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Father Involvement: Identifying and Predicting Family Members' Shared and Unique Perceptions

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Father involvement research has typically not recognized that reports of involvement contain at least two components: 1 reflecting a view of father involvement that is broadly recognized in the family, and another reflecting each reporter's unique perceptions. Using a longitudinal sample of 302 families, this study provides a first examination of shared and unique views of father involvement (engagement and warmth) from the perspectives of fathers, children, and mothers. This study also identifies influences on these shared and unique perspectives. Father involvement reports were obtained when the child was 12 and 14 years old. Mother reports overlapped more with the shared view than father or child reports. This suggests the mother's view may be more in line with broadly recognized father involvement. Regarding antecedents, for fathers' unique view, a compensatory model partially explains results; that is, negative aspects of family life were positively associated with fathers' unique view. Children's unique view of engagement may partially reflect a sentiment override with father antisocial behaviors being predictive. Mothers' unique view of engagement was predicted by father and mother work hours and her unique view of warmth was predicted by depression and maternal gatekeeping. Taken, together finding suggests a far more nuanced view of father involvement should be considered.

Keywords: father involvement, fatherhood, parenting antecedents, adolescents

Family systems theory has long acknowledged both shared and unique perspectives among family members. Broderick (1993) wrote that the family system can be described "in terms of the balance between shared and individual perceptions of reality" (p. 211). Even though understanding both unique and shared perceptions is key to understanding family functioning (Broderick, 1993; Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Nickerson, 1999; Sillars & Scott, 1983), there have been very few attempts to assess these perceptions. Indeed, some researchers (Jager, Bornstein, Putnick, & Hendricks, 2012) recently outlined the need to empirically identify the unique and shared perceptions of family life, arguing for their fundamental place in understanding how family systems operate. Research has also not addressed the critical follow-up question of what influences the shared and unique views. The need to understand shared and unique views was reflected in recent research on father involvement (FI) that found the relationship between child outcomes and FI varies substantially by who reports FI (father, children, or mothers; Dyer, Day, & Harper, 2013).

The purpose of the current article is to demonstrate the identification of shared and unique views of FI. This conceptual and statistical identification broadens our conceptualization of FI to include components uniquely perceived by fathers, children, and mothers. In addition to identification, we also examine antecedents of those views furthering our understanding of how family members make meaning of what the father does in the family.

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In summary, we advance systems theorizing about FI by addressing the following research questions: (a) To what degree does there exist shared and unique views of FI among fathers, children, and mothers? (b) Are there family members who more closely share views of FI? and (c) What are the antecedents of shared and unique views?

By understanding the shared and unique components, researchers can better know what they are measuring when surveying family members about various dimensions of family life. Findings on unique and share views can inform single reporter studies about the degree to which their reporter's view reflects a shared or unique view. This provides an important context for interpreting single reporter FI research. Further, by examining unique and shared views interventionists are provided with a far more nuanced understanding of the ways family members differentially and similarly see family life.

Conceptualization of Father Involvement and Shared and Unique Perspectives

Pleck (2010) recently outlined three primary FI components: (a) positive engagement activities, (b) warmth and responsiveness, and (c) control. These components have been found independently related to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development from infancy to adulthood (for reviews see Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Pleck, 2010). Given the data used in the current study does not have multiple reports of Pleck's (2010) "control" component, only the first two components, positive engagement ("engagement" throughout) and warmth, were examined.

Although reports of FI are certainly influenced by whether the reporter is the one enacting (i.e., the father), receiving (i.e., the child), or observing and/or participating in the involvement (i.e.,

the mother), there has been no systematic evaluation of these views. To date, research has typically favored examining either the unique or shared view of FI. The unique view is favored when reports from family members are used separately, acknowledging differing perspectives exist, but not isolating a shared view (e.g., Fagan, 2013). The shared view is favored when a single reporter is used with the assumption that it represents a common reality. It is also favored when reports from multiple family members are combined and unique views are treated as "measurement error" (see Cook & Goldstein, 1993; Sher-Censor, Parke, & Coltrane, 2011) rather than meaningful components in and of themselves.

Despite this reliance on either the unique or shared perspectives, the contribution of both has long been acknowledged. Although family systems theory aids in understanding family shared and unique views, other theories such as symbolic interactionism have long acknowledged the importance of understanding shared and nonshared meanings (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

Shared meanings within a family are supported by a common environment, common experiences, and often a common perception of the world. Conversely, differing perspectives of family life have been attributed to several sources including diverse emotional experiences (e.g., Larson, Richards, & Perry-Jenkins, 1994) and differing "developmental agendas." In Western cultures, while parents' tasks center on family togetherness, adolescents' tasks center on differentiating from family (Stuart & Jose, 2012). These differing agendas may result in parent–adolescent perceptual differences. Given similar developmental agendas of fathers and mothers, adolescent FI reports likely have a larger unique component than father and mother reports. However, given the father and the adolescent, by definition, must both be involved for FI to occur, we hypothesize father and child reports will be more similar than mother and child reports.

Although studies may varyingly use the shared or unique perspective, the implicit goal is often to identify "real" involvement. Indeed, very little theory has addressed FI as a perceptual experience. Because shared views represent the agreement of multiple reporters it is likely the best (though certainly not perfect) representation of actual FI. Studies whose research questions focus on what the father is actually doing are, therefore, likely safest using the shared view (though, in the situation of nonresident fathers, e.g., there may be only a minimal shared view). An additional part of our exploration will be to determine whether one family member's view better represents the shared view than others. However, FI research from a more phenomenological approach may be primarily interested in unique perceptions rather than objectively defined FI.

