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## Parents' division of childcare responsibilities: Predictors of fathers' childcare involvement and egalitarian attitudes

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PARENTS' DIVISION OF CHILDCARE RESPONSIBILITIES:  
PREDICTORS OF FATHERS' CHILDCARE INVOLVEMENT  
AND EGALITARIAN ATTITUDES

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A Thesis

Presented to the  
Faculty  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Psychology:  
General/Experimental

---

by

Amy Elizabeth Latta

March 2004

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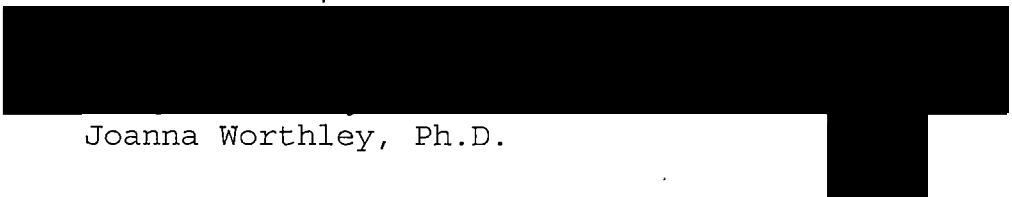
by  
Amy Elizabeth Latta  
March 2004

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## ABSTRACT

The present investigation was designed to examine the effects of egalitarian parenting and involvement in household tasks in family-of-origin on the next generation's own parental division of childcare and household responsibilities. Based on a social learning perspective, married parents' retrospective reports of a more equal distribution of childcare and household tasks by one's mother and father during one's childhood, was expected to predict more equitable distribution of these tasks in their own families by both male and female participants. Consistent with theory in the literature, it was also anticipated that reports of more equitable division of childcare and household tasks in participants' family of origin would predict more egalitarian gender role attitudes. Married parent participants, 65 males ( $M = 39.4$  years of age) and 72 females ( $M = 37.14$  years of age), completed scales derived from the literature to assess their parents' and then their own division of childcare and household tasks. They also responded to a scale designed to assess their gender role attitudes. Analyses showed that both men and women who reported that their fathers were more involved in parenting reported greater father

involvement in the parenting of their own children. However, contrary to expectations, participants' retrospective reports of their parents' division of childcare and household tasks was unrelated to their gender role attitudes. In general, results support the notion of intergenerational transmission of egalitarian parenting behavior.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Parenting duties in a two-parent household continue to be divided according to gender. Evidence indicates that women, in comparison to men, contribute significantly more to the nurture and physical care of the child, and household work pertaining to childcare, such as making beds, washing clothes and cooking meals (McBride & Mills, 1993; U.S. Bureau of Census, 1991). Although previous studies of father involvement in childcare show an increase in fathers' time spent caring for their children, their involvement continues to be significantly less than that of mothers (Pleck, 1997). This inequality exists even when women are employed full-time outside the home (e.g., Coverman, 1985; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Hochschild, 1989; Shelton, 1990).

Differential parenting based on gender is consistent with role theory which suggests that social roles include the expectations of how one ought to behave in a particular circumstance (Heiss, 1981). In the case of gender-based division of parenting and household responsibilities, traditional expectations for a mother as a parent include responsibility for traditionally female tasks in parenting

such as the child's physical and emotional needs and household chores related to childcare. Traditional expectations for fathers include responsibility for such tasks as disciplining the children, earning income to support the family and maintenance chores (e.g., mowing the lawn) around the house (Feldman, 1990).

These traditional expectations for gender are evidenced in a study by Berk and Berk (1979; see also Berk, 1985) where the household and childcare tasks were found to be distinctly segregated according to gender. For example, wives performed over 92% of the dishwashing, 96% of the cooking, 90% of the vacuuming, 94% of the bed making, and 94% of the diapering of children, whereas husbands performed 86% of the household repairs, 80% of the child discipline, and 75% of the lawn mowing. Nyquist, Sliven, Spence and Helmreich (1985) found that although attitudes about role sharing within the home had changed to become generally egalitarian, women remained primarily responsible for the tasks traditionally assigned to women. The authors concluded that wives spend more time doing household chores than do husbands, indicating that the division of labor in the household is gender-linked.

These gender roles are believed to have been learned early in childhood through family socialization that occurs when the parents model behaviors and roles, which are then established and reproduced in the child. The division of labor between men and women prescribes for children how household duties should be divided. Thus, gender roles in the children are derived from gender-based categorization of duties that is modeled by the parents (Eagly, 1987).

It has even been suggested that societal gender roles are not going to change until mothers and fathers parent more equally (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976). That is because when the children become parents, they assume, in large part, similar roles that were demonstrated, modeled and reinforced by their own parents. For example, when a father does not participate in the emotional care taking of the child or in other childcare associated duties, he is modeling to his children that these tasks are not the man's responsibility.

