1987

Influences on paternal attitudes toward child rearing an exploratory investigation

Sandra Kantor-Fish

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INFLUENCES ON PATERNAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILD REARING: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION

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

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

by
Sandra Kantor-Fish
August 1987
INFLUENCES ON PATERNAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILD REARING: An EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

To determine the effect of maternal employment, socio-economic status, ethnicity, social support, and previous socialization experiences on paternal attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities, 163 adult fathers with children ranging in age from 2 to 15 years, completed a 30-item questionnaire. In order to compare attitudes of fathers from different ethnic backgrounds, 70 Caucasian, 32 Black, 55 Hispanic, and 6 "other" race fathers were recruited from public facilities for participation. While basic demographic variables differed between the ethnic groups, their attitudes and orientation to the father role were more similar than dissimilar. Across all of the groups, egalitarianism in parental responsibility was expressed. Irrespective of race, varying levels of maternal employment, socioeconomic status, and social support had no significant impact on fathers' attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities. Subjects who reported having emotionally unavailable fathers report spending significantly more time with their children than subjects who had emotionally available fathers, p<.00001.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my thesis committee chair person, Dr. Chuck Hoffman for his continued support and confidence in me as I worked on this research. To my husband Garry and son Matthew, thank you for your complete commitment to me as I pursued my educational goals. Your loyalty provided me with inspiration and motivation to complete the task. Finally, I wish to thank my special friend Sally Johnson for her technical support and secretarial assistance in preparation of this thesis.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The social structure of the American family and the differing roles family members assume has been a major focus of research and public discussion in the recent past (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Lamb, 1981; Nye, 1976; Pleck, 1985; Sagi & Sharon, 1984). The objective of most familial research up to this point has been to provide descriptive information to aid in the understanding of mother-child interactions and relationships (Sagi & Sharon, 1984). Unfortunately, for many years the father's role in the family was largely overlooked or ignored due to a belief by many theorists that the father's role in the family and child development was secondary to that of the mother (Hanson & Bozett, 1985). It is interesting to note that when fathering research was first initiated, researchers began by studying the effects of father absence on different aspects of child development, an area studied years earlier by investigators of maternal deprivation (Belsky, 1981). Only recently has the object of inquiry included the relative importance of fathers' positive contributions to child development and home life. By attending to the potential influence fathers have in the family, researchers have begun to demonstrate ways in which variables may interact to influence father involvement with children.
Prior to addressing the factors which may be involved in influencing father participation in child care, a brief discussion of the evolution of traditional family roles is warranted.

Any attempt to describe or explain the current status of fathers in American culture would be difficult to understand without a clear perspective of the historical and social context of the father role. Giveans and Robinson (1985) suggest that historically, men and women shared both economic and child rearing responsibilities in this country until the emergence of the Industrial Revolution. Role transitions which occurred during this period relegated household chores and child rearing responsibilities to the mother and economic responsibilities to the father. Parsons and Bales (1955) reflect on this by suggesting that the role that each family member assumes is determined by a differential power structure. According to this theory, the father assumes the most powerful position of task leader, while the mother assumes the less powerful position of socio-emotional facilitator. Thus, fathers became traditionally associated with the economic provider role, while mothers focused their attention on their children and home life (Fein, 1978; Allan, 1985). Such a distinction in roles permeated the fabric of American culture in such a way as to become the traditional mode of parental behavioral responsibilities.
This trend in the allocation of parental responsibilities continued, basically uninterrupted for decades, until the emergence of a different social ideology (Hanson & Bozett, 1985). During the decades of the 1960's and 1970's, the American culture experienced a transformation of social consciousness which led to the development of the Women's Liberation Movement. In response to the changing attitudes concerning the needs of women in the current culture, political action resulted in the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. While developed primarily for the benefit of women, such political action and legislation perhaps had its greatest impact on the entire family. For example, one consequence of the movement toward sexual equality has been an increase in the number of men and women who have begun to challenge the previously well established traditional family roles of economic provider and child care provider (Giveans & Robinson, 1985).