Antecedents of Father Involvement

Scholars have identified numerous antecedents of FI (see Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). The current study incorporates a number of these, grouping them into three central influences on the family system (a) demographics, (b) individual characteristics, and (c) characteristics of the relationship with the father (cf. Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006). We briefly review the literature on antecedents used in the current study, focusing on their relationship to engagement and warmth. However, much of this literature relies on a single reporter, whether it be the father (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Hofferth, Pleck, Goldscheider, Curtin, & Hrapczynski, 2013), the child (e.g., Carlson, 2006; Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998), or the mother (e.g., Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Hofferth, 2003). As antecedent studies typically assume a shared perspective, we initially discuss the literature within this paradigm followed by more exploratory hypotheses concerning antecedents of individual perspectives.

Demographics

Several demographics have been associated with FI including child gender, family income, father and mother work hours, and father race or ethnicity. Although the literature does not universally find these factors significantly predict FI, we briefly present rationale for their relationship to FI and acknowledge conflicting findings.

Many studies find fathers more engaged with male children (e.g., Cabrera, Fagan, & Farrie, 2008; Harris et al., 1998; Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Mammen, 2011; Marsiglio, 1991; Yoshida, 2012) possibly because of their greater confidence interacting with them (Elek, Hudson, & Bouffard, 2003). Father income may influence involvement as it affects the resources the father has available to engage with his children (Hofferth et al., 2013). Because of restrictions on time, father work hours have been found negatively associated with engagement (Hofferth, 2003; Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Hofferth et al., 2013; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000). Further, given fathers often assume additional child rearing tasks when mothers work, mother work hours has been found positively related to father engagement (Hofferth, 2003; Hofferth et al., 2013; McBride, Schoppe, Ho, & Rane, 2004; Yoshida, 2012).

Regarding race or ethnicity, several studies found Black fathers less engaged and warm compared with White (Hofferth, 2003; Hofferth et al., 2013; Wilcox, 2002) whereas McBride et al. (2004) found Black fathers were more warm than White. Though Hofferth (2003) demonstrated that the majority of racial differences can be explained by demographics.

Individual Characteristics

Personality and depression. Big Five personality characteristics (Goldberg, 1990) are likely important influences on FI, though these have been underexplored. Because engaging with agreeable individuals relates to greater desire for future interactions (Cuperman & Ickes, 2009), this trait in fathers or children likely promotes FI. Further, emotional volatility (i.e., "neuroticism") in the father or child may serve to discourage interactions as it is conceptualized as a negative personality trait (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000). One study found agreeableness and neuroticism (reversed) positively related to engagement (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000). In addition, Jain et al. (1996) found fathers higher on neuroticism were more likely disengaged with their children.

A recent meta-analysis found paternal depression to have a significant, though small, negative effect on fathers' sensitivity and responsiveness (Wilson & Durbin, 2010), likely because of depression's negative effects on social functioning (Hirschfeld et al., 2000). Regarding maternal depression, a father's difficulties with a more depressed partner may "spillover" into his relationships with his children (Erel & Burman, 1995), making it more difficult to be warm.

Child Internalizing Problems

Mounting research finds a child's problem behaviors negatively correlated with parenting (Eisenberg et al., 1999; Fanti, Henrich, Brookmeyer, & Kuperminc, 2008). Child internalizing problems have been found related to the level of a father's involvement, though findings are not always consistent (see Eisenberg et al., 1999). Anxious and depressed children may be more difficult to engage with, though the reverse is also likely. Internalizing problems may be more related to child views given that more anxious or depressed children may assign negative attributions when responding about their father's involvement.

Father Identity Centrality

Drawing on identity theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000), some have posited that FI is related to the "centrality" of the fatherhood identity (e.g., Adamsons, 2010; Dyer, Pleck, & McBride, 2012; Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993). Identities higher in centrality are more core to an individual's sense of self, and behaviors associated with higher centrality identities are therefore more likely to be enacted. Centrality's influence on FI has primarily been discussed in terms of engagement, possibly because of its traditional place in a father's role. However, we also explore centrality's relationship with warmth because this FI component has increased in visibility as an important father role (see Veneziano, 2003).

Relationship With the Father

Father prosocial and antisocial behaviors toward the child. We hypothesize that FI is influenced by how prosocial or antisocial fathers and children are during interactions. Similar to the effect of personality, one pathway of influence is via motivations for FI. For instance, father prosocial and antisocial behaviors during interactions likely encourage or discourage children from engaging in future interactions. Child prosocial and antisocial behaviors are hypothesized to have similar effects on fathers' desires for interaction.

Father–mother relationship. Research has generally found the father–mother relationship and the parent–child relationship positively related (for meta-analyses see Erel & Burman, 1995; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). This is consistent with the "spillover hypothesis" (Erel & Burman, 1995) suggesting that marital relationship emotions transfer to the parent–child relationship.

Maternal gatekeeping is included as an aspect of the father–mother relationship and is typically defined as a mother's preferences and attempts to restrict the father's interaction with the child (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Although mothers often enable FI (Puhlman & Pasley, 2013), the literature has primarily focused on the negative aspect, finding gatekeeping negatively associated with engagement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; McBride et al., 2005). As only the negative aspect of gatekeeping is available in the data, we focus on this.

Antecedents of Unique Perspectives

The aforementioned research primarily assumes "real" FI or, at the very least, does not address unique views. Examining antecedents of unique views is therefore largely exploratory. However, certain general hypotheses are made. For instance, demographics may relate to unique views of engagement inasmuch as they influence perceptions of how much fathers *should* be engaged. For example, when fathers are not working full time mothers may perceive less FI given higher expectations (see Rubin, 1994). Child and mother sentiment toward the father may also override or reduce the importance of relevant information when reporting FI (i.e., "sentiment override"; Weiss, 1980). Lamb and Lewis (2010) suggest mothers may partially respond to FI items based on their relationship with the father. Children may respond to FI items partially based on the global father–child relationship (McElhaney, Porter, Thompson, & Allen, 2008). Specifically, fathers' antisocial and prosocial behaviors may affect child responses by influencing their overall sentiment of the father. The father's personality characteristics may also relate to overall sentiment inasmuch as they relate to the father's amount of positive cues (agreeableness) and their emotional liability (neuroticism), among other qualities (see Berry & Hansen, 2000; Cuperman & Ickes, 2009).