This socialization of gender-related attitudes and roles is supported theoretically. For example, Bandura's (1986) social learning theory suggests that parents, as the initial and most involved socializers, have great influence on their children's beliefs about gender roles. From this

point of view, children are seen as learning these roles by first observing them in their parents and then imitating them, particularly those performed by the parent of the same gender. The importance of these early experiences for the child's gender role acquisition is suggested by evidence that children, by 2 1/2 years of age, have not only adopted gender stereotypes, but also generalize those stereotypes to infants and animals (Cowan & Hoffman, 1986; Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992; Haugh, Hoffman, & Cowan, 1980).

Other support for gender role development occurring within the family setting can be found in gender-role acquisition theories such as Kohlberg's (1966) cognitive developmental model, and others (e.g., Frieze, Johnson, Parsons, Ruble, & Zellman, 1978; Huston, 1983; Katz, 1979; Worrell, 1981), which all suggest that children identify with the traditional gender-based roles displayed by their own father and mother. Kohlberg suggests that gender identification is the primary early classification that children make in the developing process of their cognitive organization. Once this categorization is established, then it acts as a basis for modeling the same-gender parent

because that parent is perceived to be of the same gender category.

Although there is theoretical support that parents have strong influence on a child's gender role development, there is also considerable empirical evidence to support this notion as well. For example, in a study of intergenerational attitude similarity, Glass, Bengston, and Chorn Dunham (1986) found that the attitudes of parents significantly predicted the attitudes of their children. After analyzing 2044 three-generation family members the authors concluded that the generational pairs shared many of the same attitudes, and that the parent's attitudes were strong predictors of politics, gender, and religious ideologies.

Blair (1992) also showed the effects of parental modeling and reinforcement on children in a study examining children's adoption of household chores modeled by parents. Findings indicated that the role models portrayed by parents through their household labor performance were significantly associated with children's labor. For example, sons whose fathers performed less than 10 hours of household labor averaged 2.40 hours per week of household

labor, whereas sons whose fathers performed 30 or more hours of household labor averaged 9.89 hours per week.

In another study, Fagot and Leinbach (1995) demonstrated the force of the family as a primary agent in influencing gender-related attitudes. In this study, child's acquisition of gender roles was related to the parent's gender roles and attitudes. They compared 27 two-parent families who were self-identified as sharing parenting equally with traditional sets of two-parent families. First, the parents were interviewed when the child was 17 months old. Then using the Gender Labeling Task and the Sex Role Learning Index, the parent and child were observed when the child was 27 to 28 months and re-tested when the child was four years. Results indicated that children from the egalitarian families adopted gender labels later in the second year of life (e.g., identifying pictures of boys or girls) and exhibited less gender role knowledge (e.g., sorting and preference for items such as a hammer, a broom, or baseball bat for male or female) at age four than did children in the more traditional families. These findings indicate that differences in the parenting style were reflected in the child's cognitive understanding of gender. Fagot and Leinbach concluded that the child's

cognitive understanding is more important than behavioral preferences in the child's gender schema.

Additional evidence also indicates that the family setting contributes to gender role development. For example, in a study by Weinraub, Jaeger, and Hoffman (1988), children whose mothers worked outside the home were not as traditional in gender role orientation as children whose mothers stayed at home. As far as fathers are concerned, there is evidence to suggest that fathers who are emotionally expressive with sons are likely to have sons who are emotionally expressive (Balswick, 1988).

Although the family socialization patterns are shown to be influential in children's cognitive and behavioral representations of parental roles in the family, it has also been demonstrated to have effects that extend beyond adolescence (Berryman-Fink, Ballard-Reisch, & Newman, 1993). For example, in a study by Allegro, Radin, and Williams (1992), a greater amount of paternal involvement in the child's preschool years predicted adolescent expectations for gender roles in career and family contexts. This was an 11-year follow-up of 32 teenagers in which a greater degree of paternal participation between the ages of 7 and 9 years predicted support for the

teenagers to be more nontraditional in their expectations for gender roles in career and family contexts. Thus, when there was greater father participation between the ages of 7 and 9, the same child, as a teenager, reported an expectation of support for a more nontraditional employment and childrearing arrangement with their future spouse.

The effects of family socialization on parenting roles have also been demonstrated to extend into adulthood. For example, the quality of a mother's childhood relationship to her own mother has been shown to be similar to the relationship she develops with her own child (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Ricks, 1985; Crowell and Feldman, 1988). In another study, Ahlberg and Sandnabba (1998) found that increased parental participation in terms of nurturance or care (defined as parents' affection, emotional warmth, empathy and closeness) was strongly related to the amount of perceived care provided by the participant's parent of the same sex. Nurturance, in this study, is indicated as caring for the child, which includes emotional involvement with the child. Therefore, nurturance is assumed as a part of, or related to, parent involvement in general. The participants, 94 fathers and 130 mothers of 5-year old children, completed a Child Rearing Practices Report and



Parental Bonding Instrument to assess their child rearing practices and perceived parental care. Findings indicated that in terms of care for the child, mothers that were more involved were also significantly more likely than less involved mothers to have been raised by a mother that was actively involved in the care of the child.

