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MEASURING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT UTILIZING  
THE EXPERIENCE SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Psychology:  
Child Development

---

by  
Kim Carmelite Metcalfe  
September 2002

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THE EXPERIENCE SAMPLING METHODOLOGY


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by  
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September 2002

Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

This study was designed to clarify the types of behaviors mothers and fathers engage in with their sons and daughters using the Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM). The participants were 32 heterosexual married couples (32 mothers and 32 fathers). Each couple had two children, one male and one female who ranged in age from 10 - 14 years. All 64 participants worked full-time outside their family residence. Participants carried beepers and were paged separately between 15 and 60 minutes apart, at random times, when neither parent was at work and neither child was in bed until each parent completed fifteen parent activity report forms over the course of one week. Parents were asked to report whatever activity they were engaged in at the time beeper signaling occurred. Three pre-determined domains of parent-child involvement were utilized in this study: planning and arranging for the child, parental emotional care of the child, and active engagement of the parent with the child. Types of behaviors and the amount of time mothers and fathers engaged in those behaviors with their sons and their daughters were assessed. Findings showed that mothers were significantly more involved across all three domains with their sons and daughters than fathers.

Fathers were significantly more involved with their sons than their daughters in activities, whereas no differences were found between mothers' involvement with sons versus daughters. These findings suggest that despite mothers working outside their family residence, stereotypical gender role continue to be the norm with mothers continuing to be more involved with their children than fathers. The usefulness of the ESM in assessing parenting behaviors, gender role ideologies, and the consequences for all members of the family when fathers are not as involved with their children as mothers are discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this research project to my creator and my two children Emily and Abigail Metcalfe. To my creator; I dedicate this work in appreciation for the wonderful gift of life. To my children; I dedicate this work in appreciation of all those times you both cheered me on with kindness, and understanding- I Love You.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary research findings on parental involvement with children consistently identify mothers as being more involved with their children than fathers (Baumrind, 1980; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Studies have also found that mothers spend the same amount of time with their sons as with their daughters, engaged in a variety of parenting behaviors such as childcare, play, and educational activities (Acock & Demo, 1994; Yeung et al., 2001). Findings of paternal involvement with children are inconsistent regarding the amounts of time fathers spend with their children and the types of behaviors fathers engage in with their sons versus their daughters. The purpose of this study is to clarify the different types of parenting behaviors that mothers and fathers engage in with their children and the amount of time parents spend engaged in those behaviors utilizing the Experience Sampling Methodology.

## Maternal Versus Paternal Involvement with Children

### Historical Perspective

According to Roberts and Moseley (1996), fathers in western culture historically worked in or near their homes and had essentially the same amount of access to their children as mothers did. Economic events that occurred in western culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, affected fathers' accessibility to their children. Specifically, the industrial revolution brought new economic opportunities for men. These economic opportunities required fathers to leave their homes to gain employment. As fathers left their family residence, mothers remained at home, resulting in mothers having more access to their children than fathers (Morgenbesser & Nehls, 1981). Eventually mothers' role as primary caretaker was reflected in society's opinion that a mother's care was the most important factor in raising healthy children (Grief, 1995). "Mother importance" dictated that the courts adopt the "Tender Years Doctrine" [TYD] (Rotman, Tompkins, Schwartz, & Samuels, 2000). This doctrine supported the notion that children need a mother's care to develop appropriately. The TYD became the impetus for the awarding of custody of children to mothers in situations

of marital discord (Rotman et al., 2000). The economic influences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century insured mother's role as primary caretakers of their children for over a century (Mullis & Otwell, 1998).

#### The Mother-Child Versus Father-Child Relationship Today

In the past few decades, an increasing number of mothers have joined fathers in the work force and have begun to work outside their homes in order to meet economic and personal needs. Mother employment has resulted in yet another shift in the family structure, including new expectations of fathers. The modern father is now expected to be an economic provider and contributor to his child's physical and emotional day-to-day care (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991).

Indeed, the studies that emerged during the 1960s through the 1980s suggested that fathers were responding to society's expectations of increased father involvement. The body of research findings indicated that compared to the level of father-child involvement in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, paternal involvement with children had increased (Lamb, Pleck, Chamov, & Levine, 1985; Pleck, 1985). Despite these increases, however, fathers continue to devote considerably less time than mothers to

childrearing responsibilities (Acock & Demo, 1994). Even when mothers work outside the home they are identified as more involved than fathers in the daily lives of their children (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; McBride & Mills, 1993).

Researchers have categorized various parenting behaviors to better understand the nature of the relationship between mothers and their children and fathers and their children (Yeung et al., 2001). The categories of parenting behaviors include the following: personal care (e.g., brushing child's hair, bathing child); physical play (e.g., playing catch, tickling); educational assistance (e.g., helping with homework, playing academic educational game such as phonics); household activities (e.g., cooking, mowing the lawn); social activities (e.g., going to church, visiting); entertainment activities (e.g., watching a movie, renting a video together, playing a non-academic computer game); emotional support (e.g., kissing, hugging); and discipline (e.g., punishing, lecturing about poor behavior). Research findings consistently identify mothers as spending more time than fathers with their children across all of these categories (Yeung et al., 2001).

Findings also indicate that the child's gender has no effect on how much time mothers engage in these various

parenting behaviors with their children. In other words, mothers spend the same amount of time playing, kissing, watching movies, helping with homework, and grooming their sons as they do with their daughters (Barnett & Baruch, 1988; Siegal, 1987). By contrast, some studies suggest that fathers spend different amounts of time and engage in different types of activities (e.g., play, childcare) with their sons versus their daughters (Siegal, 1987). According to findings by Barnett and Baruch (1988), fathers would rather interact with their sons than their daughters. This may be because fathers share similar sex-typed interests in activities (Marsiglio, 1991). For example, fathers are more likely to play football, baseball, catch, or go fishing with their sons rather than have a tea party, play house, dress up, or play with dolls with their daughters. Fathers may feel more comfortable performing childcare tasks for their sons such as bathing and grooming, while allowing mothers to perform these types of tasks for their daughters (Marsiglio, 1991). That said, it is important to note that other researchers suggest that fathers spend more time playing and paying attention to their daughters rather than their sons (Lamb, Hwang, Broberg, Brookstein, Hult, & Frodi, 1988). Other studies report no significant difference in the amount of



time that fathers spend and types of behaviors fathers engage in with their sons and daughters (e.g., Snarey, 1993). The findings of these studies are, obviously, inconsistent and unclear—particularly as to the influence that a child's gender has on paternal involvement.

Why the inconsistent findings among these studies? Developmental theorists suggest that methodological approaches that are commonly used to assess the amount of time and the nature of the involvement of the parent with the child may be the culprit.

#### Methodological Issues in the Assessment of Parental Involvement

Survey questionnaires and observational assessment methods (e.g., in home, laboratory, naturalistic) are typically used to determine the amount of time parents spend with their children and the types of behaviors they engage in with their children (e.g., personal care, physical play, educational assistance, household activities, social activities, entertainment activities, emotional support, and disciplining). However, these methods may not accurately assess parenting behaviors, which leads to data errors. The literature indicates a variety of problems associated with these methods, including 1) social desirability errors, 2) recall errors,

3) individual differences in the way a question is perceived (interpreted), 4) errors that result from one parent responding to family surveys, 5) limitations of close-ended survey questions, 6) the inability to assess different aspects of parent-child interactions (e.g., cognitive and emotional), 7) parents and children changing their behaviors due to an observer, and 8) the limited time spent observing parent-child interactions. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

First, social desirability bias causes individuals to answer survey questions in a manner that they believe would be socially acceptable (Connelly & Brown, 1994). Survey questionnaires designed to assess parenting behaviors frequently require parent-participants to indicate how many times they engage in a particular behavior within a set time period. When answering such types of survey questions as "How many times did you hug your child yesterday?" parents may increase or decrease the incidents of a particular behavior that they are reporting due to social desirability bias, i.e., respond with answers that a parent believes would be more socially acceptable. (For example, the actual hugging behavior of a parent-participant with their child may equal one hug per day, the parent may report four hugs per day).

Second, recall errors result in data errors in survey questionnaire studies. Recall errors are the result of people having to remember events, behaviors, and situations from another time period in order to respond to a survey question (Connelly & Brown, 1994).

The nature of the survey questionnaire is that it contains numerous questions that require participants to have to remember information. In parenting studies, some participants may report the amount of behavior and/or the type of behavior inaccurately because they fail to recall (remember) the information as it actually occurred.