Analysis Plan

Sample

Participants for this study were taken from Waves 1 through 5 of the Flourishing Families Study, an ongoing study of families with adolescents. This is a community sample from a large urban center in the Northwest and reflects the area demographics. In 2007, families were recruited using the InfoUSA national database which contained over 80 million households across the United States. Families with a child between the ages of 10 and 14 were first identified from targeted census tracts that mirrored the socioeconomic and racial stratification of reports of target school districts within the target community. Of the 744 eligible families contacted, 500 agreed to participate (147 single-parent, 348 two-parent). Retention rate from Wave 1 to 5 was 93%. Interviews were conducted in the home with each interview consisting of video recordings and self-administered questionnaires. The subsample used here consisted of 302 married or cohabiting (no FI data are available for nonresident fathers) heterosexual couples who did not separate from the beginning of the study. To reduce the heterogeneity of ages within waves, data were reconfigured by child age. Two ages are used for this study where there is entire data overlap, ages 12 ($M = 12.53$, $SD = .52$), and 14 ($M = 14.53$, $SD = .52$). That is, we use data from the same children when they were 12 and then when they were 14 independent of the wave at which they were 12 and 14. Given the analytic complexity and for the purpose of demonstration, we do not use other ages.

Obtaining and Examining Shared and Unique Variance

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model. To obtain family members' shared and unique views, second-order latent variables are specified. Second-order latent variables are latent variables with other latent variables as indicators (referred to as first-order latent variables). In the present case, first-order latent variables were FI reports from fathers, children, and mothers. Indicators of first-order latent variables were FI items (see "Measures" below).

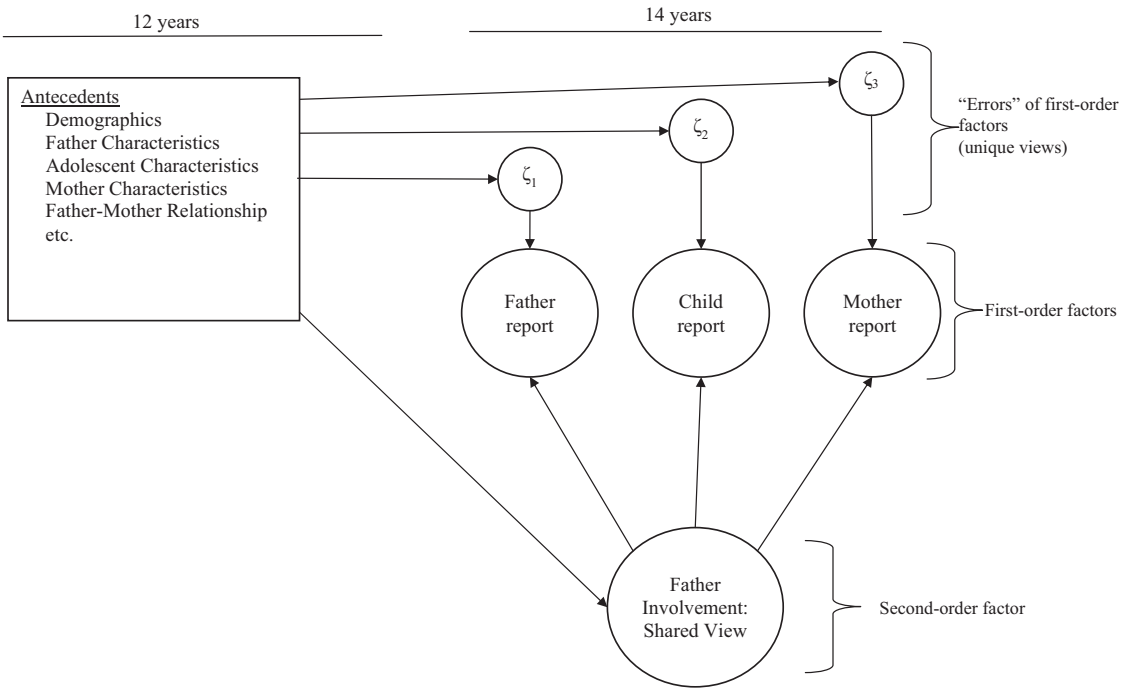

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

First-order variables are predicted by the second-order variable that represents the "shared view" of fathers, children, and mothers. With a second-order variable specified, the variance left over in each of the first-order variables represents the unique view of each reporter. For example, in Figure 1, "ζ_1" represents variance in father report *unique* to him. In addition, these errors almost certainly contain a component of random error. Examining antecedents of these will therefore provide evidence that these components contain variance attributable to a unique view of respondents rather than solely random error. Second-order factors were specified for ages 12 and 14.

Before addressing hypotheses, measurement invariance was tested to establish the measurement models of engagement and warmth. To determine equivalence of FI measures across reporter and time, measurement invariance was conducted on first-order factors. For both engagement and warmth, three age 12 FI latent variables were specified (one for each reporter) and three were specified for age 14 FI. To test measurement invariance it was first examined whether all six first-order factors (three at age 12 and three at age 14) were invariant. If not, it was then examined whether individual reporters' first-order factors were invariant across time. After establishing first-order measurement invariance across reporter and time, second-order factors are specified (see Figure 1). If sufficient invariance exists across reporter's first-order factors then invariance in the second-order factors is tested to see whether the shared view of FI has the same meaning across time.