In the same study, Ahlberg and Sandnabba (1998) demonstrated that the socialization of greater father participation in childcare could have lasting effects into adulthood. The findings indicated that, in terms of care for the child, fathers who were more involved were significantly more likely than fathers who were less involved to have been raised by a father that was actively involved in terms of the care for the child. They concluded that the findings of intergenerational transmission of nurturant or caring characteristics support theories of same-sex parental identification. Furthermore, they believed that a father's example of low involvement in domestic childcare and household tasks is reproduced in their sons, who as fathers, will also exhibit low levels of involvement in the nurture and physical child care and household tasks.

The idea that a parent's egalitarian parenting or traditional parenting style is a consequence of parental behaviors and attitudes modeled by their own mother and father was the focus of the current study. This idea is based on the theoretical perspective that societal gender roles are not going to change until mothers and fathers parent more equally (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976). In this study, I considered the longitudinal consequences of family-of-origin division of childcare and household responsibilities on mothers' and fathers' own division of childcare and household responsibilities and gender role attitudes.

It was anticipated that married fathers who indicated having had a close relationship to their father while growing up and who reported that their fathers participated more actively in traditional female household tasks, especially those that are childcare related, would report that they were more involved in these tasks than those who reported that their fathers were less involved. Moreover, it was anticipated that married mothers who indicated having had a close relationship with their father while growing up and reported that their fathers were actively involved in traditionally female household tasks,

especially childcare related, would report that their husbands were more involved in these tasks than mothers who reported that their fathers were less involved. A close relationship to the father and egalitarian division of traditionally female household tasks, particularly childcare tasks, as evidenced by reports of fathers' higher involvement in these roles, were expected to predict egalitarian parenting.

It was also expected that fathers who indicated that they were close to their own father while growing up and who reported that their fathers participated in traditional female household tasks, especially childcare related, would report more egalitarian gender role attitudes for men. Additionally, it was anticipated that married mothers who indicated that they had a close relationship to their father while growing up and who reported that their fathers were actively involved in more traditionally female household tasks, especially childcare related, would report more egalitarian gender role attitudes for men. A close relationship to the father and egalitarian division of traditionally female household tasks, particularly childcare tasks, shown by reports of fathers' higher

involvement in these roles, were expected to predict egalitarian gender role attitudes for men.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODS

#### Participants

The participants were volunteers solicited from various businesses including day care centers, fire stations and coffee houses in the Southern California area. A total of 137 out of 200 questionnaire packets were returned and analyzed for the present study. The participants were 65 males and 72 females (mean age 39.38 and 37.14 years respectively). The participants' biological parents were married or living together in the same household during the first eighteen years of the participants' lives. The participants themselves were either married for any length of time or had lived together for at least 7 years. They were treated in accordance with the American Psychological Association's (1992) "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct."

In regards to ethnicity, 59% of the participants described themselves as Caucasian, 24% as Hispanic/Latino, 3% as African American/Black, 7% as Asian, 1% as Native American/American Indian, 4% indicated "other", while 2% did not indicate their ethnicity. Concerning education, 26%

reported having a high school diploma or less, 7% had some college or an associate's degree, 29% reported having a bachelor's degree, 21% had some graduate school, 16% had a graduate degree, and 1% did not report their education level. A total of 80% of the participants reported that they were not currently attending college or graduate school, with the remainder currently enrolled in college or graduate school at least part-time. Hollingshead's (1977) occupational scales were used to classify the occupations reported by the participants; 5% of the respondents were classified in the semiskilled, unskilled, or menial service categories (scores 1-3); 39% were classified in the small business owners, clerical or sales workers, or technicians or semi-professional categories (scores 4-6); and 48% were in the minor professional higher occupational categories (scores 7-9). The mean Hollingshead occupational scale scores was 5.59 (SD = 2.42). In regards to marital status, 90% indicated that they were married, 9% were remarried, and 1% reported living in the same household with a significant other for 7 years or more. Concerning children, 4 (3%) of the participants reported having 4 or more children, 29 (21%) of the participants reported having 3

children, 61 (45%) reported having 2 children, and 43 (31%) reported having 1 child.

### Procedures

Following brief written instructions, participants completed a short demographic instrument, the Spousal Division of Childcare and Household Tasks Scale, the Father-Child Relationship Survey, the Male Norms Scale, and the Parental Division of Childcare and Household Tasks Scale while they were growing up. After the participants completed the scales, they were given a debriefing letter.

A randomization procedure was used, half of the participants reporting how they divide up childcare and household tasks with their spouse first and half reporting how their parents divided up childcare and household tasks first. In addition, half of the participants completed the Father-Child Relationship Survey third, and half completed the Male Role Norms Scale third.

### Measures

#### Background Questionnaire

To examine the biographic and demographic information of the participants, a background questionnaire was developed for use in this study. The participants were

asked to circle the choice or fill in the blank with the answer that best reflected their demographic or biographic information. Please refer to appendix A for the items on the questionnaire.

#### Division of Childcare and Household Tasks Scale

To measure the division of traditionally female childcare and household labor between the respondent's mother and father while growing up, and the respondent and his or her spouse, participants completed a scale that consisted of 31 traditionally female childcare and household tasks.