Third, survey questionnaires result in errors due to individual differences in the interpretation of each question. In other words, each participant may interpret the question to mean something different. The interpretation of a question affects how a person then responds to that question (Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994). An example of this can be found in a question asking participants to rate how often they hug their child per day. For some parent participants, the word hug may be perceived as an action of the parents arm loosely placed around their child's shoulder. For other parent participants, the perception of a hug is when a parent embraces their child with two arms and squeezes them.

Consequently, the amount of hugging behavior expressed by each participant on the survey questionnaire is not based on the same standard and therefore data errors occur. In fact, researchers have shown that individual perceptions and idiosyncratic views tend to affect the correlations of different informants' responses regarding family processes [e.g., conflict, contact, and affection between father and child] (Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994).

Fourth, data errors result from survey questionnaire studies that assume that accurate and complete information about each parent's relationship with his or her child can be obtained from one parent. Because mothers and fathers are not always present together with their children how can one parent accurately respond to survey questionnaires for each other? For example how can a mother accurately respond to a survey question that asks, how many times did dad hug his child last week? Unless mother was with dad and the child every moment of last week she would have to guess, estimate, or base her response on the time periods, last week, that she observed dad hugging his child. Naturally these types of responses may not reflect dads' actual hugging behavior, which leads to data errors. These concerns are reflected in the Methodology Working Group's report for the Federal Interagency Forum (FIF) on Child

and Family Statistics (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). According to the FIF report (1998), standard household surveys allow one individual, typically the mother, to provide information about the family unit. Marsiglio et al. (2000) reviewed 72 two-parent family survey reports of the 1990s that addressed paternal involvement issues and discovered that 54% of those had been responded to by a single source.

Fifth, data errors result from survey questionnaires because survey items tend to be closed-ended (i.e., Did you help your child with homework this week?). There are two specific problems associated with closed-ended questions. First, closed-ended questions do not assess the diverse types of behaviors that occur between parents and their children. Rather, these survey questions refer to more typical behaviors. For example, a typical survey question might be "Did you help your child with homework this week?" and an atypical question might be "Did you sew a costume with your child this year?" It is reasonable to conclude that some parents sew costumes for their children, however, the typical survey questionnaire designed to measure parental involvement would fail to assess this behavior. In other words, survey questions only allow the participants to respond to pre-determined

questions regarding very specific behaviors. Asking participants about specific behaviors makes the survey question closed-ended because it does not allow the participant to share with the researcher atypical types of parent-child interactions.

Sixth, closed-ended survey questions rarely go beyond the scope of the parent-child physical interaction (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Yueng et al., 2001). The results of studies that use closed-ended survey questionnaires to assess parenting behaviors show that certain aspects of childcare tasks are typically overlooked [e.g., emotional and cognitive] (Yeung et al., 2001). For example, survey questionnaires rarely ask about emotional and cognitive childcare tasks such as "Did you set up a college fund for your child today?" or "Did you search for a good health insurance policy for your child this week?" It is noteworthy to mention that closed-ended survey questionnaires may also fail to assess different aspects of other behaviors such as play, e.g., explaining sharing techniques to your child.

Seventh, observational studies, whether in a laboratory or in-home, require the presence of an observer. This brings with it a concern that parents and children may change their behavior in the presence of an

observer from those behaviors that actually occur in daily life in their homes. It has been found that an unfamiliar observer entering a room causes even an infant to change their interactive behavior with their mothers and their fathers. Infants will stop exploring their environment and seek out their parent when an unfamiliar observer enters the room (Lamb, 1976). These findings suggest that it is reasonable to assume that the effects of an unfamiliar observer may tend to influence the behavior of a different-aged child. Particularly, a young, shy, insecure, or fearful child may seek proximity to their parent for security purposes and cease to behave in their natural manner. Haynes and Horn (1982) reported that the presence of an unfamiliar observer has a significant effect on parents changing their behaviors during observational studies. Mothers and fathers may enhance or inhibit their behaviors with their children in the presence of an observer, as indicated in the findings of a home observation study of 48 families conducted by Russell, Russell, and Midwinter (1992). Individuals change their behavior due to anxiety or wanting to "look good" (e.g., Blurton-Jones, 1972). Parents may tend to change their behaviors in public environments such as malls, parks, or restaurants because they want to "look good"

while being observed by others. Based on specific studies Lamb (1997) argues that eighty percent of parents reported some degree of change in their behaviors due to the presence of the observer.

Eighth, researchers express concern over the length of time of the typical parent-child observation. Using limited observation time only allows the researcher to glimpse into the daily occurring parenting behaviors. Certainly a glimpse into a parent's daily involvement with their child results in data errors. Why? Because the typical parent engages in a variety of parenting behaviors throughout their day, which cannot possibly be observed in a limited time period. There are particular concerns about using naturalistic observational methods to assess father-child involvement because fathers typically spend less time with their children than mothers. To insure reliable assessment of the paternal relationship, the duration of the observation needs to be a long enough time period to ensure correct sampling (Marsiglio et al., 2000). Others have expressed that reliable measures of theoretically important interaction patterns between a parent and child are not obtained unless the pair is observed for several hours (Leyendecker, Lamb, Scholmeric, & Fricke, 1997. Observational studies that typically



demonstrate sampling of 10 to 30 minutes of parents and their children are unlikely to obtain reliable measures of these dyadic interactions (Marsiglio et al., 2000).

The concerns and limitations associated with the above methods indicate vexing methodological problems that others have attempted to solve by using the Experience Sampling Methodology [ESM] (Czikszenmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen 1993).

#### Experience Sampling Methodology

The Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM) is an innovative assessment tool where participants are given a beeper and then signaled at random times. At the moment they are beeped, participants record data in a diary or on a report form. For example, participants may record their behavior, activities, thoughts, or feelings at the moment that beeper signaling occurs, depending on the type of study they are participating in.

The ESM protocol was designed to address the problems associated with different assessment strategies (Hormuth, 1986). The ESM was developed approximately 30 years ago, and has been successfully used in different fields of psychology. In 1992, the ESM was successfully used in the field of psychiatry as a rigorous approach to understand the emotional states experienced throughout the day by the

mentally ill (deVries, 1992). Each participant was asked to record the emotional state they were in at the moment they were signaled. For example, "How were you feeling at (e.g., sad, happy) at the moment you were signaled?" In order to assess the roots of success and failure the ESM was successfully adopted and used by researchers to investigate what teenagers think about, how they feel, and how much they want to do what they are doing (Czikszenmihalyi et al., 1993). Teenagers were asked to carry a pager and when signaled record what they were doing and how they felt while they were doing it. Additional success using the ESM was evidenced in a longitudinal study of children and adolescents' patterns of developmental behaviors (Richards, Crowe, Larson, & Swarr, 1998). Parents and children were asked to carry a pager and record their specific behavior at the moment they were signaled. For example, "What were you doing at the moment you were signaled?"

The successes of the ESM as an assessment instrument have been demonstrated in the above studies. An in-depth review of the ESM protocol suggests that the concerns associated with using survey questionnaire and observational studies may be adequately addressed by using the ESM.

Social desirability bias is found in research data when participants respond to research questions in a manner they believe will be socially acceptable (Connelly & Brown, 1994). Spontaneous, immediate responses to a pager signal is required of participants in ESM studies (Hormuth, 1986). Therefore, participants have very little time to ponder what type of answer is socially desirable to a survey question. It is expected that by eliminating the time to ponder an answer, the data errors associated with the social desirability effect will be reduced.

Recall errors are a result of participants having to remember data (e.g., behaviors, activities, thoughts, or feelings) from another time period and then record this data (Connelly & Brown, 1994). Participants of studies using the ESM record data immediately, at the moment they are signaled by the beeper (Cziszentmihayli et al., 1993). It is reasonable to assume that by reporting data immediately reduces recall errors because participants don't have to remember information from another time period (Hormuth, 1986).

When answering survey questions participants must interpret each question before responding. As mentioned earlier participants may not interpret survey questions the same way due to their individual differences and this

most likely leads to data errors (Tein, Roosa & Michaels, 1994). The nature of the questions asked during studies utilizing the ESM requires very little interpretation, i.e., "At the moment you were signaled by the beeper what were you doing?" This type of question should significantly reduce data errors associated with individual differences.

