ^b	0.84
Father's Education	2.95 ^a	1.41	3.65 ^b	1.65
Father's Income in 10,000	6.03	2.85	6.58	2.27

Note: Means with different superscripts were significantly different.

Identification of Alcohol Abuse

- In order for a father to be considered an alcoholic, he must have fulfilled one of the following criteria while the child was 12 months old.
 - The Family History Research Diagnostic Criteria for Alcoholism (FH-RDC; Andreasen et al., 1977, 1986) which is a self-report by the father, that asked if his mother had a substance abuse problem or received treatment for alcohol related issues.
 - He acknowledged having a problem with alcohol, was receiving treatment for alcohol use, was currently drinking and had, in the past year, one alcohol-related problem.
 - He indicated having alcohol-related issues in at least three areas based upon his responses on the University

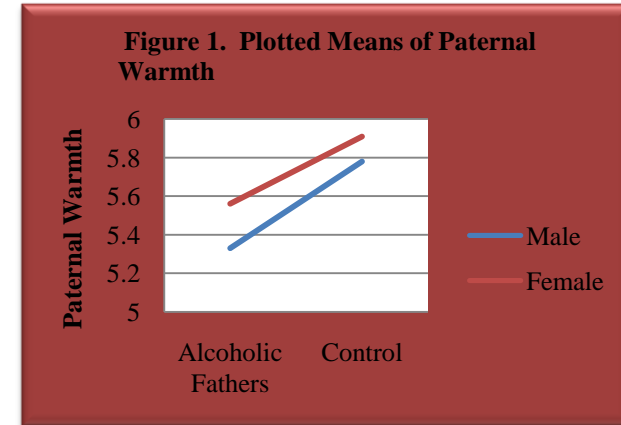
of Michigan-Composite International Diagnostic Interview (UM-CIDI) screen.

- IV. He met the DSM-IV criteria for abuse or dependence in the past year.

Assessment of Paternal Warmth

- The dyads came to the laboratory when the child was in fourth grade. The research assistant asked the parent and child to spend time talking about the things they really liked about each other and their family as a whole. The degree of paternal warmth was then measured using an adapted version of the Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scales (Melby et al., 1998). Higher scores on the 9-point scale reflect a greater degree of paternal warmth.
- The fathers were scored on their behaviors in three domains. (1) Nonverbal communication, such as physical affection. (2) Supportiveness, which includes being empathetic. (3) Content, for example praise, encouragement or approval.

- As shown in tables 2 and 3, non-alcoholic fathers exhibited significantly greater warmth than alcoholic fathers (moderate effect size of $d=.43$).
- There was no main effect of child's gender or interaction between alcohol status and gender, as shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.



Results

- A 2x2 ANOVA was used ($p<.05$).

Table 2. Means

	Male	Female	Total
Alcoholic Fathers	5.33	5.56	5.45 ^a
Control	5.78	5.91	5.85 ^b
Total	5.56	5.74	

Note: Means with different superscripts were significantly different

Table 3. ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	6.66	3	2.22	2.73
Intercept	4650.9	1	4650.9	5722.68
Child's Gender	1.14	1	1.14	1.4
Alcohol Group Status	5.89	1	5.89	7.25**
Child's Gender x Alcohol Group Status	0.09	1	0.09	0.11
Error	118.66	146	0.81	
Total	4883.47	150		
Corrected Total	125.31	149		

* $p<.05$ ** $p<.01$

Conclusion

- Approximately one in ten school age children in the U.S. is a child of an alcoholic parent (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012).
- Research has shown that having an alcoholic father can be detrimental to the family's wellbeing due to a risk for higher conflict and lower quality parenting (Moos & Billings, 1982).
- The current results indicated that alcoholic fathers exhibited lower warmth towards their children than non-alcoholic fathers
- More research is needed to examine the effects of paternal warmth on children, especially in high risk samples.

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