Ten childcare tasks, which are more often performed by mothers, were derived from Hoffman and Moon (2001). These tasks are specific to childcare having to do with the physical and emotional support of the child. Five childcare items more often performed by mothers were derived from Coltrane (1996), four of which can be classified as having to do with the physical care of the child (e.g., helping to dress my child(ren) and caring for my child(ren) when sick.

Seventeen household tasks that are more often performed by the mother were derived from Coltrane (1996). Several of these tasks are supported as being more often performed by females in Blair and Lichter (1991), although



they are indicated in the present study in a more general form (e.g., cleaning house as opposed to vacuuming). Some examples of the household items on the scale are vacuuming, mopping and cooking dinner.

Participants were given the same items twice, the first asking the participant to "[p]lease circle the number which best describes how you and your spouse divide up the following tasks" and on the other to "[p]lease circle the number which best describes how your mother and father divided up the following tasks while growing up". We measured responses on 7-point scales where "wife always" or "mother always" corresponded with 1, "shared about equally" corresponded to 4, and "husband always" or "father always" corresponded with 7.

The scale evidenced excellent internal consistency in the current sample. The alpha levels for division of childcare tasks and household tasks between parents were  $\alpha = .93$  and  $.95$ . The alpha levels for the spousal division of childcare tasks and household tasks were  $\alpha = .92$  and  $\alpha = .91$ , respectively (the total alpha level for these two scales combined was  $\alpha = .94$ ). Please refer to appendix B

for a complete list of the items on the Division of  
Childcare and Household Tasks Scale.

#### Male Role Norms Scale

To measure the gender role attitudes for men, the participants completed the Male Role Norms Scale. The MRNS consists of 26 items loading most highly on three factors (status, toughness, and anti-femininity) which were identified by Brannon and Juni (1984) and derived empirically by factor analyzing from the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS, Brannon & Juni, 1984; Brannon, 1985). The MRNS was constructed and validated on a sample of predominately Anglo-American students ( $n = 400$ ) at two New England liberal arts institutions. In both the original sample and the current sample, the Male Norms scale was internally consistent,  $\alpha = .86$  and  $\alpha = .88$  respectively. Please refer to appendix C for a list of the items from the Male Role Norms Scale.

#### Father-Child Relationship Survey

To measure the grown child's relationship with his or her father, participants completed a scale derived from the Father-Child Relationship Survey, which is a form of the Parent-Child Relationship Survey (PCRS, Fine, Moreland, &

Schwebel, 1983; Fine, 1985). The original scale was not available, so the complete wording for the items on the scale was also not available. In the current study the wording of 15 original items was revised and an additional item was added to create the Father-Child Relationship Survey. The scale is a self-report questionnaire comprised of Likert-type items which are intended to assess older children's (over the age of 18) perceptions of relationship quality with his or her own father. Please refer to appendix D for the father form of the Parent-Child Relationship Survey which is indicated as the Father-Child Relationship Survey.

The original scale includes four factors: Positive Affective, Father Involvement, Communication and Lack of Anger. Because the Lack of Anger subscale has not been significantly correlated with the other subscales (Fine et al., 1983), these items were omitted from the revised PCRS.

In both the original sample and current sample the Positive Affective, Father Involvement and Communication subscales were internally consistent,  $\alpha = .97, .93, .94$  and  $\alpha = .93, .94, .89$ , respectively. The total alphas for the original and current sample were also internally

consistent,  $\alpha = .98$  and  $\alpha = .97$  respectively (Fine et al., 1983).

The scale has good known groups and discriminative validity. The total score from the father form significantly discriminated between subjects from intact and divorced families (Fine et al., 1983). The norms and validity information were developed from a principally middle-class, college student sample.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

Table 1 indicates the correlations between each of the variables' effect.

As can be seen in Table 1, none of the predictor measures (Parent Division of Childcare Tasks, Parent Division of Household Tasks and Father-Child Relationship) were significantly correlated with Male Role Norms.

Parent Division of Childcare was significantly related to Spousal Division of Childcare. Furthermore, Parent Division of Childcare was significantly related to Spousal Division of Household Tasks. There were no other significant correlations between the predictor and criterion measures evaluated.

Other correlations indicated however, that there was a significant correlation between Spousal Division of Childcare and Spousal Division of Household Tasks. Spousal Division of Household Tasks was also significantly associated with Male Role Norms.

In order to examine the hypotheses more directly, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed for Spousal Division of Childcare, Spousal Division of Household Tasks, and Male Role Norms. Two-step hierarchical

multiple regressions were executed, using SPSS REGRESSION and SPSS FREQUENCIES for the evaluation of assumptions. In each analysis, the technique of substituting the mean was performed. As a control in each analysis, the demographic variables of participant gender, household income, their education levels and age, were entered on step 1. The three predictor variables, Parent Division of Childcare, Parent Division of Household Tasks, and the Father-Child Relationship were then entered together on step 2. Please refer to Table 2 which indicates the findings for step 2 for each of the regression analyses conducted.