Based on the historical considerations outlined, it is reasonable to believe that fathers may experience a concomitant change in their attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing responsibilities due to the social changes occurring in our culture. As Fein (1978) suggests, men are both psychologically and physically capable of participating in a broad range of parenting behaviors, and therefore should not feel limited to the traditional role of economic provider. The possibility of fathers assuming
more responsibility for instrumental and expressive tasks within the family system demonstrates the cultural development of a new family structure (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981; Lamb, 1981). Such an "emergent" perspective entails an equitable sharing of responsibility for child rearing tasks which is independent of ascribed roles based on the parent's gender. Hoffman (1977) points out that as sex roles continue to converge, sex-based differences in child rearing patterns will diminish. The multitude of social changes occurring in our culture today certainly indicates the need for an adaptation to such an "emergent" perspective on child care.

Unfortunately, only a minimal amount of research has been conducted in relation to developing a more thorough understanding of paternal attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing responsibilities in families with school age children. Only recently have the variables which may interact to influence paternal behaviors become the object of inquiry to researchers interested in child development and family functioning. Such factors as maternal employment, socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity, social support, and previous socialization experiences have been identified as possible mediators of father participation in child care (1979; Lamb, 1981; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, in press; Lamb, in press; Osborne & Morris, 1982; Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1979). Following is a review of the
literature relevant to the contemporary status of paternal attitudes and behaviors in the United States, with special emphasis on the manner in which the aforementioned factors may effect father involvement in child care. The discussion will be divided into the following categories: maternal employment/socioeconomic status, ethnicity, social support, and previous socialization experiences.

Maternal Employment/Socioeconomic Status

One of the most important outcomes of the movement toward sexual equality has been the increase in the number of women in the paid labor force, thereby effecting familial SES (Osborne & Morris, 1982). Within recent years, paid employment among women has become the rule rather than the exception. Data provided by the United States Census Bureau (1983) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1985) indicate that paid employment among married women with children under the age of six increased from 2.5% in 1960 to 53.5% in 1985. Even more intriguing are the figures provided for married women with children between the ages of 6 and 17. In 1960 approximately 4% of mothers with school age children were in the paid labor force. However, by 1985 the figure had increased dramatically to 69.9%. Recently, when the labor force participation rates were analyzed by presence and age of children, and ethnic status, the following employment patterns
emerged. In 1985, the proportion of all employed women with school age children was 69.8% (Caucasian), 70.9% (Black), and 58.5% (Hispanic) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1985). Another important statistic is the proportion of all married couples in which both spouses are employed, compared to those in which the husband is the primary economic provider. In 1981, 51.8% were dual earner couples, with husbands being the sole provider in only 23.6% of the families (Pleck, 1985). Such information is indicative of continued trend toward greater sexual equality in the economic-provider role in the family which may be attributed to the changing social milieu of the past 20 years. Furthermore, the trend for mothers to obtain employment outside of the home raises an important issue regarding the traditional division of parental responsibilities in the family. Specifically, what effect does maternal employment have on paternal attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing responsibilities?

Based on the sociological concept of reciprocal roles and distributive justice, Lewis (1986) suggests that men should reevaluate and adjust their roles to compliment the changing demands placed on the woman in the family, such as when she is employed outside of the home. Therefore, the recent influx of women into the labor force should have a tremendous impact on the allocation of parental responsibilities within the family. Ideally a logical
result of women entering the labor force, thereby having less time to allocate to child care, would be for their spouses to compensate by increasing their participation in household tasks and child care (Gecas, 1976).

Current research suggests that maternal employment appears to have an impact on the attitudes and behaviors of fathers toward child care responsibilities in the home (Bradley, 1985). For example, different studies have consistently demonstrated that husbands do increase the amount of time they spend involved in certain family-oriented activities when their wives are employed either full or part time (Bahr, 1974; Baruch & Barnett, 1981; Beckett & Smith, 1981; Ericksen, Yancey, & Ericksen, 1979; Hoffman, 1974; Osborne & Morris, 1982; Russell, 1982; Walker & Woods, 1976). However, when husbands do increase their involvement in family work in response to their wives' employment, the increase is virtually insignificant in comparison to the relative amount of time mothers spend involved in such tasks. For example, while controlling for maternal employment, wives still spend from three to six times as many hours involved in child care as do their husbands (Carlson, 1984). Furthermore, paternal participation tends to be limited to activities traditionally defined as male oriented, such as recreational entertainment and morning and bedtime routines (Baruch & Barnett, 1981). Although such results are indicative of a trend
toward greater father participation in the home, they also exemplify the traditional division of child care responsibilities between mothers and fathers.