Procedures outlined by Meredith (1993) and Widaman, Ferrer, and Conger (2010) were used to test measurement invariance. Four types of invariance were tested: configural, weak, strong, and strict. A significant χ^2 difference test indicates measurement invariance is not met; though some have suggested a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) decrease greater than .01 also indicates measurement invariance is not met (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Strong invariance is typically required for latent variables to be considered equivalent.

Comparisons were made to see whether one family member's report is more representative of the shared view than the other reports. To do this we use constraints to test (i.e., chi-square difference test and CFI comparisons) whether the amount of variance the second-order factor explains in the first-order factor differs by reporter.

Examining Antecedents

To examine antecedents, factor scores and residuals from the measurement models are saved to use in regressions. That is, from Figure 1, the second-order factor and "errors" are saved and represent the shared and unique views, respectively. Age 14 shared and unique views are dependent variables. In separate models, each dependent variable is regressed on the antecedents.

In nonexperimental research with only a single time point there is little evidence of whether an independent variable is an outcome or antecedent of the dependent variable. For example, it could easily be that FI influences marital quality rather than the other way around. Given we have two time points, we use child age 12 antecedents to predict age 14 FI. In this way we at least know that the antecedents precede FI.

However, one major confound remains. Age 12 antecedents may relate to age 14 FI simply because of age 14 FI being correlated with age 12 FI. To remove this correlation we fit a model controlling for age 12 FI. Controlling for prior levels in

the dependent variable is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for establishing causality (see Finkel, 1995). As Hofferth et al. (2013) describe, accounting for prior levels of FI examines whether relationships are "correlational or potentially causal" (p. 65). Given that controlling for prior levels is a more stringent test, we focus on interpreting this model while also providing estimates when leaving out this control. Demographics were controlled in each model. All models were fit in Mplus 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) with ML estimation.

Measures

To remove measurement error antecedents were specified as latent variables (with appropriate distribution specifications) and their scores saved for regressions.

Reliability of antecedents. Given the number of antecedents, we summarize reliabilities here with full details available from the first author. For latent variables, all standardized factor loading were above .30 and all models fit acceptably with root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) $<$ .08, CFI and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) $>$ .95 (the TLI equaled .95 in two instances), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) $<$ .08 (or weighted root mean square residual [WRMR] $<$1.0). The exception was father identity which had a CFI of .90 and a TLI of .80, though RMSEA and WRMR were acceptable (.07 and .72, respectively).

Demographics and work hours. Demographic variables were adolescent gender (1 = male, 0 = female), family income (natural log), father race or ethnicity (1 = European American; 0 = Black), and parental employment. Dummy variables were used for employment. For fathers, variables were: working fewer than 40 hr a week, working 40–45 hr, and working more than 45 hr. The largest group was those working 40–45 hr and was used as the comparison (i.e., omitted) group. For mothers, dummy variables were: no-employment, working fewer than 40 hr a week, working between 40 and 45 hr, and working more than 45 hr. Nonworking mothers comprised the largest group and was the comparison.

Personality. Self-reported personality characteristics were obtained with the 30-item Quick Big Five personality test (Vermulst & Gerris, 2005). This measure categorizes personality according to five different subscales. We used the agreeableness (warm and committed to others) and emotionality (emotionally reactive/neuroticism) subscales. Item responses ranged from 1 (*not at all applicable to me*) to 7 (*completely applies me*).

Father and mother depressive symptoms. Parental depression-related symptoms were assessed using a short version (11 items) from the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). This shortened version has been found to tap into the same dimension as the full version with good reliability and little loss of precision (Kohout, Berkman, Evans, & Cornoni-Huntley, 1993). Responses are based on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*most of the time*). Higher scores indicate more depressive symptoms.

Child behavior problems. The internalizing problems scale was adapted from the Child Behavior Checklist Youth Self-Report (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, 2005). Thirteen items were used and include questions such as "I am unhappy, sad or depressed," "I am self-conscious or easily embarrassed." Responses ranged from 0 (*not true*) to 2 (*often true*), higher scores representing higher levels of internalizing symptoms. This adapted scale has been found to have good reliability and predictive validity (e.g., Dyer, Day, & Harper, 2013).

Father identity centrality. Identity centrality was measured using Bruce and Fox's (1999) father role measure. We conducted an EFA to examine factor structure with the three factor solution fitting the data very well ($\chi^2(df) = 21.129(18)$, $p = .27$). The first factor related to identity centrality (sample item: "I like being known as a father") and was used in analyses. Responses ranged from 1 (*not very true of me*) to 3 (*very true of me*).

Observed father and adolescent prosocial and antisocial behaviors. An interaction between the father and adolescent was videotaped and coded by trained observers using the Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scale (Melby et al., 1998). We used observed father and adolescent prosocial and antisocial behaviors. Prosocial behaviors are demonstrations of helpfulness, sensitivity toward others, cooperation, sympathy, and reflects a level of age appropriate maturity. Antisocial behaviors demonstrate self-centeredness, egocentricity, and out-of-control behaviors that show insensitivity toward others and age-inappropriate behaviors. Using an intraclass correlation method (Yoder & Symons, 2010) for determining reliability, the coefficients for antisocial behavior were .84 for fathers and .81 for adolescents. The coefficients for prosocial behavior were .81 for fathers and .82 for adolescents. Disagreements among coders was resolved using the consensus procedure from the Iowa Behavioral Coding lab (Melby et al., 1998).

Marital quality. Marital quality was assessed using a 5-item modified version of the Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983). Responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *very strongly disagree;* 6 = *very strongly agree*; sample item: "My relationship with my partner makes me happy"). Higher scores indicate higher perceived marital quality. As the correlation between father and mother reports was relatively low (.46) both reports are used.