As indicated, the first regression analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between the three predictor variables and the criterion measure, Male Role Norms. The amount of variance accounted for by the demographics was approximately eleven percent ( $R^2$  change = 0.11,  $F(4,132) = 4.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which was significant. A closer examination revealed that two of the demographic factors of step 1, participant education ( $\beta = -0.14$ ,  $t = -2.46$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and gender ( $\beta = -0.44$ ,  $t = -2.78$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significant. That is, fewer years of education contributed to less egalitarian Male Role Attitudes.

Furthermore, male gender contributed significantly to less egalitarian Male Role Attitudes. The amount of additional variance accounted for when the predictors were added on step 2 was not significant ( $R^2$  change = .01, change  $F(3,130) = 0.48$ ,  $p > .05$ ), indicating that these variables did not contribute to participant's ratings of their Male Role Attitudes.

In the second regression analysis, the relationship between the three predictor variables, and the Spousal Division of Childcare was examined. The amount of variance accounted for by the demographics was not significant ( $R^2$  change = 0.07,  $F(4, 136) = 2.32$ ,  $p > .05$ ). When I added the predictor variables in step two, the amount of additional variance was significant ( $R^2$  change = 0.12, change  $F(3, 129) = 6.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A closer examination revealed that two of the predictors, Parent Division of Childcare ( $\beta = .480$ ,  $t = 4.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Parent Division of Household Tasks ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $t = -2.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significant, whereas the Father-Child Relationship was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). As the relationship between participants' remembrances of their father involvement in childcare was expected to be related to childcare, a second regression analysis was

carried out for this criterion measure. In this analysis, the predictor variable Father-Child Relationship was entered with the values represented dichotomously as either high or low. The results of this analysis were consistent with the previous regression analysis in that Father-Child Relationship did not significantly predict Spousal Division of Household Tasks ( $p > .05$ ) or Spousal Division of Childcare Tasks ( $p > .05$ ).

The last regression analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between the three predictor variables, and the criterion measure, Spousal Division of Household Tasks. The amount of variance accounted for by the demographics was just over eight percent ( $R^2$  change = 0.08,  $F(4,136) = 2.96$ ,  $p < .05$ ) which was significant. A closer examination revealed that the only one demographic factor of step 1, participant gender, was significant ( $\beta = -.38$ ,  $t = -2.43$ ,  $p < .05$ ). That is, male gender contributed significantly to reports of more egalitarian Division of Household Tasks. When I added the predictor variables on step two, the amount of additional variance accounted for was not significant ( $R^2$  change = 0.02, change  $F(3, 129) = 1.08$ ,  $p > .05$ ).



As indicated in the previous analysis there was a significant gender effect for spousal effects for household tasks. That is, men reported more egalitarian Division of Household Tasks than did women. In spousal reports of household labor, literature indicates that in couples, men report that they do more household work than women report they do (Press & Townsley, 1998). While men and women in the present study were not part of the same couple, the same effect was examined. That is, men in general reported that they participate in household tasks more often than women report for their husbands.

In order to examine the extent to which the gender effects of my study were consistent with previous literature, I compared men's and women's ratings on all of the division of childcare and household labor scales (Parent Division of Childcare, Parent Division of Household Tasks, Spousal Division of Childcare and Spousal Division of Household Tasks) in a follow up multivariate ANOVA. The results indicated that men report that they do more childcare and household labor than women report that their husband's do (means for *Spousal Division of Childcare*, 3.29, 2.93;  $F(1,101) = 5.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ); means for *Spousal Division of Household Tasks*, Men: 3.24, Women: 2.74;  $F(1,$

101) = 7.96,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, when looking back at their fathers, men remember their fathers doing more childcare labor than women remember their fathers doing (means for *Parent Division of Childcare*, Men: 2.41, Women: 2.07;  $F(1,101) = 4.62$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, men did not report significantly more often than women that they remember their fathers having done more household labor.

Table 1. Pearson Correlations for Measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Parent Childcare Tasks	-					
2. Parent Household Tasks	.64*	-				
3. Father-Child Relationship	.46*	.24*	-			
4. Spouse Childcare Tasks	.34*	.07	.14	-		
5. Spouse Household Tasks	.17*	.05	.01	.58*	-	
6. Male Role Norms	-.04	-.03	-.07	-.17	-.24*	-

Note 1. Lower scores on Male Role Norms indicates more egalitarian attitudes were toward Male Roles.

Note 2.  $N = 137$ .

\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Male Role Norms

Criterion Measures	$R^2$ Change	Change $F$
Male Role Norms Regression, Step Two	0.01	0.48
Spouse Childcare Regression, Step Two	0.12	6.49**
Spouse Household Regression, Step Two	0.02	1.08

Note. Predictor variables added in Step Two: Parent Division of Childcare, Parent Division of Household Tasks and Father-Child Relationship.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .001$ .