Using the ESM reduces the assumed response errors of family household survey questionnaires associated with one parent answering questions for the entire family. Each participant of the ESM carries a pager and participates in the study (Czikszentmihayli et al., 1993). Consequently, each participant's data is recorded.

The two problems associated with close-ended survey questions (i.e., researchers are unable to assess atypical parental involvement and different aspects of parental involvement such as emotional and cognitive) may be adequately addressed by using the ESM. The open-ended questions that are available to researchers adopting the ESM (e.g., what were you doing at the moment you were signaled by the beeper?) allows participants to record any type of emotional, cognitive, or physical involvement that is occurring at the time they are signaled (Czikszentmihayli et al., 1993). The result is that

atypical parental involvement and different aspects of parental involvement are more likely to be recorded and included in the results of the study.

The ESM also does not require an unfamiliar observer and therefore allows the natural flow of behavior in any situation to occur (Hormuth, 1986). The most likely result is a significant reduction or elimination of children and parents changing their behaviors due to the presence of an observer.

The length of time of observational studies is among additional research concerns. The typical 10-30 minute observations of family processes are not long enough to obtain reliable measures (Marsiglio et al., 2000). The ESM protocol demands an approximate one-week commitment from researchers and participants (Czikszenmihalyi et al., 1993). This extended time period allows data collection to continue for a time period that reflects the participant's week. It is more likely that the actual daily occurrences in a participant's daily life will be reflected in a weekly sampling rather than a 10-30 minute sampling. Extended sampling time increases reliability and reduces data error (Marsiglio et al., 2000).

Adopting the ESM to assess parenting behaviors may be worthwhile when we consider the limitations of using

survey questionnaires and observational methods.

Particularly since we do not have a clear picture about paternal involvement yet, a large body of research identifies dads as important aspects of healthy child development.

### The Importance of Fathers in Children's Development

Although results of studies of paternal involvement with children are conflicting, to date there are studies that strongly suggest the important influence of fathers on child development. What emerges from this research is that fathers are indeed important contributors to their child's emotional and intellectual development.

Researchers must have a clear and accurate picture of what fathers do with their children, what fathers don't do with their children, how much time fathers spend interacting in typical and atypical behaviors with their children, and, most importantly, if the child's gender determines the amount and type of paternal involvement. Only when these questions are answered can research serve to increase parental knowledge that will support parental involvement that promotes optimal child development. Research on the significance of father-child attachment, father's parenting style, father's play style, and father's impact

on children's social and cognitive development is reviewed below.

### Secure Father-Infant Attachment

Infant attachment is described as the infant's use of a primary caregiver, usually the mother, as a secure base to explore the environment (Bowlby, 1989). Infants are described as either securely or insecurely attached to a primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1989). Secure attachment, determined by the degree of the primary caregiver's warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness toward the child in early life fosters an important foundation for psychological development in later years (Bowlby, 1969), which affects a wide variety of outcomes for the child (Pickard, 1998; Lamb, 1997; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2001).

Overwhelmingly, theorists have viewed the mother as the most important aspect of the infant's ability to securely attach to a primary caregiver. In fact, a large body of research identifies the mother-infant relationship as unique and more important than any other relationship (Baumrind, 1980; Bowlby, 1969). Does this mean that the father is irrelevant in the infant's life (Lamb, 1997)? Both early and contemporary research suggests that fathers are more than biological contributors to their child's

development. In fact, research overwhelmingly suggests that children who are securely attached to their fathers and who experience healthy father involvement are more likely to have better social skills, moral development, interpersonal relationships, and higher academic achievement than their paternally deprived peers (Pickard, 1998; Yeung et. al., 2001). Earlier researchers had argued that infants who have little interaction with their fathers but were otherwise securely attached to their mothers were more likely to be more fearful of strangers and experience more separation anxiety from their mothers (Stolz, 1954; Tiller, 1958). According to Pickard (1998), father involvement is extremely important during the infant attachment phase because fathers serve as a security base within the family unit by being available and accessible to care for their child. Therefore, fathers' availability and accessibility play a role in the infant's ability to securely attach to a primary caregiver, which is typically the mother. Researchers overwhelmingly agree that secure attachment strongly influences the child's cognitive, social, and emotional skills, which enhances the child's subsequent relationships (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969; Pickard, 1998). It is argued that secure attachment with father



leads to a cluster of positive outcomes for the developing child (Pickard, 1998). For example, when comparing preschoolers who are securely attached to fathers with those who are insecurely attached, securely attached preschoolers demonstrate more cognitive competence, increased capacity to empathize with others, and greater internal locus of control. Additionally, preschoolers who are securely attached to dads show significantly lower levels of gender-role stereotyping. For school-aged children who are securely attached to their fathers, positive outcomes include increased levels of self-esteem (e.g., feeling good about oneself), self-control (e.g., the ability to control the actions of oneself), and social competence [e.g., the ability to successfully socialize with others in a variety of situations] (Pickard, 1998). These arguments suggest that children who experience healthy paternal involvement tend to develop social competencies and personal resources. Furthermore, children who are securely attached to both parents are more likely to be task-oriented, display more warmth and empathy, and demonstrate better parenting skills as adult parents (Pickard, 1998).

### Father's Parenting Style

Historically, fathers tended to be the disciplinarians in the home (Harris & Morgan, 1991). Often times when children misbehaved mother would make statements such as just wait until your father gets home (Roberts & Moseley, 1996). Although fathers continue to be viewed as the disciplinarian in the family, they are now encouraged to discipline with understanding, warmth, and affection (Yeung et al., 2001). This encouragement stems from our understanding and increased knowledge over the last several decades about different parenting styles and their impact on child development. The "disciplinarian" parenting role that lacks understanding of children's developmental abilities, parental warmth, and parental affection mimics the authoritarian parenting style described by Baumrind (1968; 1991) i.e., high in control and discipline and low in warmth. The authoritarian parenting style is associated with many negative outcomes for children including lower cognitive, social, and interpersonal relationship skills. The parent who understands his child's developmental limitations is more likely to discipline in a warm, sensitive, nurturing manner. This parent would be described as using the authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1968; 1991).

mothers, which allow fathers to gravitate towards more physical interactions with their children (Roberts & Moseley, 1996). Physical interactions such as rough and tumble play assist the child in developing their ability to regulate their feelings and responses, develop interactive skills, learn to read and respond to emotions of others, and read their own feelings and emotions (Roberts & Mosley, 1996), all of which is thought to result in emotional mastery (MacDonald & Parke 1984; Parke, 1996).

#### Father's Play Style

The amount of time and type of play that fathers engage in with their sons and daughters facilitates a playful attitude (Pickard, 1998). Although mothers play with their children, fathers tend to spend more time playing with their children. It is also argued that fathers play with their children in a more rambunctious manner than mothers do (Lamb, 1997). Fathers who play with their children produce a broad range of arousal, which forces children to stretch both emotionally and physically (Roberts & Moseley, 1996). According to Lamb (1997), father play is physical and it gets kids worked up, negatively or positively, with a wide range of emotions (e.g., fear, anger, delight) that force children to

regulate their feelings and responses. Parke (1996) argues that this fathering behavior assists children in developing complex interactive skills, which he refers to as "emotional communication" skills. The way that these skills develop is a result of children learning to read their dads' emotions through his facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, and then learning how to respond accordingly. Some concrete examples given by Roberts and Moseley (1996) are "Is daddy really going to chase me down and gobble me up, or is he joking? Did I really hurt daddy by poking him in the eye? Is daddy in the mood to play, or is he tired?" (p. 4). Through play, children also learn to communicate their emotions to others. For example, a child who cries lets dad know he is playing too rough or scaring the child. If play isn't stimulating or interesting enough, children will ask dad to do something else or perhaps leave dad and find more stimulating entertainment. These behaviors indicate that children are learning to communicate their own emotions, needs, and desires to others (Roberts & Moseley, 1996). Another important contribution of father play to child development is that children learn how to listen to their own feelings. Roberts and Moseley (1996) claim that an example of children listening to their feelings is when

they begin to understand that if they become too worked up and cry, they may push their play partner away.

When children reach emotional mastery, the consequences are far reaching because children learn that their actions can affect their internal feelings and the responses of others (e.g., their father's actions). Additional links to father-child type (e.g., rough, rambunctious) play include later developmental abilities that include frustration management, a desire to explore new things and activities, and problem solving skills. Finally, according to Parke (1996), children learn how to control the way they interact with others because they have learned to read and respond to others' emotions early on in life. Reading and responding to emotions helps children deal appropriately with future social encounters. For example, when playing with friends, children know when they are physically or emotionally hurting others and this helps them monitor and control themselves. Through monitoring and controlling one's actions, children are less likely to become frustrated or angry and drive their friends away.

