

International Family Day Care
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*“Male Counterparts in Family Child
Care: The Positive Role that
Husbands Play in Successful Homes ”*

Ramona Freeman, Ph.D.

Kent State University – Salem

rfreema1@kent.edu

Statement of Significance

Men in early childhood are under-represented, yet they play important roles for children. When family child care providers have husbands or male partners, these men invariably have some impact upon the success of these home based educare programs.

Support from Male Counterparts is Critical in Family Child Care Because:

- Providers are solitary in their work: they need emotional sustenance
- Providers must negotiate space and time that belongs to both partners
- Providers' satisfaction with all aspects of their work is necessary felt by the spouse/male counterpart
- Providers' educare programs can improve with the addition of a 'second opinion', the male perspective
- Others?

How can Husbands and Male
Counterparts Support the
Family Child Care Business?

Stories...

Every once in a while, I surprise the parents with a special thing where they can bring their children for a sleep over, or an evening. The real advantage is the *thinking of others* and the *extra effort part*; when that's nailed down, then it's gonna be in everybody's mind – the good relationship. We'll take them places on a Saturday, my husband and our kids too, like to a park or a skating rink. This is just life; it's how it is. (Daisy)

Other daycares are sometimes in a rut. They do the same old same old, even outdoors, even the field trips. Here we do what we want. We have our own parades, our own Indy 500, obstacle course, you name it. My back yard is small but we have nice stuff. Frank just made a climbing wall; he looked at one and copied it, with architectural improvements. At one time the yard looked like a Little Tykes store but now we're getting creative, and kids don't want to leave. (Iris)

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I like to let them get dirty so they are pushing their hands into mud or whatever. I gave them magnifying glasses and they saw the hairs on the legs [of praying mantises] and all the other parts of the body. Then they took the magnifiers and looked at other things outside like rocks, worms... stuff in the garden. They asked my husband if they could look at some stuff of his, so he gave them a piece of roof shingle. Then he gave them a wing of a wasp that he had killed. Also a paint can that was all rusted. The kids thought the rust crumbs looked like caves.

(Daisy)

My husband one day put [his motorcycle pack] in a backyard tree... so it would be above their head. The two boys that are 6 and 7 got home from school – love to be around Frank. So he said, “I wonder how that got in the tree”. They guessed a bunch of things, and Frank would not give it away that he put it there. They said maybe the wind or the mailman or a squirrel. So Frank left for a little bit. And I said, “Maybe you could try and get it down for him”. They tried to jump up, but it was just a little too high. They spent all afternoon using everything in the back yard. They were so determined. (Iris)

I had a big old bowl of Insta-snow™ that we'd been playing with. When it got too old, we planted trees that Ben [husband] ordered... like seventeen trees. We have to water our trees in the summer time because they get so dried out in the field. So Ben takes the older summer time kids outside and each kid gets to put a cup of Insta-snow. The kids saw the difference between those that were grown this summer; those did better than trees planted last summer. (Daisy)

Ben will save a carburetor or radio or clock and keep it in the barn. That's how we'll work on reading, especially with the boys I find having a hard time. Ben will give them a book on carburetors, then we'll start tearing apart a real one. He gets all these race magazines too. The easiest way to get a boy to read is to give him a car part, then get a catalog to find words at their level. It makes a difference because older boys come back and tell me: "That was a whole lot more fun, Ms. Rose, a *lot!*" [laughter]. (Rose)

We always buy a lot of wild flower seed and Ben [husband] plows up an area probably twice as big as this table [36" x 60"], over by the blueberry bushes where you pull in the driveway. Then they just take the seeds and throw them in, and whatever comes up, comes up. A lot of times we play in the afternoon in the front yard, so that when we're playing and the parents pull in, we're already outside. There's no fighting about going home because one of the outside activities is to go pick a little handful of flowers to take home.
(Rose)

Frank gets home in the early afternoon when the kids have just woke up from their nap. He always swaggers in and asks me: “Who’s running this place? Can I get a cold drink for a thirsty man?” It’s his signal that he’s home. Every day he pulls out all the change he has in his pocket, never very much, and he plunks it on the table to ‘pay’ for some iced tea, et cetera. One kid pulls his chair out, another gets a napkin, and they act like waiters, like they really aim to please [laughter]. Then they wait. Frank will take a coin in his hand and look at it for a long time and then ask what it is. Then he asks another question and another, asking harder ones like, “What would two dimes be?” He explains to them if they don’t know the answer. They stand around the table ‘til they have all the money [laughter]. (Iris)

I get cues also from other people about how the kids are doing. I have my sources [laughter]. Frank [husband] will occasionally notice a kid's progress and he'll tell me. (Daisy)

Levels of Involvement for Husbands
and Male Counterparts in Family
Child Care:

- Men who play a peripheral role; very low involvement
- Men who offer psychological aid: a buffer, encourager
- Men who actively help with planning or environment
- Men who work alongside the provider

What other types or categories of husband/male partner involvement can be uncovered?

Counter Stories:

(Family child care made worse by
the Better Half!)

Are there any instances of the men
being counter productive to
exemplary family child care?

Roadblocks:

- Lack of awareness
- Stereotypes (men don't wipe toddlers' noses)
- Suspicion from parents
- Lack of encouragement
- Lack of professional development to address this
- Others?

To promote providers' awareness:

Be aware of client children who do not have a father figure

Note children who like to interact with the husband/male partner, and encourage him to step into activities (book reading, table conversation, tying shoes)

Let parents know how male partners assist with the child care program (that a clearly defined role is in place for him as co-caregiver)

Notice the opportunities for client children to observe the provider and male partner collaborate, converse, and enjoy each other

Avoid having the husband/father figure only model traditionally male roles (bolting the climbing wall together versus loading the dishwasher)

For male partners to consider:

- How much do I want to be involved in the family child care process?
- How much *am* I involved in the family child care program?
- Do my wife/female partner and I have a clear understanding of my role?
- What else could I do to support the program... what are my strengths?

For male partners to consider (con't):

- What age group do I prefer when I interact with client children?
- To what degree do I interact with the client children's families?
- How will my involvement improve the quality of our program?
- What would I like to see offered during in-service training for my wife/female partner or for me?

New Directions:

- Future Literature
- Professional Development
- Marketing Considerations

What might we plan for
next week?