Maternal gatekeeping. Developed by Allen and Hawkins (1999) this measure assesses mothers' control of fathers' access to their children. Mothers responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*; sample item: "If my child needs to be disciplined, I think that I am the one to discipline them, not their father"). Higher scores represent higher levels maternal gatekeeping.

Father involvement. Father involvement was measured using a reduced Hawkins et al. (2002) scale that includes eight items. Responses about the frequency of activities related to their child's life were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Items include: giving encouragement, reading books, and attending activities. Fathers, mothers, and adolescents responded to these items. The eight items were selected from the original 26 based on their applicability to the early adolescent period.

These eight items typically group into two domains, engagement and warmth (Dyer, Day, & Harper, 2013), overlapping with Pleck's (2010) first two FI components. Engagement items included reading with child, taking care of child, attending child activities, and helping child with homework. Warmth items included giving child encouragement, acting as a friend to child, and making it easy for child to talk to the father. The breadwinning item was omitted given it is considered a separate FI component (see Pleck, 2010).

Missing Data

Because of attrition, 23 families (7.6%) were missing FI data at age 14. For antecedents, the most missing data was for child report of their personality and the marital items (10.0%) with the least missing data for mother report of her personality (6.6%). Regression models used multiple imputation with 100 imputations. To test robustness, models were fit with full information maximum likelihood for missing data. Results were substantively identical.

Results

Given its size, the full correlation table is not included but is available from the first author. The correlation matrix between FI and the antecedents is contained in Table 1. The highest correlation was between child internalizing problems and child emotionality (r = .51). All other correlations were below .50.

Measurement Invariance

See Tables 2 and 3 for measurement invariance tests.

Engagement. When constraining loadings across reporters and time the χ^2 difference test was nonsignificant and the CFI was unchanged. However, when constraining intercepts (father report at 12 as base) significant differences were found ($\Delta\chi^2(df)$ = 204.11(16), $p < .001$; CFI .958 vs. .870). Father intercepts across time were then constrained and found to be significantly different ($\Delta\chi^2(df)$ = 26.21(3), $p < .001$; CFI .958 vs. .946) as were mother intercepts ($\Delta\chi^2(df)$ = 39.20(3), $p < .001$; CFI .954 vs. .938). Imposing loading and intercept constraints on child report led to no decrease in model fit. As father and mother reports were not comparable across time, we do not examine second-order measurement invariance. Good model fit was found for age 12 and 14 second-order factors (age 12 fit: $\chi^2(df)$ = 64.51(45), $p < .05$; CFI = .974; TLI = 962; RMSEA = .038. Age 14 fit: $\chi^2(df)$ = 59.95(45), $p > .05$; CFI = .981; TLI = .974; RMSEA = .033).

Warmth. When constraining loadings of all six latent variables for warmth, there was a significant decrease in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2(df)$ = 32.54(10), $p < .001$; CFI .956 vs. .944). However, when examining each reporter individually across time, strict invariance held. Given this we conducted second-order factor measurement invariance across time. Loadings, intercepts, and residuals were invariant for the 12 and 14 year second-order factors. Thus, both first and second-order factors are directly comparable. The final model fit the data acceptably ($\chi^2(df)$ = 240.87(142), $p < .001$; CFI = .945; TLI = .941; RMSEA = .048; SRMR = .088).

Amount of Unique Variance

Table 4 contains parameter estimates from the final second-order latent variable models. For engagement, there was no evidence that there were differences in the amount of unique variance across reporters at age 12. At age 14, the χ^2 difference test was significant when constraining the R^2 for mother and

Table 1
Significant Correlations Between Reports of Father Involvement and Antecedents

	Engagement				Warmth			
	Shared	F. unique	A. unique	M. unique	Shared	F. unique	A. unique	M. unique
Child gender								
Family income								
Race	.13		.15		.12			.12
F. work < 39 hr				−.14				
F. work > 46 hr		−.16						
M. work < 39 hr				−.13				
M. work between 40 and 45 hr	.16			.13				
M. work > 45 hr	.20			.19				
F. agreeableness	.16				.27	.13		
F. emotionality		−.14			−.15			
A. agreeableness	.14		.17		.17	−.15	.12	
A. emotionality	−.15				−.16			
M. agreeableness					.13			.14
M. emotionality								
F. depression								
M. depression	−.13				−.20	.13		−.14
A. internalizing	−.21	−.12			−.23			
F. identity centrality	.23	.17						
F. prosocial behaviors	.15		.17		.24	−.20	.12	
F. antisocial behaviors			−.16					
A. prosocial behaviors			.19		.13	−.12	.12	
A. antisocial behaviors								
Marital quality (M. report)				.13	.18			.14
Marital quality (F. report)	.13				.22			
Maternal gatekeeping	−.19			−.16	−.32			−.20

Note. All correlations significant at $p < .05$. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female; race: 1 = European American, 0 = Black; F. = father; A. = adolescent; M. = mother.

Table 2
Engagement Measurement Invariance Across Time (Age 12 and Age 14)

	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	$\Delta\chi^2(df)$	ΔCFI
1. Parameters all free	266.374*** (181)	.960		
2. All loadings equal across time and reporter	286.728*** (196)	.958		
1 vs. 2			20.511 (15)	−.002
3. All loadings and intercepts equal across time and reporter	489.095*** (212)	.870		
2 vs. 3			204.114*** (16)	−.09
4. All loadings equal across time and reporter, father intercepts equal across time	313.939*** (199)	.946		
2 vs. 4			26.216*** (3)	−.012
5. All loadings equal across time and reporter, child intercepts equal across time	296.578*** (199)	.954		
2 vs. 5			9.417* (3)	−.004
6. All loadings equal across time and reporter, child intercepts equal and errors equal across time (FINAL MODEL)	300.275*** (203)	.954		
5 vs. 6			3.732 (4)	.000
7. All loadings equal across time and reporter, child intercepts equal and errors equal across time, mother intercepts equal across time	338.638*** (206)	.938		
6 vs. 7			39.200*** (3)	−.016

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

child reports of engagement, $\chi^2(df) = 4.16(1)$, $p < .05$ with child reports having significantly *more* unique variance (i.e., lower R^2). For warmth, at both 12 and 14 years, child reports had significantly more unique variance than mother reports (age 12 $\chi^2(df) = 4.79(1)$, $p < .05$; age 14, $\chi^2(df) = 12.14(1)$, $p < .001$). At age 12, father reports had significantly more unique variance than mother reports, $\chi^2(df) = 4.96(1)$, $p < .05$. In summary, fathers and children were not significantly different in the amount of unique variance, however, in every instance but one, children had more unique variance than mothers and in one instance fathers had more unique variance than mothers.