Even though father-play appears to be significant in child development, there are caveats. Some suggest that by the age of eight or nine some children tire of dad's

rambunctious "Gonna get you" interactions and the play that was once stimulating begins to frustrate, anger, or even bore some children. Fathers, therefore, must be aware of when to turn to other behaviors to interact with their children (Roberts & Moseley, 1996).

#### Father's Impact on Cognitive and Social Development

Longitudinal data has typically focused on mothers' influence on child development in early and middle childhood (Paley, Conger, & Harold, 2000). Although maternal involvement is highly valued, more and more research indicates that father involvement is as important to child development as mother involvement. It would seem obvious that if one loving, involved parent is good for a child then two would be even better. It seems unreasonable to assume that a terrific, involved mother replaces the uninvolved or absent father when we consider that fathers and mothers each bring special unique qualities into the lives of their children. Even when a father is uninvolved in his child's life he is sending messages that teach the child about a number of issues (e.g., trust, abandonment, antisocial behavior, self-esteem, etc.). These types of messages pose potential risks for the child's cognitive representations of parents and have a direct or indirect

effect on adolescent negative social behaviors, which can result in decreased peer acceptance (Paley, Conger, & Harold, 2000). There is some evidence that fathers do indeed influence social competence in their children (Dekovic & Janssens, 1992; MacDonald & Parke, 1984). Both maternal and paternal involvement had significant direct and indirect effect on adolescent negative social behavior and peer acceptance in a study by Paley et al. (2000). Questions posed to adolescents were designed to assess how much adolescents trusted and were supported by their mother and father, and how much warmth versus hostility mother and father projected (Paley et al., 2000). By observing their parents' behavior, children may acquire schemas and or working models of how to socially interact. What results from the relationship with their parents may be negative or positive depending on the actual relationship with mom and dad (Putallaz & Herin, 1990).

#### Summary and Purpose of Study

In summary, research findings to date indicate that mothers spend more time engaged in parenting behaviors (childcare, physical care, educational activities, social activities, entertainment activities, emotional support, discipline, and household chores) with their children than

fathers. In addition, research indicates that the types of behaviors mothers demonstrate with their children and the amount of time mothers spend with their children does not appear to be affected by their child's gender. Findings on fathers' involvement with children, however, are inconsistent and unclear as to what types of behaviors and how much time fathers spend engaged in those behaviors with their children; and whether the child's gender impacts the types of behaviors and amount of time fathers spend engaged with their sons versus their daughters. Many researchers suggest that the inconsistencies in studies of father involvement are the result of the types of assessment strategies used. More importantly, these inconsistencies do not allow professionals and laymen to have an accurate picture of what dads are really doing with their children. Research indicates that fathers have a tremendous influence on their child's developmental trajectory. Yet, how can we make recommendations regarding paternal involvement if we don't have an accurate picture of what is going on out there in the real world?

The purpose of the current study was, in general, to use the Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM) to more accurately assess the types of behaviors that mothers and fathers engage in with their sons and daughters and the



amount of time they spend engaged in those behaviors when compared to each other. The research questions were: are mothers more involved with their children than fathers? Are mothers equally involved with their sons and their daughters? When considering parenting involvement in three domains (i.e., planning and arranging for child, emotional care of child, parents active engagement with child) are fathers more involved with their sons than their daughters? When considering specific behaviors (e.g., physical play, social activities, childcare, and household chores) does a child's gender play a significant role in the amount of time fathers spend engaged in specific behaviors with their sons versus their daughters? The specific hypotheses are indicated below:

Hypothesis 1. Mothers will spend significantly more time involved in overall parenting behaviors across all three domains (i.e., planning and arranging for child, parental emotional care of child, parents active engagement with child) with their sons and daughters than fathers.

Hypothesis 2. Fathers will spend significantly more time involved in overall parenting behaviors across all three domains (i.e., planning and arranging for child, parental emotional care of child, parents active

engagement with child) with their sons than with their daughters.

Hypothesis 3. No significant difference will be found when comparing the overall parenting behaviors across all three domains (i.e., planning and arranging for child, parental emotional care of child, parents active engagement with child) of mothers with their sons versus mothers with their daughters.

It was expected that the findings of this study would give a clearer picture as to what behaviors mothers and fathers engage in with their children, and whether the child's gender influences the types of behaviors and the amount of time fathers spend engaged in those behaviors with their children.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHOD

#### Participants

Participants were sixty-four parents (32 mothers and 32 fathers) from two-parent traditional families, to control for the possible effects of divorce and/or single parenting, and step-parenting. All participating parents worked full-time outside of their family residence, to control for the possible effects of inequitable employment time of parents on parenting behaviors. Parents ranged in age from 29- to 49-years old ( $M = 38.9$  years), and were recruited from southern California. Each two-parent family was required to have exactly two children, one male and one female child, to control for possible child-gender effects. Children ranged in age from 10- to 14-years old [ $M = 12$  years] (to control for possible child-age effects). The sample was ethnically diverse: 39.1% Caucasian, 18.8% Latino, 7.8% Asian, 21.9% African American, 1.6% American Indian, Multiethnic 9.4%, and 1.6% did not report. Thirty-six percent of participating parents reported having completed high school, and 64% reported at least some college. Participants were recruited from churches, local residences, and through

verbal announcements in dance studios, karate centers, and fliers posted on bulletin boards of YMCAs, grocery stores, drug stores, Wal-Marts, K-Marts, and Target stores in Southern California communities. No incentives were offered for their voluntary participation.

#### Materials and Procedures

Each set of parents met with the experimenter and was provided a participant packet which contained a consent form, an instruction sheet, two beepers, one for each parent, a family schedule form, a demographic information form, and 15 mom parent-activity report forms and 15 dad parent-activity report forms.

#### Consent Form

Each parent was given a consent form that stated specific requirements for parents to be able to participate in the study (e.g., both parents had to work full-time outside of their family residence, have exactly two children with one being male and one being female within the 10 - 14 age range), and what parents should expect during the time period they are participating in the study. Specific expectations were stated as follows: beeper signaling will occur randomly 15-60 minutes apart

during the hours that neither parent is at work and not past neither child's bedtime (Appendix A).

#### Instruction Sheet

Each parent was also given an instruction form that explained what he or she was to do when the beeper signal occurred [i.e., immediately fill out one parent activity report form] (Appendix B).

#### Pager Information Form

Each parent was a pager information sheet that stated that parents were obligated to return the pagers to the researcher (Appendix C).

#### Family Schedule Form

Before the study began, parents filled out a family schedule sheet (Appendix D), which was used to indicate the typical days and hours of the week that neither parent was at work and the children were not asleep. The days of the week beginning with Monday and ending with Sunday were listed in a column. Blank spaces were provided next to each day of the week and parents were asked to indicate the following: 1) typical hours that neither parent is working, 2) the earliest bedtime of one or both of their children.

### Demographic Information Form

A demographic information form was used to gain background information on participants. Both mothers and fathers were asked to report their age, gender, marital status, number of children, ages of children, gender of children, employment status (full-time versus part-time), location of employment (outside family residence, inside family residence), parents' highest level of education, and ethnicity (Appendix E).

### Parent Activity Report Form

The parent activity report form was designed by the author to assess the type of behavior a parent was engaged in at the time they were signaled by the beeper (Appendix F). Each parent-activity report form contains five specific questions: 1) date, 2) time beeped, 3) the time report form was filled out, 4) a brief, clear, and accurate description of what the parent was doing at the moment they were beeped, and 5) who (if anyone) was the parent doing this activity with. The first four questions were followed by a blank space, which allowed the participant to write in their answer. The fifth question was followed by five choices for the participant to select from: 1) alone, 2) partner, 3) female child, 4) male

child, 5) friend/s, 6) relative. The participant was instructed to check all that apply.

### Participant Training

The researcher explained to the participants that there were two sets of activity report forms in the packet: one set contained fifteen "mom" parent-activity report forms (for only mothers to use), and one set contained fifteen "dad" parent-activity report forms (for only fathers to use). The researcher demonstrated when and how each parent should fill out the parent-activity report form. This was done by the researcher having herself signaled by a beeper and then immediately recording her response on a sample form. The researcher had herself signaled three different times and filled out form immediately after each beeper signal occurred.