In addition to the impact of maternal employment on fathers' behaviors and attitudes toward child care, there is evidence that social class factors play a contributing role in determining father involvement with children (Bradley, 1985). Reviews by various researchers suggest that fathers from working class backgrounds display more traditional attitudes and behaviors toward child care than fathers from middle or upper class socioeconomic conditions (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981; Lamb, 1982; Lambert, Hamers, & Frasure-Smith, 1979; Gecas, 1976; Osborne & Morris, 1982).

In sum, it appears that maternal employment and familial SES have an impact on fathers' attitudes and behaviors toward child care. Husbands of employed wives spend more time involved in family work than husbands whose wives are not employed outside of the home. However, irrespective of maternal employment, women still assume responsibility for the majority of primary child care tasks in the family.

In recognition of the effect of maternal employment and SES on paternal involvement in the home, it is unfortunate that many studies on fathering have neglected to control for these influential variables (Bradley, 1985).
Clearly, more attention should be given to including such variables when designing studies of father participation in child care.

**Ethnicity**

Very little is known concerning the effect of ethnicity on fathers' attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing responsibilities, thereby limiting our knowledge of the similarities or differences between fathers of different ethnic backgrounds. A primary reason for the lack of information is that the majority of fathering research has focused on middle-class Anglo fathers, while neglecting the possible unique characteristics of fathers from different ethnic backgrounds such as Blacks and Hispanics (Bradley, 1985). Additionally, oftentimes when research has been conducted with ethnic minority families, insufficient care has been employed by the researchers with regard to certain methodological issues. For example, socioeconomic status, which has been shown to be an important variable or predictor of paternal attitudes (Handel, 1970) frequently has not been adequately controlled for. Oftentimes, when socioeconomic status has been taken into consideration, only families from the lower end of the economic continuum are investigated, thereby limiting the generalizability of the results to other groups within the particular ethnic culture being studied. As Price-Bonham and Skeen (1979) point out, due
to the disproportionate number of studies utilizing low socioeconomic status families, a distorted perception has been created concerning families from all socioeconomic levels within a particular ethnic group.

Sample size is an additional methodological issue often overlooked in research designed to demonstrate similarities and/or differences in attitudes and behaviors of fathers from different ethnic backgrounds (see Pleck, 1985; Robinson, 1977). Frequently, the size of the ethnic minority sample is quite small in relation to the comparison group, thereby limiting the generalizability of the results. To increase the probability of identifying actual differences or highlighting similarities between fathers from ethnically diverse groups, more attention should be given toward obtaining representative sample sizes for each group studied.

Despite such methodological flaws, there exists a small body of research which provides useful descriptive information relating to men's perceptions of fatherhood among fathers from different ethnic backgrounds. Following is a review of what is known about the fathers' relationship to the family within the context of ethnic status. The discussion will begin with a description of Caucasian fathers' attitudes and behaviors toward child care, proceeded by similar segments on Black and Hispanic fathers. Finally, methodologically sound studies which
have compared and contrasted attitudes of fathers from different ethnic backgrounds will be discussed.

**Caucasian Fathers**

Through investigating Caucasian fathers' perceptions of the division of child care responsibilities in the home, researchers have found evidence to suggest that while fathers are becoming increasingly more egalitarian in their attitudes, there still exists the traditional division of child care roles in the family (Baruch & Barnett, 1981; Gecas, 1976; Kellerman & Katz, 1978; Osborne & Morris, 1982). Such studies have found that when fathers are requested to attribute caretaking responsibilities to either the father, mother, or both parents equally, they usually assign the majority of primary child care tasks to the mother (e.g., physical caretaking, emotional support), and the recreational/entertainment activities to the father. Tasks perceived as equally shared parental responsibilities include educational guidance and disciplinary measures (Kellerman & Katz, 1978; Gecas, 1976). Interestingly, even in families identified as "non-traditional" with respect to the division of child care roles, fathers spend significantly less amount of time involved in primary child care tasks than do mothers, even though their attitudes suggest an egalitarian approach to family roles (Russell, 1982). Such results are supported by
interview data which have consistently demonstrated such differences in the type of parental activity enacted (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Kotelchuck, 1975; Rendina & Dickerscheid, 1976; Richards, Dunn, & Antonis, 1975; Russell, 1983). While such results are indicative of a slight increase in paternal involvement in the home, they also suggest that the traditional division of child care roles between husbands and wives still exists.

