

Distant dads a thing of the past

Dalhousie researcher wants to update research methods to include fathers

PARENTING

By Jorge Barrera - CanWest News Service

The outdated stereotype of the distant dad means fathers are still largely excluded from studies of children and their families, says a Dalhousie University doctoral student researching ties between a child's pain and parent reaction.

Clinical-psychology student Erin Moon, 27, said fathers are mostly missing from research. Questionnaires and tests are all based on the responses of mothers, who have traditionally been cast in the role as the one most involved in the care and nurture of children, said Moon.

"The research has not kept up with the changes in society, with fathers being more and more involved in children's lives," said Moon. "Almost all the previous research has been conducted with mothers. So working with fathers requires a bit of a shift."

Moon plans to study how parent reaction influences the way children deal with pain. She wants to focus on whether fathers react differently to a daughter or a son in pain, for which little data currently exists.

Forty families of three — including a child, father and mother — will be tested as part of her study at the **WK** Health Centre. In the study, each child will be told to put a hand in cold water for as long as they can. Moon plans to observe how the child is affected by the father's and mother's reactions.

California-based men's issues author Warren Farrell said society is half-a-century behind in its view of dads.

"The sexism against men is so great, we don't even think of them," said Farrell, who has written several books on the subject, including *Father and Child Reunion*.

Marian Lippa, 34, says her upbringing shows how untrue the stereotypes are.

She grew up in a home with a single dad who always had breakfast ready and school lunches packed.

"I received as much affection as any of my friends did with their mothers," said Lippa, a Toronto paralegal who is also a director of a men's advocacy group.





Fathers are more involved in the lives of their kids than in the past, says researcher Erin Moon, whose new pain research at the WK will include both moms and dads.