Table 3
Warmth Measurement Invariance Across Time (Age 12 and Age 14)

	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	$\Delta\chi^2(df)$	ΔCFI
1. Parameters all free	190.194*** (111)	.956		
2. All loadings equal across time and reporter	222.191*** (121)	.944		
1 vs. 2			32.544*** (10)	−.012
3. Father loadings equal across times	190.343*** (113)	.957		
1 vs. 3			0.130 (2)	.001
4. Father loadings and intercepts equal across times	192.583*** (115)	.957		
3 vs. 4			2.298 (3)	.000
5. Father full invariant across time	197.864*** (118)	.956		
4 vs. 5			5.228 (3)	−.001
6. Father full invariant across time, child loadings equal across time	199.395*** (120)	.956		
5 vs. 6			0.754 (2)	.000
7. Father full invariant across time, child loadings and intercepts equal across time	202.771*** (122)	.955		
6 vs. 7			3.370 (2)	−.001
8. Father and child full invariant across time	210.806*** (125)	.952		
7 vs. 8			7.097 (3)	−.003
9. Father and child full invariant across time. Mother loadings equal across time	210.845*** (127)	.953		
8 vs. 9			0.015 (2)	.001
10. Father and child, full invariant across time. Mother loadings and intercepts equal across time	211.193*** (129)	.954		
9 vs. 10			0.257 (2)	.001
11. Father, child, and mother, full invariant across time	213.318*** (132)	.955		
10 vs. 11			2.229 (3)	.001
Second order				
1. Second order all free	225.241*** (137)	.951		
2. Second order loadings equal across time	229.877*** (139)	.949		
1 vs. 2			4.502 (2)	−.002
3. Second order loadings and intercepts equal across time	240.154*** (141)	.945		
2 vs. 3			10.560** (2)	−.004
4. Second order full invariance across time (FINAL MODEL)	246.002*** (144)	.943		
3 vs. 4			5.967 (3)	−.002

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index.
*** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Factor Structure for Father Involvement (n = 302)

	Age 12			Age 14		
	Dad	Adolescent	Mom	Dad	Adolescent	Mom
Engagement						
First order loadings						
Attend activities	.49 (.05)	.44 (.05)	.57 (.06)	.57 (.06)	.59 (.07)	.63 (.06)
Read to	.49 (.05)	.52 (.05)	.56 (.05)	.34 (.06)	.43 (.06)	.38 (.05)
Take care of	.52 (.05)	.58 (.04)	.65 (.05)	.51 (.06)	.62 (.07)	.58 (.07)
Help with homework	.65 (.06)	.62 (.05)	.72 (.04)	.49 (.07)	.53 (.06)	.54 (.06)
R^2 for second order factor	.55	.46	.82	.69	.45	.87
Second order loadings						
Dad report		.74 (.07)			.83 (.07)	
Child report		.68 (.09)			.67 (.09)	
Mom report		.90 (.08)			.93 (.08)	
Model fit[a]						
$\chi^2(df)$		59.95 (45)			64.51 (45)*	
CFI/TLI		.98/.91			.97/.96	
RMSEA		.03			.04	
SRMR		.06			.07	
Warmth						
First order loadings						
Give encouragement	.68 (.04)	.58 (.05)	.74 (.04)	.66 (.04)	.58 (.05)	.71 (.04)
Act as friend	.75 (.03)	.77 (.03)	.61 (.05)	.73 (.04)	.77 (.03)	.58 (.05)
Easy to talk	.78 (.03)	.81 (.03)	.84 (.03)	.76 (.03)	.82 (.03)	.82 (.03)
R^2 for second order factor	.44	.32	.58	.50	.32	.70
Second order loadings						
Dad report		.67 (.06)			.70 (.06)	
Child report		.56 (.05)			.56 (.06)	
Mom report		.76 (.70)			.84 (.08)	
Model fit						
$\chi^2(df)$			240.87 (142)***			
CFI/TLI			.95/.94			
RMSEA			.05			
SRMR			.09			

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.
[a] Given unresolvable model issues when estimating age 12 and 14 engagement second-order factors in the same model (nonpositive definite matrix) they are estimated separately. No such issues were encountered with warmth.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$. All loadings significant at $p < .001$.

Engagement Antecedents

Table 5 contains significant parameter estimates of engagement and warmth results. In this table, Model 1 does not control for age 12 levels of involvement whereas Model 2 does.

Shared variance. Age 12 shared view predicted age 14 shared variance (β range = .66; $p < .001$). In both Models 1 and 2, when the mother worked 40 hr or more, engagement was rated higher. In Model 1, father engagement was also higher when mothers' worked less than 40 hr compared with nonworking mothers. In both models, engagement was positively related to the father being European American, the father having greater identity centrality, and the mother having more emotionality. Although gatekeeping and observed behaviors were related to engagement in Model 1 they were not significant after controlling for age 12 FI (Model 2).