However interesting, the results of several of these studies must be interpreted with caution due to certain methodological insufficiencies associated with them. For example, in two of the studies reviewed, there was no indication of the sample size used (Gecas, 1976; Osborne & Morris, 1982). Additionally, Kellerman & Katz (1978) used only nine fathers as subjects in their research, whereas Baruch and Barnett (1981) utilized only highly educated upper middle-class professional fathers in their study design. Furthermore, in the Osborne & Morris (1982) study, the majority of the interviews were conducted solely with the mother, therefore the strong possibility exists that the mothers reported biased perceptions of their spouses help. Instead of providing an accurate representation of the proportion of time fathers spend interacting with their children, the results reflect the mothers impression of being helped by the father. Based on such problems, it becomes evident that more care needs to be employed by
researchers while designing studies of father participation in the home. Special emphasis needs to be placed on the size and type of the subject samples to be used in order to create a more thorough foundation of knowledge regarding paternal attitudes and behaviors of Caucasian fathers.

Black Fathers

Traditionally, the Black family in America has been described as primarily matriarchal (Glick, 1981). According to government figures, approximately 41% of all Black families are headed by females (United States Bureau of Census, 1983b). The stereotypical image of the role of the Black father has mainly emphasized deficits (e.g., absenteeism, aloof personality, unstable family ties, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, etc.), while neglecting possible positive attributes (Connor, 1986). Due to the narrow focus of most research on Black families, little is known about the division of familial responsibilities between husbands and wives in intact functioning family units. With the recent development of interest in the study of all fathers, several researchers have challenged the stereotypical image of Black fathers on the grounds of inaccuracy due to the dated nature of the investigations and methodological problems associated with them (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 1982).

Several studies designed to explore the degree to
which Black fathers participate in child rearing activities and their attitudes toward the father role display results suggesting an egalitarian approach to fathering (Connor, 1986; McAdoo, 1986). For example, when fathers were asked who makes the major child rearing decisions in the family, over two-thirds expressed mutual decision making with their spouses. Results from questions related to activities between fathers and their children suggest that Black fathers spend a significant amount of time interacting with their children (McAdoo, 1986). Approximately 50% of the fathers reported spending two or more hours each day involved in activities with their offspring.

Unfortunately, several problems exist with regard to certain methodological features of these studies. For example, both researchers relied on samples comprised of middle-class Black fathers, therefore limiting the generalizability of the results to Black fathers from different socioeconomic environments. Furthermore, McAdoo (1986) did not define the type of activities the fathers in the sample did when they spent time with their children. Such information would be useful in order to determine if Black fathers differ from White fathers in the type of interactions they have with their children.
Hispanic Fathers

Similar gaps in our knowledge exist with regard to the roles of fathers from yet another ethnic minority group, Hispanics (Benokraitis, 1985). In the traditional Mexican-American family, patriarchal authority has long been considered the norm, with fathers assuming the dominant position of economic provider and mothers assuming the role of expressive caretaker/nurturer (Hawkes & Taylor, 1975; Lynn, 1974). However, as in the case of Black families, researchers have begun to challenge this stereotypical image of Hispanic families.

In a study designed to determine if a differential power structure actually exists with regard to attitudes and behaviors of Hispanic parents, Hawkes and Taylor (1975) provide evidence to dispel the widely accepted belief of husband dominance. Among the 76 farm labor families studied, egalitarianism was by far the most common approach in both action taking and decision making. The researchers suggest that the parental display of equitable responsibility toward various child care tasks may be partially attributed to the increasing acculturation of Hispanics into the Anglo culture, and to an increase in maternal employment among Hispanic families. However, the results of this study may not accurately reflect paternal attitudes due to the methodology employed. Since all of the data were obtained from interviews with mothers only,
the possibility of biased responses must be recognized. While the results suggest that Hispanic mothers perceive certain familial tasks as egalitarian, unfortunately we cannot speculate on the fathers' attitudes, thereby limiting the meaningfulness of the results.

