

## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Psychology of Fathering in the Caribbean: An Investigation of the Physical and Psychological Presence of the Jamaican Father**

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The present study had four main objectives including investigation of children's major parental and caretaking figures, determining whether physical and psychological presence of father had effects on children in terms of wellbeing and the quality of the father-child relationship, as well as determining if child wellbeing can be predicted by several variables relating to father. It also attempted to provide supporting evidence for or against studies advocating that the 'marginal' father is an overgeneralization and/or stereotype and that he is more involved in parenting than commonly recognized or admitted. Structured interviews were carried out with a sample of 251 school children with mean age of 14 years from the Kingston area. The study focused on the children's perceptions of their relationships with their biological fathers. Overall, children living with their fathers enjoyed a higher quality relationship with him. The relationship boys and girls shared with their resident biological fathers was found to be similar. Psychological presence of father was also a significant moderator of the quality of father-child relationship, and children with higher scores on this variable generally had a better quality relationship with their fathers. Biological fathers and mothers were found to be, to a large extent, the maternal and paternal figures and caretakers, with the father being the more variable figure in terms of residence with children. While authoritative parenting was prevalent in all 'social classes', there was more variability in the 'lower classes' with a greater preponderance of authoritarian and uninvolved styles of fathering. The most unique contribution of the present study is to qualify the applicability of the marginal father stereotype. It now seems more correct to infer that non-resident fathers and fathers who are not very psychologically present to their children better fit the negative stereotypical description in terms of the quality of their interaction with their children.

**Key words:** physical presence of father; psychological presence of father; marginality; stereotype; Marina Ramkissoon