

# United We Stand: The Role of Women in Advancing the Fatherhood Movement

Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.  
Children, Youth & Family Consortium  
University of Minnesota

Minnesota Fatherhood & Family Services Summit  
St. Cloud Civic Center  
January 20, 2005



## What's in it for her?

- Her child's healthy development and well-being
- Greater economic security for herself and child
- Her own emotional well-being as a mother
- Critical mass of fathers → healthy neighborhood

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

## What factors are most likely to influence his relationship with his child?

- Relationship with mother of child
- Mother's attitudes, expectations & support of father; family of origin; employment status
- Father's skills, knowledge, role identity & commitment; family of origin; his employment status
- Contextual factors: economic factors, workplace practices, cultural expectations & support

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

The father-child relationship appears to be more sensitive to outside forces than the mother-child relationship.

- Mother-father relationship
- Contextual/cultural factors

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

## What can we do in the community at large?

- Healthcare providers engage father fully in prenatal, perinatal and pediatric care
- Schools engage fathers in conferences, special events & ongoing support of student success
- Workplaces support mothers and fathers equally in utilizing parental leave and being involved in children's activities
- Citizens advocate for policies & programs shown to encourage father responsibility and successful co-parenting

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

## What can we do in family support programs?

- Address the multiple factors that influence fathering (“ecological approach”)
- Integrate and coordinate work with mothers and fathers
- Specifically focus on quality of mother-father relationship
- Address family of origin (past & present) for both mother & father

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.



The heart of the matter: looking back, moving forward.

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

## Relationship History Influences on Parenting

- Early relationships with parents and other caregivers
- How the person has come to think about that history (*“state of mind” about remembered attachment*)

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

## Link Between Parental State of Mind and Parent-Infant Attachment

### AAI

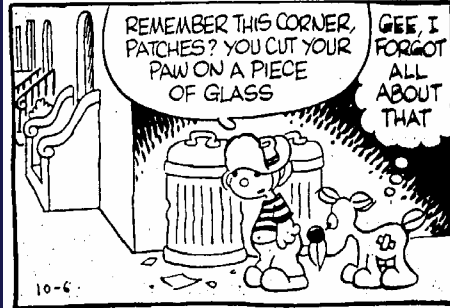
Secure-autonomous  
Dismissing  
Preoccupied  
Unresolved

### Strange Situation

Secure  
Avoidant  
Anxious-Resistant  
Disorganized

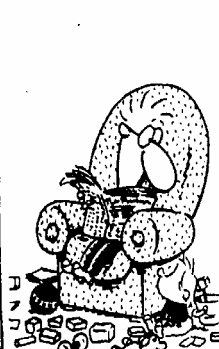
Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

Gamin and Patches / By Addison



Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

Baby Blues / By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D.

End