While the aforementioned study was indicative of egalitarianism in Hispanic family roles, research utilizing stronger methodological designs has not found evidence to support this finding. For example, Bronstein's (1984) systematic observations of 78 parent-child dyads in Hispanic families revealed considerable differences between maternal and paternal child rearing behaviors. Results similar to those found in investigations utilizing Anglo subjects, Bronstein found that mothers spend significantly more time involved in primary caretaking activities than fathers. Furthermore, as in the case of Anglo fathers, Hispanic fathers' interactions with their children were primarily limited to recreational activities. As Falicov (1982) suggests, such results are an indication that the traditional division of labor still exists in Hispanic families.

Comparative Research

While the majority of fathering research has focused on separate ethnic groups, several studies have compared paternal attitudes and behaviors between fathers of dif-
ferent ethnic backgrounds. Price-Bonham and Skeen (1979) conducted a study to compare and contrast family characteristics and attitudes toward the father role between Caucasian and Black fathers while controlling for socioeconomic status. The results suggest that while demographic characteristics differ between the groups of fathers, their general attitudes and orientation toward the father role are more similar than different. Statistically significant differences were found to exist between groups of fathers for only three of the child rearing items studied. For example, it was more important for Black fathers to help their children develop athletic skills, whereas it was more important for White fathers to help their children with school work. Black fathers did not differ from White fathers on their attitudes toward the following: helping with household tasks, disciplining children, participating in activities with their children, or being nurturant toward their children.

Similar results were obtained in a descriptive comparative study of Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic lower and working class families (Bartz & Levine, 1978). The results provide evidence that the fathers did not differ in their basic orientation to child rearing irrespective of their ethnicity or social class. However, it is difficult to assess what effect ethnicity had on paternal attitudes toward specific child rearing items as the researchers
clustered different child care variables together, without providing adequate definitions for the factors comprising each category. Such categorical information would be useful in order to discern if differences do exist in parenting styles across ethnic groups.

In sum, the aforementioned review of the literature relevant to the effect of ethnic status on fathers' attitudes and behaviors toward child care, suggests that the traditional division of labor still exists in families from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Although fathers are beginning to assume more responsibility for child care in the home, mothers are still regarded as the primary caretakers. Across all ethnic groups, the one area in which fathers appear to participate in the most is the recreational/entertainment role. While such descriptive information is useful, there is still a great deal to be learned about fathering in ethnically different groups. Intracultural research is needed in order to assess and evaluate fathers' contributions to the family and home life as well as to elucidate changes occurring in the fathers' role among ethnically diverse groups (Bartz & Levine, 1978; Baumrind, 1980; Connor, 1986; Nye, 1976). Information provided by such research could be useful in a variety of ways. For example, it would provide a foundation of knowledge regarding parenting styles across ethnic groups which could be used for developing future research
agendas, as well as aiding parent educators and family therapists.

**Social Support**

A definite weakness of current research on paternal involvement in child care is the insufficient attention given to social support systems which may act as a mediating variable and viable predictor of father-child interactions (Belsky, 1981; Cochran & Brassard, 1979; Hoffman & Nye, 1975; Lamb, 1981; Lamb, in press; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, in press). This issue is particularly relevant to research focusing on fathers from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Due to the differing composition and utilization of social support networks among Anglo, Black, and Hispanic families (Jacobsen, 1986; Lynn, 1974; McAdoo, 1978), researchers need to take this into consideration when designing studies of factors which may influence father participation in the family (Jones, 1985).

In both Hispanic and Black cultures there exists a strong supportive network comprised of relatives and friends (Lynn, 1974). The basic support provided by such networks is primarily emotional but may also be economic in nature. When comparing Blacks and Whites, Hayes and Mindel (1973) found the extended social support network to be a more salient feature of Black families than Caucasian families.
Addressing the issue of social support as a possible influential factor in father involvement, Lein (1979) found evidence which demonstrates that employed mothers and fathers have systematically different social support networks. For example, the social support available to fathers in this sample was found to be comprised of co-workers and relatively few close friends. Conversely, women's social networks were much broader and were found to include friends, neighbors, and relatives. Lein suggests that the differing composition of men and women's social support systems may be partially attributed to the different demands placed on men and women in their traditional sex roles. As a result, traditional beliefs and assumptions regarding paternal behavior are perpetuated through such networks. Based on this conclusion, one may assume that a partial explanation for men's ambivalence at becoming more involved in child care stems from a lack of emotional support for such nontraditional behavior. Perhaps if fathers were to receive social support from a more diverse group of people (e.g., friends, neighbors, co-workers, spouse, and relatives), and this support provided reinforcement for their involvement in child care, a possible result would be an increase in father-child interactions. In a demonstration of this effect, Riley (1983) found that fathers' social networks affects their level of involvement in child care. Specifically, the
strength and size of the supportive relationships were found to be the best predictors of father involvement in caregiving functions.