### Procedure

The participants were first directed to read the instruction sheet and asked if they had any questions. They then were asked to indicate by marking an X on the consent form if they wished to participate in the study and, if so, they were asked to fill out the family schedule sheet. Each parent was then asked to fill out a demographic information form. Participants were then

informed that they would not be beeped during their work hours or after at least one child was put to bed. It was explained to the participants that they were expected to carry their beepers during the hours they provided for us on the scheduling sheet. They were told that signaling would occur randomly, and that filling out the parent-activity report form immediately after each signal occurred and only if neither parent was at work was critical to the study. Participants were informed that the study would take approximately one week; however, as soon as all the report forms were completed or one week (7-days) had elapsed they could turn off their beepers, and contact the researcher (via telephone) as the study would be completed for their family.

After being contacted by the participants at the completion of the study for each family, the researcher met with the parents at a mutually agreed upon place (coffee house, place of business) and collected the activity report forms, and beepers. Finally, each mother and father participant was given a debriefing statement to read, and parents were asked if they had any questions (Appendix G).



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

#### Preliminary Analysis

The analysis of the data first required the development of "domains", or general categories, of different types of parental involvement with children. The domains utilized in the current study were those derived from pilot studies conducted under the direction of Dr. Charles D. Hoffman which assessed parenting behaviors using the ESM (e.g., Metcalfe, Nagel, & Hoffman, 1999). Each of the three domains is defined in Table 1.

#### Analyses

A chi square analysis was utilized to assess the data. The dependent variable was the amount of involvements a parent reported with their sons and their daughters across the three parenting involvement domains: parent planning / arranging for child, parent emotional care of child, and parent active engagement with child.

Table 1. Domains of Parental Involvement

Domain	Definition	Activity with child
01) Planning/ arranging for child	Times when parents are planning or arranging activities for child	Childcare Play or any other social activity
02) Parent/s emotional care of child	Times when parents are comforting their child	Kissing Hugging Talking to child to comfort child
03) Parent/s active engagement with child	Times when parents are actively involved with the child	Grooming Housework Cooking Yard work Working in garage Washing car Working on car Eating Drinking Watching a movie Watching television Visiting In church Bible study Praying Driving child someplace Picking child up from someplace Bathing child Assisting child with homework Attending child's educational activity Assisting child with any educational activity Casual talk with child Physical play Reading to child Reading with child Playing any type of board game with child Playing computer or video game with child Running errands with child present Sleeping/napping with child Shopping with child Disciplining child

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 stated that mothers would spend significantly more time involved in overall parenting behaviors across all three domains (i.e., planning and arranging for child, parental emotional care of child, and parents active engagement with child) with their sons and daughters than fathers. Mothers total involvement with both children resulted in 527 activities (Table 2), whereas fathers total involvement with both children resulted in 257 activities (Table 3). A chi square analysis was computed on mothers versus fathers number of involvements with children, the findings were significant  $\chi^2 = 46.49$ ,  $p < .001$ , with mothers reporting more involvements than fathers.

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 stated that fathers would spend significantly more time involved in parenting behaviors across all three domains (i.e., planning and arranging for child, parental emotional care of child, and parents active engagement with child) with their sons than with their daughters. As Table 3 shows, fathers reported 160 involvement behaviors with their sons and 97 with their daughters. A chi square analysis was computed. Findings were significant,  $\chi^2 = 15.44$ ,  $p < .001$ , with fathers showing significantly more involvement with their sons than with their daughters.

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 stated that there would be no differences in the frequency of involvements of mothers (in overall parenting behaviors) with their sons versus with their daughters. As Table 2 shows, mothers reported a total of 251 parental involvement activities with their sons and 276 with their daughters. A chi square analysis was computed, the findings, not surprisingly, were not significant,  $\chi^2 = 2.37$ ,  $p > .05$

Table 2. Raw Frequencies (and Percentages) of Mother Involvement with Sons and Daughters

	Mother involvement with: Sons	Daughters	Total overall mother involvement
<u>Domain:</u>			
	6	6	12
01) Planning/arranging for child	(1%)	(1%)	(2%)
	0	0	0
02) Parents emotional care of child	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)
	245	270	515
03) Parents active engagement with child	(46%)	(51%)	(97%)
	251	276	527
Total Overall Mother Involvement:	(47%)	(52%)	(99%)

Table 3. Raw Frequencies (and Percentages) of Father Involvement with Sons and Daughters

	Father involvement with: Sons	Daughters	Total overall father involvement
<u>Domain:</u>			
01) Planning/arranging for child	0 (0%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)
02) Parents emotional care of child	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
03) Parents active engagement with child	160 (62%)	96 (37%)	256 (99%)
Total Overall Father Involvement:	160 (62%)	97 (37.3%)	257 (99.3%)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was to use the ESM to more accurately measure mothers' versus fathers' involvement with their sons and daughters. Following is a discussion of the usefulness of the ESM, the interpretation of the findings within the context of gender role ideologies, and the consequences for families when fathers are not as involved with their children as mothers.

#### Utilizing the Experience Sampling Methodology to Address Research Concerns

The primary reason for utilizing the ESM in this study was, as mentioned earlier, because researchers have expressed concerns with the methodological assessment strategies used to assess parenting behavior. There is a concern that parental involvement studies rarely go beyond assessing the physical interactions that occur between parents and their children. Utilizing the ESM in the present study allowed the researcher to assess parental involvement other than physical interactions between parents and their children. During the participant training session and on the written instructions, parents were requested to record the nature of any conversations

on the parent-activity report form. This allowed the researcher to go beyond assessing physical involvement and assess the parent's cognitive type of involvement such as planning and arranging activities for the child. Additionally, the open-ended nature of the parent-activity report form allowed for parents to report any type of behavior they were engaged in at the moment they were signaled. Therefore, the researcher was allowed to assess whether the parent was involved in providing emotional care for their child.

Another expressed concern of theorists is that frequently one parent, typically the mother, is responding to survey questionnaires for the other parent, typically the father. This approach forces researchers to assume that one parent can accurately report the actual involvement between their child and the other parent. In this study, using the ESM addressed this problem. Each mother and father carried a separate pager, had separate parent-activity report forms clearly labeled, mom parent activity report form and dad parent activity report form. During the participant training session, and as a part of the written instructions, it was stressed to participants that each parent should respond to their own beeper signals and record their activity on the forms that were

labeled for each parent. In addition, to encourage each parent to respond for him or herself, each parent was paged at different times.

Findings of this study were robust, which suggests that the ESM is a sensitive assessment tool worthy of additional uses in parenting studies.

#### Gender Role Ideologies

Findings of this study support previous studies that show mothers as reporting more involvement with their sons and daughters than fathers reported. In addition, although findings of prior research have been inconsistent with regards to the effect of the child's gender on father involvement, this study shows that fathers reported significantly more involvement with their sons versus their daughters. Finally, as anticipated, mothers of this study reported no differences in the number of involvements with their sons versus their daughters.

Past studies show that in studies of single earner families, mothers reported being more involved with their children than fathers (Coontz, 2000; Williams, 2000). These earlier theories reasonably explained such findings by arguing that when one parent (typically the father) is off working, childcare naturally falls to the other



(typically the mother). This study, among many others, shows that even in dual earner families in which both parents are working, mothers are more involved with their children than fathers.

How do we explain these results? Many theories and studies have attempted to explain the differences in the amount of time mothers and fathers spend with their children. These theories revolve around security, economics, biological differences between men and women (Marsiglio, 1991; Pleck, 1985) and gender ideologies (Hochschild, 1997). Three theories are presented below in an attempt to explain why mothers continue to be more involved with their children than fathers, despite the fact that both mothers and fathers are full time employees. Earlier theories are reviewed first in order to outline how parenting behaviors of the past have influenced parenting behaviors of the present.

Many of the earlier theories that tried to explain mother versus father involvement with children focused on issues of security and economics. These theories suggested that in single earner families, men rather than women work for two primary reasons. First, men typically earn more than women and therefore can provide better for the family. Second, the biological differences between men and

women affect a woman's ability to guarantee to employers that they will be consistent in their attendance to the work place, or consistent in their abilities to get the job done. Women who are in the childbearing age range were and to some extent continue to be viewed as a risk or liability for hire. These earlier theories might offer some reasonable explanation as to why mothers are more involved with their children than fathers; however, we would have to assume that mother and father involvement was equal before fathers went off to work. If indeed mothers and fathers were equally involved with their children before dads left the their homes to work, we would anticipate that in homes with both mothers and fathers working, parents would report more equitable amounts of child involvement. However, this study and others fail to show this. Why are mothers more involved with their children in dual earner families?