Father unique variance. For father unique variance, the father working more than 45 hr and the mother working part time were related to FI (negatively and positively, respectively) though this relationship did not bear out in Model 2. Consistent across Models 1 and 2, greater father identity and marital quality as reported by the father were positively related to engagement. Interestingly, mother report of marital quality had an inverse relationship with the father's perception of his engagement (Model 2).

Child unique variance. Across both models, fathers who worked under 39 hr were seen by children as more engaged and fathers who were more antisocial were seen as less engaged. Furthermore, across both models the more prosocial the child the more engagement they perceived. When not controlling for prior engagement, the father being European American and the child's agreeableness were positively associated with child perceptions of engagement. Father depression was negatively associated with the unique child view only in Model 2.

Mother unique variance. Mothers perceived less engagement when fathers worked less than full-time and perceived more engagement when they themselves worked more than 45 hr (Model 2). These were also significant predictors in Model 1, though the mother working between 40 and 45 hr was also significant (positively related) along with mother emotionality (positively related), and maternal depression and gatekeeping (negatively related).

Table 5
Age 14 Engagement and Warmth: Predictors of Shared Variance and, Father, Child, and Mother Unique Variance (n = 302)

	Shared		Unique father		Unique child		Unique mother	
Father engagement	Model 1β	Model 2β	Model 1β	Model 2β	Model 1β	Model 2β	Model 1β	Model 2β
Age 12 engagement		.66***		.35***		.33***		.38***
Demographics								
European American	.12*	.10*			.14*			
Work hours								
Father < 39 hr[a]					.13*	.14*	−.18**	−.16**
Father > 45[a]			−.13*					
Mother < 39[b]	.17**		.18**					
Mother 40–45 hr[b]	.25***	.11*					.17*	
Mother > 45 hr[b]	.24***	.12**					.20**	.13*
Personal characteristics								
Mother emotionality		.14***					.06*	
Mother depression							−.13*	
Child agreeableness					.12*			
Child internalizing	−.18**	−.10*						
Father identity	.22***	.13**	.19***	.12*				
Father emotionality			−.18**	−.14*				
Father depression						−.13*		
Marital quality (father)		.10*	.13*	.13*				
Marital quality (mother)				−.13*				
Maternal gatekeeping	−.13*						−.14*	
Observed behaviors								
Father prosocial	.21***							
Father antisocial					−.14*	−.18**		
Child prosocial	−.14*				.17*	.17*		
Father warmth								
Age 12 warmth		.93***				.22***		
Demographics								
Income			.13*	.13*				
Work hours								
Mother < 39[b]	.12*							
Mother 40–45 hr[b]	.17**							
Mother > 45 hr[b]								
Personal characteristics								
Mother depression			.13*	.13*			−.13*	
Child agreeableness			−.12*	−.13*	.13*			
Child internalizing	−.17**							
Father agreeableness	.16**	.06*	.16**	.14*				
Father emotionality			−.12*	−.12*				
Father depression		.06*					.19**	.19**
Marital quality (father)	.14*							
Maternal gatekeeping	−.20***						−.15*	−.13*
Observed behaviors								
Father prosocial			−.18**	−.19**				

Note. Only significant parameters are lists. Model 1 does not control for age 12 levels; Model 2 does.
[a] Compared to fathers working between 40 and 45 hr. [b] Compared to nonworking mothers.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Warmth Antecedents

Shared variance. In Model 1, the shared variance was positively related to the mother working either less than 39 hr or between 40 and 45 hr (compared with nonworking mothers). The shared view of warmth was also predicted by father agreeableness and the father's report of marital quality. Child internalizing and maternal gatekeeping were both negatively associated with the shared view. In Model 2, shared variance at age 14 was strongly predicted by age 12 shared variance ($\beta = .93$, $p < .001$). Other than this, only father agreeableness and father depression were positively related to warmth.

Father unique variance. Given age 12 warmth did not significantly predict father unique variance at age 14, it is unsurprising that Models 1 and 2 have identical significant predictors. Father unique variance was positively associated with income, mother depression, and father agreeableness. Father unique variances were negatively associated with child agreeableness, father emotionality, and father prosocial behaviors.

Child unique variance. In Model 1, child agreeableness was positively related to their unique view of father warmth. In Model 2 the child view of age 12 warmth was significantly related to their view of age 14 warmth. No other predictors were significant in either model.

Mother unique variance. Age 12 mother reports did not significantly predict their unique variance at age 14. Mother depression was significantly (and negatively) related to mother's unique view in

Model 1 but not Model 2. However, in both models father depression was positively related to the mother's unique view with maternal gatekeeping negatively related.

Discussion

According to family systems theory, a key component of family life is the negotiation between shared and unique views of family members. The current study extracted both the shared and unique variance of FI among three family members, the father, the child, and the mother. Although hypothesized previously, this study is the first we know of to empirically identify these components for use in analyses. This study also examined the degree to which each family member's view was unique to them and shared by other family members. It was hypothesized that children would have more unique variance than parents. This largely bore out for mother–child comparisons, but did not for father–child comparisons. Mothers and fathers differed in only one instance with mothers having less unique variance. Thus, there is some indication mother reports best reflect the shared view, with no indication the father or child may.

This suggests that when needing to choose a single reporter, studies interested in identifying actual father behaviors may be safest using mother report (assuming the shared view best represents actual involvement). Studies using only child report should acknowledge this view is likely the least indicative of a shared view. An important follow-up question will be how the degree of shared view between parents and children evolves over time.

Although identifying these views and their overlap is important, understanding what is associated with these views is critical. Although causality cannot be established, the current analyses took an initial step by exploring how demographic, personal, and relational factors are related to shared and unique views. Given controlling for prior levels is a more stringent test, we primarily focus on "Model 2" of Table 5 for interpretation.