Clearly, the social support systems of both traditional and nontraditional fathers needs further investigation, as does the effect of ethnicity on social support networks. However, based upon what we do know, it may be hypothesized that fathers who perceive that they receive emotional support from significant others in their lives, will express more egalitarian attitudes toward child care responsibilities than will fathers who do not receive such support.

Early Socialization Experiences

Social learning theory suggests that fathers acquire their attitudes toward parental roles from models provided to them during the process of early childhood socialization (Nye, 1976). Based on this theoretical assumption, one would expect fathers of this generation to display attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing consistent with their fathers role enactment. In order to ascertain whether a relationship exists between fathering styles across generations, several researchers have compared fathers behaviors with their fathers' behaviors when they were in their active parenting years (Radin & Sagi, 1982; Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1979). The results indicate only a
minimal correlation between fathers' behaviors across generations. This lack of homogeneity in child rearing practices suggests that perhaps fathers compensate for the lack of availability of their own fathers when they were growing up by being more actively involved in their children's lives. Soltz (1967) suggests that fathers may modify their child rearing practices as a response to the characteristics, values, beliefs, or practices expressed by their own fathers when they were young. Based on this perspective, it may be expected that fathers of today's generation who had uninvolved fathers during childhood will express more active involvement with their children in their current living arrangements.

**Purpose of the Study**

The foregoing discussion of relevant research has demonstrated the importance of attending to a large number of variables which may influence father involvement in the home. Such factors as maternal employment, the socio-economic status of the family, ethnic background, social support systems, and previous socialization experiences have been recognized as potential mediating variables in paternal involvement in child care. Unfortunately though, many researchers interested in father involvement have not adequately controlled for the influence of such variables in their methodological design, thereby limiting the meaningfulness of the results which they obtain.
The purpose of the present investigation is to help aid in the understanding of how such diverse factors influence paternal attitudes and behaviors toward child care responsibilities among fathers from different ethnic and social backgrounds. To date, this will be the first attempt by any researcher to integrate the previously mentioned mediating variables into a single study design. Such an approach will be useful in determining how such factors may interact to effect paternal attitudes toward various child rearing responsibilities.

Based on the review of the literature, the following hypotheses will be addressed in this investigation:

1. Fathers whose wives are employed outside of the home will express more egalitarian attitudes toward child care responsibilities than fathers whose wives are unemployed.

2. Middle class fathers will express more egalitarian attitudes toward child care roles than will fathers from lower socioeconomic conditions.

3. Fathers who perceive receiving support from significant others in their lives for their enactment of the father role will express more egalitarian attitudes toward child care responsibilities than will fathers who do not receive such support.

4. Fathers of this generation who had fathers who were
emotionally unavailable to them when they were young, will report spending more time involved with their children today than their fathers did with them.

It should be noted that due to the lack of previous research on the effect of ethnic status on paternal involvement, no hypotheses will be postulated regarding ethnic differences. This issue will be addressed post-hoc in order to determine if differences in paternal attitudes toward child care responsibilities differ between ethnic groups.
Subjects

Questionnaires were distributed to 1,905 fathers over an 11 month period of time from August 1986 through June 1987. Of these, 163 (8.5%) were returned completed. The participants were 163 adult male fathers, ranging in age from 22 to 75 years old (mean age 36.6 years). In order to assess the effect of ethnicity on paternal attitudes, 70 Caucasian, 32 Black, 55 Hispanic, and 6 fathers representing "other" ethnic groups were recruited for the study. Table 1 provides the following demographic information for each ethnic group: mean age, marital status, education, socioeconomic status, and average number of children.
Table 1
Demographic Attributes by Ethnicity