More contemporary theories have attempted to explain why mothers continue to be more involved with their children than fathers despite the fact that they work outside their family residence. These theories have revolved around characteristics of fathers (e.g., age, education, experiences with his parents, and employment issues); characteristics of children (e.g., age, gender,

abilities, interests, personalities); and, finally, characteristics of mothers [e.g., encouraging versus discouraging paternal involvement, self-esteem, employment issues] (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Pleck, 1985). These theories rarely go beyond attempting to link the amount of time fathers spend with their children to a particular characteristic of the parent or child. Although this knowledge is important in helping us to understand parenting behaviors, "It only takes us so far in understanding who does and doesn't share the second shift" (Hochschild, 1997, p. 14).

According to Hochschild (1997), one reasonable explanation for mothers being more involved with their children than fathers in dual-earner families is that parenting behaviors are strongly influenced by gender role ideology. This theory suggests that mothers and fathers behave within their family sphere in ways that they believe mothers and fathers should behave. These beliefs are based on the characteristics that society has assigned as "normal" for females and "normal" for males.

Hochschild (1997) conducted interviews of couples from around the country, and categorized their parenting behaviors and beliefs about their roles as mothers and fathers. Based on her findings she suggested that within a

marriage there are three specific gender role ideologies: 1) traditional, 2) egalitarian, and 3) transitional. These gender role ideals influence the ways in which parents operate within their families.

The traditional gender ideology assumes that in the family setting the man works outside of the home earning money to provide for his family, while the woman's role is to care for the home and the children. In these families, the ideal is for the man to have the power and control over all issues. To some extent the woman has some power and control over their homes and the children, although the man is the ultimate decision-maker. Even though the mother might work full-time or part-time away from her residence, this is not her ideal situation: she believes that her proper place is in the home caring for the home and her children. The traditional mother, in this theory, identifies with home activities such as being a wife, being a mom, and being a neighbor. Additionally, traditional women expect their husbands to identify with their jobs and have the power and control in the family. The traditional man is thought to want the same. Interestingly, Coontz (2002) conducted interviews of men and women and over two-thirds of the participants expressed that going back to the traditional way of life

when fathers were the breadwinners and mothers were the homemakers would be better for families and society.

The egalitarian gender ideology assumes that men and women should share equal responsibility of the workload both inside and outside of the home. In other words, the egalitarian woman wants to identify with her job and her home, and she wants her husband to do the same. She also wants to share power equally with her husband. Egalitarian husbands want the same. Both have equal workloads, power, and control, and they are comfortable with the arrangement (Hochschild, 1997).

The *transitional* gender ideology is a cross between the traditional and egalitarian ideology. Transitional women, unlike traditional women, want a career and they want to identify with their career and home. Thus, the transitional woman's identity is in some aspects linked to her career and, in other aspects, linked to her home activities (e.g., caring for her children and home). Typical transitional men are completely in favor of their wives earning money; however, they also want their wives to be responsible for the home and childcare. These men are willing to give power to their wives when it comes to issues regarding the children and the home. However, these men also continue to believe that they should have the

final say in most matters. In other words, these men and women are caught in a time warp. They are trying to move forward in some respects, but their beliefs about the role of men and women in the home continue to be strongly connected in traditional values. Hochschild (1997) claims that when she interviewed couples and asked them to describe what they believed about men's and women's ideal roles within the family unit, most of the couple's ideas were classified as transitional. The transitional ideology perhaps best explains the findings of this study. Despite all of our female participants working outside their residence full time they are significantly more involved with their children than fathers.

It is important to mention that according to Hochschild (1997) some men and women have surface gender ideologies and deeper gender ideologies that conflict. For example, on the surface some men and women claim to be egalitarian by making statements that reflect the egalitarian ideology. However, their actual behaviors are more traditional or transitional in nature. Hochschild (1997) refers to the actual behavior of men and women as their deeper ideology.

Why are fathers far more involved with their sons than their daughters? There appears to be no reasonable

single explanation for the findings in this study. The theories outlined below have received previous attention and might offer some reasonable arguments as to why, in some studies, fathers show more involvement with their sons than their daughters.

Some studies and theories suggest that fathers' higher involvement with their sons versus their daughters is explained by the child's characteristics (i.e., gender, age, abilities) combined with the father's characteristics (i.e., gender, age, abilities). Others suggest that the mothers' characteristics (i.e., self-esteem, gender beliefs) explain this phenomenon.

Perhaps to some extent shared same sex interests promote fathers and sons to "hang out together". It sounds reasonable to predict that the majority of dads would prefer throwing a football around with their sons rather than "play house" with their daughters (Lamb, 1997). This would ring true particularly in the light of the previous discussion about gender role beliefs and expectations in our culture.

Other indicators that attempt to explain why fathers and sons are together more than fathers and daughters are a result of father and son age and abilities. Younger to older adolescent boys and active fathers might share

similar abilities that drive them into higher involvement with each other. For example, fathers are more likely to go outside and shoot hoops with their sons if both are physically capable, and both have abilities in this area (Lamb, 1997).

Another explanation for higher father-son involvement versus father-daughter involvement is based on mothers' characteristics. Researchers have suggested that mothers are the gatekeepers to father involvement (Lamb, 1997). In other words, if mothers feel that fathers should be involved with their children, it would be more likely that they would promote the relationship. Combining this argument with a gender ideology of a mother we might make a reasonable argument for higher father-son versus father-daughter involvement. Mothers who believe that fathers should play a significant role in their sons' lives due to shared gender would be more likely to promote father-son involvement versus father-daughter involvement.

Findings on the effect of the child's gender on the amount of time fathers involve themselves with their children have been inconsistent in previous research. While it might be assumed that fathers and daughters do not share interests and abilities because they do not share the same gender, it is more likely that interests



and abilities vary from person to person, based on personality, environment, and other factors besides gender. If gender were the only factor explaining parental involvement then studies would show that mothers are more involved with their daughters than their sons. In fact, studies consistently show that mothers are equally involved with their sons and their daughters. These findings suggest that no single parent or child characteristic determines the amount of mother-child involvement. Therefore, we might reasonably conclude that no single parent or child characteristic determines the amount of father-child involvement.

Trying to explain why no differences are found between mother involvement with sons and mother involvement with daughters leads us to explore three areas: 1) Baumrind's (1980) theory of mothers as primary caretakers of their children affects mother involvement with sons and daughters, 2) Rothschild's gender ideology theory as it relates to mothers equal involvement with sons and daughters, and 3) subliminal messages from the courts and media that might influence mothers equal involvement with their sons and their daughters.

As primary caretakers mothers must provide and are expected to provide all types of care for their children

(Baumrind, 1980). This argument reasonably explains why mothers are equally involved with their sons and their daughters. As primary caretakers, mother involvement must go beyond sharing of similar gender type interests. Primary caretakers provide for all aspects of a person's care. Therefore, according to Baumrind's (1980) theory we would anticipate mothers' equal involvement with their sons and daughters.

Hochschild's (1997) gender ideology theory offers some explanation of mothers' equal involvement with their sons and their daughters. Hochschild's (1997) contemporary research showed that for most families today, traditional and transitional gender ideologies exist. In both of these gender ideologies mothers choose to behave, and fathers expect mothers to behave as primary caretakers of their homes and their children. In other words, for these families the mother is most likely to be equally involved with both gendered children because she is expected to provide the primary care for her children regardless of the child's gender.

In addition to the above, people receive subliminal messages from the courts and the media, which also affects parenting roles and behaviors. Williams (2000) discussed how the court promotes and supports gender role

expectations of mothers and fathers. Also discussed is the profound effect that the courts have had on parenting behaviors. Williams (2000) presents several court opinions and rulings regarding motherhood, which a person could reasonably interpret to mean that the court views mothers as primary caretakers of their sons and daughters. The courts rulings, decisions, and opinions might contribute to the explanation as to why there are no differences found in mother involvement with sons versus mother involvement with daughters.