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

The current study was designed to examine whether adult children's reports of egalitarian parenting by their parents would influence the likelihood for egalitarian parenting behavior and gender role attitudes of the adult child. In general, results support the notion of intergenerational transmission of egalitarian parenting behavior. Individuals whose fathers were more involved in parenting reported greater father involvement in parenting their own children. Specifically, men who report that their fathers were more involved in parenting, indicate that they were more involved with their own children. As for men, women whose fathers were more involved in parenting reported that their husbands were more involved in parenting.

The modeling effect of parental division of household tasks was examined in addition to that of childcare tasks. However, the effect of parental behavior on children seems to be specific to childcare and not generalizable to that of household tasks. Further, hypotheses regarding intergenerational transmission of egalitarian gender roles were not supported. Specifically, the similarity of

parenting behavior across generations was not found to have influenced more egalitarian gender attitudes, as was expected. This expectation had been based on the work of Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976) who each suggested that society's gender roles are not going to change until parents model more egalitarian parenting behaviors for their children.

#### Intergenerational Transmission of Childcare Behavior

When men and women reported that their own fathers were more involved in childcare, they tended to report that they and their spouse were more egalitarian in the division of childcare tasks. As previously discussed, Eagly (1987) suggests that many types of social behaviors result from social expectations (i.e., attitudes and beliefs about gender). Since gender role expectations are normative in society, a person is likely to display behaviors that are consistent with these expectations. In the same way, when behaviors become less stereotyped according to gender role expectations, then these behaviors seem more appropriate for either gender to perform.

Applied to childcare behaviors, to the degree that both mothers and fathers perform given childcare tasks,

then these behaviors become less defined as gender specific. For example, as fathers take on more childcare tasks, such as changing diapers, such tasks become less defined as stereotypic for females.

Thus, children raised by mothers and fathers who shared more childcare tasks are likely to cognitively identify these behaviors as egalitarian rather than as specifically male or female (Kohlberg, 1966). In this way, the child is socialized by his or her parents to understand that what may have been considered in other family contexts as traditionally female childcare and household behaviors, can be acceptable male behaviors (Bandura, 1986). For example, when a son or daughter observes his or her father participating in the preparation of dinner, then such a task may become established as an acceptable behavior in the child's organization of appropriate male behaviors.

The finding that women whose own fathers were more involved in childcare reported that their husbands were more involved in the same childcare tasks might suggest one of several possible scenarios. First women whose fathers were involved might expect a similar level involvement from their own husbands. Since the modeling effect worked for both the adult females and males in this study, the female

might be modeling her father's greater father involvement in childcare by her own expectations for a husband to be involved in childcare the same way her father was. Thus, these women might support and structure higher father involvement in their family. Similarly, women whose fathers were uninvolved may expect no better than that level of involvement from their own partners. Thus these women might subtly or overtly gatekeep in such a way as to make their current experiences fit with their history and experiences. Another possible scenario is that women whose fathers were involved might choose partners that fit their fathers' model of involvement.

Contrary to expectations, the role modeling effect did not seem to be influenced by how close the father-child relationship was for either men or women. Because the parents are the initial and primary socializer for the child (Bandura, 1986; Kohlberg, 1966), close relationships with the father were expected to predict a similar level of father involvement in the next generation. Surprisingly, this was not the case, as father-child closeness was unrelated to involvement in childcare. Specifically, regardless of closeness, fathers in the current study tended to replicate their own fathers' level of involvement



in childcare if their fathers were highly involved. Furthermore, regardless of the closeness of the relationship with their own father, the women in the study tended to have/report that their husbands' level of involvement in childcare was similar to that of her father.

This suggests that the parent and child closeness is not a significant direct contributor to whether or not the child models behaviors of that parent as an adult. This contrasts with Ahlberg and Sandnabba (1988) who demonstrated that greater parent nurturance (which includes closeness) resulted in greater modeling by the same-gender child. It is possible that the type of closeness that was examined in this study varied in form from that examined by Ahlberg and Sandnabba (1998).

#### Intergenerational Transmission of Household Task Behavior

Based on the findings of modeling theory, when men reported that their father had been more involved in traditionally female household tasks, it was expected that they too would report that they were more involved in these tasks. However, contrary to expectations, when men reported that their father was more involved in traditionally female household tasks, they were not significantly more likely to

report higher father involvement for these same household tasks in their own families. Similarly, when women reported that their father had been involved in traditionally female household tasks, it was expected their husbands would also be more involved in these same tasks. Also contrary to expectations, women who reported that their father was more involved in traditionally female household tasks were not more likely to report that their husband was more involved for the same household tasks in their own families.

The fact that children modeled the division of childcare behaviors and not household tasks displayed by their children might suggest that there are characteristics about these two types of behaviors that make them more or less likely to be transmitted to the next generation. One possible explanation is that there are stronger modeling effects for childcare behaviors because they are applied more directly in an interaction between the parent and child. It may be that such direct observation and interaction facilitated the modeling of behavior. Thus, the child may be more likely to adopt parenting behaviors than household tasks because the child is present and involved in each childcare behavior. Household tasks, on the other hand, can be performed without the child attending to them,

or even in the absence of the child altogether. This lesser involvement, then, may be less susceptible to be modeled by the child. For example, cleaning might be completed while the child is attending to something else (e.g., watching television, doing homework, playing with friends, etc.) or in the absence of the child (e.g., child is at school or with friends outside of the house).