Antecedents of the Shared and Unique Views

For engagement, the shared view was positively related to mothers' time at work and her emotionality. This may indicate that when mothers are somewhat less available in time and emotional resources, fathers step in. This is indicative of a family system attempting to achieve equilibrium, one part of the system compensating for another. The father's report of marital quality was positively related to the shared view, indicating an important role of the couple relationship in shaping a more positive shared view of the father. That father work hours did not predict shared engagement indicates engagement is configured more in response to the mother's schedule than the father's. Child internalizing problems were also negatively related to the shared view, possibly indicating either that children with internalizing problems withdraw more from the father or that fathers have a difficult time engaging more anxious children.

No father personality characteristics were related to shared engagement, though identity centrality was. The opposite was true for the shared view of warmth where father agreeableness was positively associated with warmth, but centrality was not. Engagement may be more influenced by centrality as this role more likely contains an engagement component than a warmth component. Warmth is perhaps more influenced by the father's predisposition to empathetic interactions (agreeableness). There being no overlap in significant predictors of engagement and warmth (in Model 2) speaks to their different etiologies: one enabled more by work schedules and mother and child characteristics, the other by father personality.

Despite numerous antecedents having a significant bivariate relationship with the shared view of age 14 warmth, in the end, only father agreeableness and father depression were significant in the second model. Although the positive association between agreeableness and warmth was expected, the positive association between depression and warmth was not. Father depression is also positively related to mothers' unique variance. The reason for this may be in the warmth items. One item concerns the father acting as a friend to the child and another with the father making it easy for the child to talk to them. For more depressed fathers, rather than these items indicating the father is reaching out to support the child, they may indicate the father reaching out for support *from* the child. This possibility has not yet been dealt with in the literature and deserves exploration.

Unique views. For fathers' unique view of both engagement and warmth, an interesting pattern emerged where fathers' characteristics and *self-reported* relationship characteristics were in the hypothesized direction. However, characteristics of the mother and child as well as the mother report of marital quality were opposite to hypothesizes. Fathers who have a more positive view of themselves may tend to bias FI reports upward. In addition, when things are not going well with other members of the family (including the wife's, but not his assessment of the marriage) he may compensate by actually increasing FI or by believing is more engaged or warm than he actually is. This speaks more to a "compensatory" model than a "spillover" model of father involvement (Erel & Burman, 1995). That is, fathers perceive themselves as *more* engaged or warm (not less) when other parts of the family system are struggling.

Father reports containing a compensatory component may explain why his reports are least predictive of child outcomes (Dyer et al., 2013). That is, they share variance with negative aspects of the family system. Thus, when research examines the impact of FI using father reports, it may be well to test for suppressor effects.

Child unique view of engagement was predicted by father antisocial and child prosocial behaviors. This may reflect sentiment override where children perceive greater FI when they have positive interactions with the father. This may also be why father depression predicts the child's unique view, more depressed fathers are likely less positive in their interactions, creating more negative sentiment. When fathers worked less than full time, children perceived greater engagement, possibly because of comparisons with other children whose fathers work full time.

Although child agreeableness was significantly related to their perception of father warmth in Model 1, once previous levels of the child's unique view were controlled no antecedents were predictive of the child's unique view. Thus none of the hypotheses bore out in predicting a child's unique view of father warmth. Given almost 50% of the child's report is unique it will be important for future research for explore just what the child is responding to when they report on paternal warmth. It may also be that children's responses contain more random error than parent responses.

For engagement, mother perceptions were predicted by work arrangements. Fathers working less were perceived as less involved, possibly because mothers may feel fathers who work less should do more child care (e.g., Rubin, 1994). Mothers working more than 45 hr perceived greater engagement, perhaps seeing the additional requirements on the father. This may explain why studies that did not interview mothers (for whom work hours may be more salient) did not find maternal work hours related to FI (e.g., Marsiglio, 1991; Yeung, 2001).

For warmth, why mothers perceive more depressed fathers as more warm is less clear. It may be, as discussed earlier, warmth items also capture an element of the father attempting to receive support from the child. It may also be that when responding to items about expressing warmth that mothers give additional "credit" to fathers who have more emotional difficulties.

Maternal gatekeeping was negatively associated with the mother's view. Mothers who rate fathers as less capable of caring for their child may also perceive the father as less able to connect warmly with the child. It is interesting that maternal gatekeeping was related to FI in four instances, but only remained significant when controlling for prior levels in the model of mother unique views. Thus, maternal gatekeeping often bundles together with FI, though may not be causally related for most forms of involvement. Future research should examine what processes give rise to higher levels of maternal gatekeeping being associated with less FI.

Limitations

The current study only examined one method for obtaining multiple views of FI, a Likert scale. Results from other methodologies such as time diaries may differ. Another limitation is that only seven of the IFI items were used. The current study also did not examine potential moderators of the relationship between antecedents and FI (e.g., child gender). Finally, the amount of diversity in the current sample was low. Findings should not be generalized to nonresident fathers. It is likely the amount of variance the shared view explains for each reporter of nonresident FI is substantially different than for resident FI. Further, given the additional constraints on nonresident FI, antecedents likely differ from resident FI.

Conclusion

In summary, father unique views may reflect a compensation for other parts of the system going poorly. Child reports of engagement may reflect sentiment override. Mother reports of father engagement may reflect expectations of engagement given his and her work schedules. Mother reports of warmth may be more influenced by the father's depression and her views of the whether she (vs. the father) is best able to handle the child.

This study extends conceptualization of FI by explicitly examining shared and unique views of multiple family members. It also provides some indication of the level to which fathers, children, and mothers similarly and differentially perceive FI. By identifying antecedents of shared and unique views, this study opens a new line of research in the growing area of what influences a father's involvement. This approach provides fruitful ground for FI research, allowing for additional insights into how each family member experiences FI and increases understanding of the role of fathers in family life.

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