The media is yet another institution that sets up social norms for a society. The media portrays mothers as being equally involved with their sons and their daughters. If we as a society are bombarded with specific messages, we tend to adopt those messages as normal because the behavior has been repeatedly modeled for us. Social learning theory suggests that modeled behavior offers the strongest form of learning (Bandura, 1977). The subliminal messages mothers receive from the media might play a significant role in her desire, and behavior to be equally involved with her sons and her daughters.

## Consequences of Fathers not being as Involved as Mothers

There are consequences for families when fathers are not as involved with their children as mothers. As stated earlier, healthy father involvement contributes to optimal physical, social, and emotional child development. In addition, Hochschild's (1997) work implies consequences for mothers, fathers, and children of traditional and transitional gender ideology homes.

According to Hochschild (1997), women with traditional and transitional gender ideologies have jobs yet they continue to shoulder the burden of household and childcare responsibilities. Therefore, she argues, these women are at risk for exhaustion, frustration, depression, high amounts of stress, higher incidents of illness, and divorce.

According to Williams (2000), fathers with these gender role ideologies work harder and more hours at their jobs, because their self-worth is profoundly connected to their ability to provide for their families. Therefore, traditional and transitional fathers tend to suffer, like mothers who share these gender role ideologies from exhaustion, frustration, depression, high amounts of stress, high incidents of illness, and divorce. Unlike

mothers, however, fathers' "second shift" takes him away from the family residence. Consequently, some fathers and children might be at risk for low paternal father-child involvement.

The consequences for children of low paternal involvement have already been discussed. However, according to Hochschild (1997) and Williams (2000) traditional and transitional gender role ideologies place both parents at risk for divorce, and therefore it appears that these gender role ideologies have consequences for children. Although the effect of divorce and parental conflict on child development is far beyond the scope of this particular study, it deserves mentioning.

There is a large body of consistent research, which suggests the short- and long-term consequences of divorce on children. Additional research shows that regardless of whether parents choose to stay together or divorce, there are consequences for children of parents who engage in high amounts of parental conflict. We might reasonably assume that in some homes in which parents are exhausted, frustrated, overstressed, overworked, and depressed there is some amount of parental conflict affecting children.

### Limitations of Research

The ESM is a relatively new tool in assessing parenting behaviors. In order to be able to evaluate the sensitivity of the ESM and to be able to offer some reasonable explanations for the findings of this research, the sample was restricted as indicated in chapter two, which describes the method of this study. The result of these restrictions were that there were several limitations to this research: 1) the sample was too homogeneous, 2) small sample size, 3) the findings of the study suggest that more parent-activity report forms were needed, and 4) the findings of the study showed that paging parents for one week was not long enough.

The first limitation to this study was the homogeneous sample, which makes the findings difficult to generalize to the broader population. Some theorists have suggested that mother and father employment status, child age, child gender, and whether the relationship between parents and their children was biological or step, affects parental involvement with children. This study was designed to use a homogeneous sample in order to decrease extraneous variables that might have affected parental involvement.

An additional limitation to this study was the small sample size of 64 participants (32 mothers and 32 fathers). The small sample size does not allow the findings of this study to be generalized to the population. Finding a sample that met the restrictions necessary to participate in the present study limited our sample size.

The findings of this research suggest that requiring each parent to fill out 15 parent-activity report forms was an additional limitation of this study. Each participating parent was required to fill out exactly 15 parent activity report forms. During the assessment of the data it became apparent that neither mothers nor fathers reported any type of emotional involvement with their children. Should it be assumed that none of the 62 parents in this study offer emotional care to their children? It is more likely that such behaviors do occur. Perhaps these behaviors were not occurring during the times when parents received the signal to report their behaviors. This suggests that parents need to be paged more and required to fill out more than 15 parent-activity report forms.

The fact that none of the parents reported emotional care of their child also suggest that paging parents for one week is not enough. During the weekdays each parent

was paged one to three times per evening. The limitation of the amount of pages parents received during the weekdays was due to some of the restrictions of the study. For example, since neither parents was to be signaled during the other parents work hours or when either child was in bed it limited the hours during weekday evenings that parents could receive signals. One solution to this problem is to extend the time period of the study to include more weekdays. Consequently, researchers would be better able to sample more parenting behaviors regardless of the limitation on the signals that could occur on weekdays due to parents work and children bedtime schedules.

#### Other Findings

It should be mentioned that using the ESM to assess family behaviors is somewhat cumbersome. Many participants stated that they would not volunteer again unless they received a reward of some type. Although the ESM adequately addresses many research concerns, it requires dedication from both the participants and the researcher. According to participants, filling out the report forms became problematic when they left their homes and the pager went off and they had to stop what they were doing



and fill out the report form. Having to stop their daily flow of activity to record information on the parent-activity report forms was extremely annoying to approximately two-thirds of the participants. Upon reviewing previous studies using the ESM, it was noted that participants in some of the other studies using the ESM were paid. Another idea might be to extend the time period of the study and signal less frequently. However, this might increase the risk that the researcher may lose some participants.

One problem in using the ESM is that during the weekdays after school and work families have very few hours together before the children must go to bed. This forces the researcher to signal participants quite a lot on the weekends, which becomes a nuisance to most busy families. In order to allow participating parents to respond to all fifteen report forms within a week time period, the only alternative to reduce beeper signals on a weekend would be to extend the duration of the study.

#### Directions for Future Research

There are a number of implications for future research that have emerged from this study. These include:

- 1) using the ESM for two - three weeks to assess parenting

behaviors and requiring parents to fill out more than 15 parent-activity report forms, 2) using the ESM to assess parenting behaviors of blended families, and 3) assessing gender role ideologies of parents in parenting involvement studies.

First, using the ESM for an extended time period to assess parenting behaviors for two to three weeks rather than one week would allow researchers to address the limitations as mentioned previously. Extending the time period would allow researchers to increase the amount of parent-activity report forms required of participating parents. This might allow researchers to get a better picture of what occurs in the family and assess emotional care giving of parents.

Second, using the ESM to assess parenting behaviors in blended families would expand this research outside of the boundaries of the traditional family unit (e.g., blended families). Working outside of the traditional family unit would also allow researchers to compare parenting behaviors of traditional and non-traditional families. Certainly with the increase of blended families researchers need to have a clear and accurate picture of the amount of involvement and types of involvement that different types of families engage in.

Thirdly, assessing gender ideologies of parents who participate in parenting behavioral studies might do much to advance our knowledge on why parents behave the way they do with their children. Hochschild's (1997) work indicates that gender ideology might have a significant affect on how much parents are involved with their sons and their daughters. Having parents assessed for their gender role ideology and comparing their ideologies to their actual behaviors with their children would be a worthwhile effort. The findings of such a study might give researchers a huge leap in understanding why mothers continue to be more involved with their sons and daughters than fathers. Researchers might also be able to discover additional variables that help explain the inconsistent findings of father-son involvement versus father-daughter involvement.

It appears that understanding and explaining the impact of the child's gender on father involvement is complex. Perhaps there is no one single factor that remains constant across families with regard to child-gender influences on father involvement. This would indicate that researchers need to stretch and move into different directions when looking at paternal involvement. Assessing gender ideologies along with actual parenting

behaviors might be a significant direction for new research.

More importantly if we as researchers want to make recommendations to parents about the nature and quantity of time they spend with their children we certainly should have an accurate picture of what is happening in the real world. Wanting to have an accurate picture of what types of parenting behaviors mothers and fathers demonstrate with their children should be the driving force behind developing novel ways to sensitively assess parenting behaviors.

Finally, we would like to suggest that studies of parental behaviors using the ESM are needed to advance and continue to refine the procedures of this promising assessment strategy in hopes to better understand the differences in parenting behaviors.

APPENDIX A  
CONSENT FORM

# CONSENT FORM

code \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to serve as a participant in the research investigation entitled Paging Parents. Kim Metcalfe from the Psychology Department of California State University at San Bernardino (CSUSB) has explained to me that the nature and general purpose of the study is to develop and use a new method to determine what activities family members do together, when parents are not at work. I understand that the study will be concluded after each participant fills out fifteen report forms, which will take approximately one week. Each report form must be completed at the moment I am signaled, the signaling will occur randomly, only during the hours that my partner and I indicated on the Schedule Form. I further understand that signaling may occur from 15 to 60 minutes apart with approximately 16 signals occurring Monday through Friday, and approximately 10 signals occurring on Saturday and Sunday. Each report form should take less than two minutes to complete and the total time expected to complete all fifteen report forms is approximately 30 minutes.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and I understand that I am free to withdraw or stop participating at any time. I have been assured that the information I am providing will be held in strict confidence by the researchers. The information I provided on the Pager Promissory Note is only to assure the safe return of the pager, and I understand that the Pager Promissory Note will be returned to me at the time I return the pager to Kim Metcalfe. All of the forms that I complete and return to Kim Metcalfe for the purpose of the study are coded and at no time will my name appear on the consent, demographic, report, or family schedule forms.

The Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino, has approved this study. If I have any questions about research participants' rights I may contact the university's Institutional Review Board at (909) 880-5027. Additionally, if I have any questions before, during, or after this study or if I wish to receive a copy of the results (which will be made available by September, 2001) I am free to contact Dr. Charles Hoffman at (909) 880-7305.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understood the written instructions above, the verbal instructions provided by Kim Metcalfe, and I understand the nature of this study. I am at least 18 years of age and I consent to participate in this study.

Requirements to Participate in This Study (check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ I have two children (one male and one female) between the ages of ten and fourteen years.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am the biological or adoptive parent of both of my children.

\_\_\_\_\_ I reside with the other parent of both of my children.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am employed full time.

\_\_\_\_\_ My full time employment is located outside my family residence.

APPENDIX B  
INSTRUCTIONS

## INSTRUCTIONS

(PLEASE APPLY WHEN FILLING OUT REPORT FORMS)

When the beeper signals you, please fill out one parent activity report form. Please fill in all questions on the report form as accurately as possible. After each mother has responded to 15 beeper signals and recorded their responses on 15 mom parent-activity report forms and fathers have responded to 15 beeper signals and recorded their responses on 15 dad parent-activity report forms the study is completed for your family. At that point please contact the researcher Kim Metcalfe at (909) 680-0007. The researcher will meet with you at an agreed upon place and time to collect the report forms and the pagers.

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The following are written instructions that have already been discussed with you verbally. Three key points to remember:

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**1. Please remember (as discussed previously) that your written response on the report form should be brief. The following are some examples:**

"In church"	"Driving child to soccer practice"
"Driving child to visit friend"	"Helping child with homework"
"Showering"	"Resting"
"Reading"	"Cooking"
"Yard work"	"Talking on phone"
"Talking to my child"	"Hugging child"
"Disciplining child"	"Driving"

**2. However, with regards to certain situations we need your response to be specific.**

- 
- If you are having a conversation with your child, please indicate if the conversation is regarding one of the following issues (disciplining your child, comforting your child). If the conversation is about any *other* topic you may simply state "Conversing with my child."
  - If you are talking on the phone with someone please indicate whether the conversation is regarding one of your children. The following are examples: arranging childcare, child transportation, child healthcare, child doctor appointment, child life insurance, child health insurance, child entertainment, child social activity, child's birthday, RSVPing for child to attend any event including a birthday party, or child educational or achievement participation/opportunity.
  - If you are watching a video or playing a computer game with your child/ren please be specific: indicate if the video or computer game is specifically for educational purposes or for entertainment (fun).
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If you become confused or at any time are uncertain of how to describe a situation, please page Kim Metcalfe at (909) 680-0007 for immediate assistance.

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Please randomly choose any below or write in any other activity you do with your child in any given week.

**Taking my child to school**

**Taking my child to dance, soccer, etc.**

**Cooking dinner**

**Helping my child do homework**

**Talking to my child**

**Hugging my child**

**Kissing my child**

**Disciplining my child**

**On the phone arranging childcare for my child**

**Watching my child do \_\_\_\_\_**

**Cleaning the house**

**Doing laundry**

APPENDIX C  
PAGER INFORMATION

Code \_\_\_\_\_

## **Pager Information**

**Participants are obligated to return the pagers to the researcher.**

**Thank you**

APPENDIX D  
FAMILY SCHEDULE

Code \_\_\_\_\_

Pager Number \_\_\_\_\_

## FAMILY SCHEDULE

Please fill out the schedule below. For each day of the week, write in the time that both parents are home from work. For example, if you come home from work at 4:00pm and your spouse arrives home at 6:30pm that means you are *both* home at 6:30 pm. For each day of the week there is a space provided to write in your children's bedtimes. If your children go to bed at different times please write in the earliest time. For example, if one child goes to bed at 8:00 pm and the other goes to bed at 9:00 pm, use the earlier time of 8:00pm when filling in the space below that is designated for *bedtime*.

	Hours both Parents are home from Work	Earliest Bedtime of child
MONDAY	_____	_____
TUESDAY	_____	_____
WEDNESDAY	_____	_____
THURSDAY	_____	_____
FRIDAY	_____	_____
SATURDAY	_____	_____
SUNDAY	_____	_____

THANK YOU !

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Code \_\_\_\_\_

Demographic Information

**1. Marital Status (check one):**

☐ Married

☐ Cohabiting (with the biological other parent of my children)

**2. List ages and additional information of your children in chronological order (first-born, second-born):**

Age of first-born \_\_\_\_\_ Gender of first-born (circle one) M F

Age of second-born \_\_\_\_\_ Gender of second-born (circle one) M F

**3. Employment Status (check one):**

☐ Full-time employee

☐ Part-time employee

**4. As a full time (40 hours per week) employee, I work (check one):**

☐ Outside of my family residence

☐ In my family residence

**5. Your current occupation: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Highest level of education you have completed (check one):**

☐ High school graduate

☐ Some college

☐ College graduate (B.A. degree)

☐ Graduate degree or Credential

**6. Ethnicity (check one)**

☐ Latino

☐ Caucasian

☐ African American

☐ Other

☐ American-Indian

☐ Asian-American/Pacific Islander

☐ Multiracial

**7. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ Your gender: \_\_\_\_\_**

APPENDIX F  
ACTIVITY REPORT FORM



Code \_\_\_\_\_

## **MOM** PARENT ACTIVITY REPORT FORM

**Reminder: You will fill out one report form immediately, each time you are paged.  
Please do not complete a report form if you are paged and either parent is at work.  
Please do not put your name on this form.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Beeped: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm *If different from time beeped*  
*Time Report is Filled Out:* \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

**Briefly, clearly, and accurately describe...**

Exactly what you were doing at the moment you beeped? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHO (IF ANYONE) WERE YOU DOING IT WITH?**

**(Check all that apply)**

☐ Alone ☐ Partner ☐ Female Child ☐ Male Child ☐ Friend/s ☐ Relative

Code \_\_\_\_\_

## **DAD** PARENT ACTIVITY REPORT FORM

**Reminder: You will fill out one report form immediately, each time you are paged.  
Please do not complete a report form if you are paged and either parent is at work.  
Please do not put your name on this form.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Beeped: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm *If different from time beeped*  
*Time Report is Filled Out:* \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

**Briefly, clearly, and accurately describe...**

Exactly what you were doing at the moment you beeped? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHO (IF ANYONE) WERE YOU DOING IT WITH?**

**(Check all that apply)**

☐ Alone ☐ Partner ☐ Female Child ☐ Male Child ☐ Friend/s ☐ Relative

APPENDIX G  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Code \_\_\_\_\_

## **Debriefing Statement**

### **Paging Parents:**

Thank you for completing the “Paging Parents” study. The purpose of this study is to better understand the behaviors that mothers’ and fathers’ engage in with their sons and daughters, and how mothers and fathers may or may not differ in the quantity and quality of these behaviors with their children.

Researchers typically assess family behaviors in the laboratory, family residence, or ask a family member to complete a survey questionnaire. Although there has been renewed interest in parenting behaviors in the field of developmental psychology, methodological (i.e., the way we study something) flaws still exist in assessing parenting behaviors. We anticipate that this study is an improvement methodologically and therefore the results will give us a clearer picture as to what things moms and dads do with their sons and daughters.

Your participation in this study has been important to help us further understand the nature of parenting behaviors that are specific to mothers and fathers. Additionally, by recording what you do when the beeper signaled, you have assisted us in trying a new way to assess parenting behaviors. We are hopeful that this study will contribute to the existing knowledge of parenting behaviors. If you are interested in the results of this study, please contact Dr. Laura Kamptner at (909) 880-5582 after December 2002 to obtain a copy of the results. Please do not reveal the nature of this study to other potential participants. Thank you again for your participation!

Sincerely,

Kim Metcalfe, M.A. candidate in Lifespan Developmental Psychology  
Dr. Laura Kamptner, Professor, Psychology and Human Development.

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