Even if household tasks were directly observed, they may have been experienced as less relevant by the developing child than were childcare tasks. Thus household tasks may have been less likely to be consistently attended to (and therefore less available for accurate recall later). In this way, the household task data might be more reflective of the participant's opinions than of the participant's recollections. It is also possible that childcare tasks are more susceptible to parental influence than household tasks.

#### Intergenerational Transmission of Gender Roles

Fathers who reported that their fathers participated more actively in traditional female household tasks, especially those that are childcare related, were expected to report more egalitarian gender role attitudes for men.

Similarly, women who reported that their fathers were actively involved in more traditionally female household tasks, especially childcare related, were expected to report more egalitarian gender role attitudes for men. However, contrary to expectations, men and women's reports of egalitarian attitudes of Male roles were not influenced by reports of their parents' division of childcare and household tasks. That is, men and women who reported that their own fathers had been more involved in childcare were not more likely to hold more egalitarian roles for men. In addition, men and women who reported that their own fathers had been more involved in household tasks were not more likely to report more egalitarian gender roles. Thus, neither the fathers' childcare or household task involvement predicated egalitarian gender roles for either men or women participants.

It may be that participants' reports of greater father involvement did not predict more egalitarian gender role attitudes because the gender role instrument was not sensitive enough to indicate changes in gender role attitudes having to do more directly with egalitarian childcare and household task behavior. The Male Role Norms Scale contained only one item that measured attitudes

toward male involvement in childcare and household tasks. It might be that an instrument that examined only attitudes having to do with men's involvement in the specific childcare and household tasks, such as those that were measured in this study, might get at the gender role attitudes most likely to change as a result of these types of behaviors.

In contrast to the intergenerational transmission, it does appear that within the current generation, more egalitarian behavior is associated with more egalitarian gender roles. One possible explanation for this result is that transmission of gender role attitudes only operates through one's own direct participation in egalitarian behaviors. This explanation is in contrast to the idea that egalitarian gender role attitudes are learned along with egalitarian gender role behaviors that are modeled by one's parent. There is support in the findings to indicate that this may be true. That is, as men reported that they were more involved in household tasks, they tended to report that they held more egalitarian gender roles for men. The same association was observed for women. When women reported that their husbands were more involved in household tasks, they tended to report more egalitarian

gender roles for men. These results tie in with Eagly (1987) who suggested that when men start sharing more in the traditionally female household tasks, that their gender roles and stereotypes ought to be affected.

In contrast, men and women who reported more egalitarian childcare division in their own families were not significantly more egalitarian in their gender role attitudes for men. It may be that expectations for childcare tasks are shifting more rapidly than for household tasks. That is, with increased societal interest in fathering, it may be easier for fathers to become more involved in childcare. For example, vacuuming might be considered more strictly defined as part of the female role than is tucking the child into bed.

It is also possible that increased involvement in childcare tasks might be due to the reward felt from these types of tasks over that of household tasks. For example, a father is more likely to feel that tucking a child into bed is more rewarding than is vacuuming the living room. Thus increased involvement in the childcare tasks over household tasks might be a result of the reward felt.

## Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

A possible limitation in this study is the use of retrospective reports to examine the division of childcare and household tasks in the family of origin. With retrospective reports, there is a large lapse of time in assessing the parenting behaviors in the family of origin and thus they might give reports based on memories that have faded over time and are more likely to be prone to error. Furthermore, the participants' reports of the past may be biased if their responses about the past are influenced by what is going on now.

However, a longitudinal study of this question also comes with limitations. One such limitation is that the longitudinal study of this question would take at least twenty or more years to gather. Since this was a preliminary study, results from this study can be used to justify the time involved in conducting a future longitudinal analysis of the same question. In fact, future research might find longitudinal reports most beneficial because it might provide the most consistent data since it would evaluate parenting behaviors in the family of origin as they are occurring.

## Overall Summary

This study provides preliminary support for intergenerational transmission of parenting behaviors. Participants who responded that they are more egalitarian in their division of childcare tasks also responded that their parents had been more egalitarian in their division of childcare tasks. This is important today considering that while fathers' participation in childcare activities has increased in recent years (Coltrane, 1996; Pleck, 1987), mothers continue to provide more childcare than fathers (Blair & Lichter, 1991). Thus this study gives important information for how egalitarian parenting can occur in the future. It demonstrates that socialization in the family context is an important factor in egalitarian parenting. As parents model more egalitarian parenting behaviors, their children, as adults, will model similar behavior in their own families. That is, men and women will begin to parent more equally as they are raised in families that model egalitarian parenting behaviors.



APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender: Male Female

3. Ethnic background (check which best describes you):

☐ American Indian                      ☐ Asian-American  
☐ Black/African American           ☐ Caucasian  
☐ Hispanic/Latino  
☐ Other (please specify)

<u>      </u> Eighth grade or less	<u>      </u> 4 yr college- B.A./B.S. degree
<u>      </u> Some high school	<u>      </u> Some graduate courses
<u>      </u> High school diploma/G.E.D.	<u>      </u> Graduate degree (M.A./M.S. or higher)

6. Are you employed? Yes No

Job title \_\_\_\_\_  
Hours per week \_\_\_\_\_

9. If your spouse is employed, please enter his/her job title and approximately how many hours he/she works a week:

Job title \_\_\_\_\_  
Hours per week \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Never Married                      ☐ Divorced  
☐ Married                                ☐ Remarried  
☐ Other (please specify):

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12. If you checked yes to having any children, do you have at least one child with the person that you are married to?

☐ Yes ☐ No

13. Please list the age and gender of child(ren) from spouse with whom you are currently married?

Age:  Gender:

14. Were your biological parents married and living together during the first 18 years of your life?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Please estimate total household income(optional):

<input type="checkbox"/> Under \$15,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$45,000 - \$54,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 - \$24,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$55,000 - \$64,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$34,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$65,000 - \$74,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000 - \$44,999	<input type="checkbox"/> Over \$75,000

APPENDIX B

ITEMS FROM THE DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD AND CHILDCARE TASKS  
SCALE

ITEMS FROM THE DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD AND CHILDCARE TASKS  
SCALE

1. Vacuuming
2. Mopping
3. Sweeping
4. Dusting
5. Cleaning bathroom
6. Making beds
7. Picking up child(ren)'s toys
8. Tidying living room
9. Hanging up clothes
10. Cooking dinner
11. Washing dishes
12. Putting dishes away
13. Wiping down kitchen counters
14. Shopping for food
15. Doing Laundry
16. Ironing
17. Arranging babysitters for my child(ren)
18. Taking my child(ren) to the doctor
19. Cleaning up after my child(ren)
20. Preparing lunch for my child(ren)
21. Caring for my child(ren) when ill
22. Combed or brushed my child(ren)'s hair
23. Kissing my child(ren) goodnight
24. Soothing my child(ren) when they are upset at a friend  
or sibling
25. Consoling my child(ren) when they are physically hurt
26. Helping to calm my child(ren)'s school related fears
27. Reading a bedtime story to my child(ren)
28. Comforting my child(ren) when awakened by a nightmare
29. Helping my child(ren) to dress
30. Driving my child(ren) to school and/or extracurricular  
activities
31. Helping my child(ren) to bathe

## APPENDIX C

### ITEMS FROM THE MALE ROLE NORMS SCALE

#### ITEMS FROM THE MALE ROLE NORMS SCALE

1. Success in his work has to be a man's central goal in this life.
2. When a man is feeling a little pain he should try not to let it show very much.
3. It bothers me when a man does something that I consider "feminine."
4. The best way for a young man to get the respect of other people is to get a job, take it seriously, and do it well.
5. Nobody respects a man very much who frequently talks about his worries, fears, and problems.
6. A man whose hobbies are cooking, sewing, and going to the ballet probably wouldn't appeal to me.
7. A man owes it to his family to work at the best paying job he can get.
8. A good motto for a man would be "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."
9. It is a bit embarrassing for a man to have a job that is usually filled by a woman.
10. A man should generally work overtime to make more money whenever he has the chance.
11. A man always deserves the respect of his wife and children.
12. I think a young man should try to become physically tough, even if he is not big.
13. Unless he was really desperate, I would probably advise a man to keep looking rather than accept a job as a secretary.

14. It is essential for a man to always have the respect and admiration of everyone who knows him.
15. A man should never back down in the face of trouble.
16. Fists are sometimes the only way to get out of a bad situation.
17. If I heard about a man who was a hairdresser and a gourmet cook, I might wonder how masculine he was.
18. I always like a man who's totally sure of himself.
19. A real man enjoys a bit of danger now and then.
20. I think it's extremely good for a boy to be taught to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of the younger children.
21. A man should always think everything out coolly and logically, and have rational reasons for everything he does.
22. In some kinds of situations a man should be ready to use his fists, even if his wife or his girlfriend would object.
23. I might find it a little silly or embarrassing if a male friend of mine cried over a sad love scene in a movie.
24. A man should always try to project an air of confidence even if he really doesn't feel confident inside.
25. A man should always refuse to get into a fight, even if there seems to be no way to avoid it.
26. A man must stand on his own two feet and never depend on other people to help him to do things.



## APPENDIX D

### ITEMS FROM THE FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

ITEMS FROM THE FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

When I was a child:

1. I looked to my father as a role model.
2. I spent a lot of time with my father.
3. I maintained a steady relationship with my father.
4. I trusted my father.
5. It was easy to talk to my father about a problem.
6. I was confident that my father would give help when I needed it.
7. I was close to my father.
8. It was easy to talk to my father about a school problem.
9. It was easy to communicate with my father.
10. My father understood me.
11. My father listened to me.
12. My father was caring.
13. I respected my father.
14. I valued my father's opinion.
15. I admired my father.
16. I desired to be like my father.

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