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<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Caucasian^a</th>
<th>Black^b</th>
<th>Hispanic^c</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age of subjects (mean years)</td>
<td>35.77</td>
<td>35.23</td>
<td>38.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital status (observed frequency)</td>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>Cohabiting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education (observed frequency)**</td>
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<td>Partial high school</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial college</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/professional training</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic status (mean scores)**</td>
<td>44.77</td>
<td>35.89</td>
<td>33.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children*</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Information from the six subject who responded to "Other" ethnicity are not included in this table. \(^a n = 70. \(^b n = 32. \(^c n = 55. \(^p < .0001. \)**p < .00001.
Subjects were selected on the basis that they were fathers of at least one child ranging in age from 2 to 15 years old at the time of the study. Natural fathers and step fathers were both included in the sample. To maximize the potential of locating fathers representative of different occupational and social backgrounds, subject recruitment occurred at a variety of public facilities and institutions in the inland southern California region (see Table 2).

Table 2
Subject Selection Facilities

C.S.U.S.B. Children's Center
C.S.U.S.B. Grounds/Maintenance
Central City Mall
City of San Bernardino Department of Public Works
City of San Bernardino Fire Department
City of San Bernardino Police Department
First Christian Church
Gemco Department Store
Martin Luther King Elementary School
Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
Our Lady of Guadalupe Elementary School
Ramona Alessandro Elementary School
Materials

A 30-item self-administered Father Participation questionnaire, developed by the author, was the testing instrument used (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was designed to measure paternal attitudes and beliefs toward various child rearing responsibilities and social support systems. The questions involving child care responsibilities were derived from previous research which classified various child care tasks into five distinct categories along with the traditional classification of which parent (or both) should be responsible for administering them (Kellerman & Katz, 1978). Responses to this section of the questionnaire were recorded by having each subject circle a number which corresponded to their attitudes concerning the subject of each statement or question on a 7-point Likert type scale. Additionally, items pertaining to demographic, ethnic, and socioeconomic features of the subject sample were incorporated into the survey. Included in this section were questions cited from Hollingshead's (1976) Four-Factor Social Index which has been shown to provide a reliable and accurate method of assessing familial income without directly addressing the income issue (Gottfried, 1985). Finally, two open-ended questions were included which were designed to elicit
responses regarding paternal feelings toward two issues. The first question required fathers to minimally discuss at least one area of their relationship with their child(ren) that they identify as enjoyable. The remaining question was concerned with what fathers would most like to change in their relations with their child(ren).

Procedure
At the outset of the investigation, the individuals in charge of each of the facilities were contacted regarding permission for the use of their facilities for subject selection and participation. Due to regulatory restrictions or time constraints, the researcher did not have direct access to most potential research participants. When this occurred, time was spent briefing the particular individual who assumed responsibility for administering the surveys (e.g., police detective, priest, crew supervisor, etc.). Items discussed during the briefing sessions included the purpose of the study, voluntary subject participation, the issues of confidentiality and anonymity of personal responses, and the issuance of the debriefing statement and copy of results form (Appendix B), once the questionnaires were completed. Although this strategy was not a part of the original methodological design of the study, it provided an alternative method of recruiting participants from otherwise
unobtainable facilities.

At several locations, such as the elementary schools, packets containing questionnaires were sent home with children to have their fathers complete and return via their children. When this strategy was employed, a standardized introductory cover letter (Appendix C) was attached to each questionnaire along with the debriefing statement and copy of results form. Each packet contained one blank envelope for the fathers to return their completed surveys in. This measure was employed as an additional way to insure anonymity and confidentiality of responses.
Hypothesis One

In order to determine if a significant difference exists in attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities between fathers whose spouse/partners are employed and those who are not employed outside of the home, a t-test was computed across combined responsibility scores for five questions. Of the 157 subjects who responded to the question concerning maternal employment, 74 (47.1%) had employed spouse/partners, while 83 (52.9%) had unemployed spouse/partners. The t-test on mean child rearing responsibility scores between the groups revealed no difference in egalitarianism, \( t(1, 155) = .15, p > .05 \). Although the results were not statistically significant, as reflected in Table 3 it can be seen that the mean scores for attitudes toward child care responsibilities reflect slightly more egalitarianism among fathers of employed versus nonemployed wives. Overall, regardless of the employment status of the spouse, fathers displayed very egalitarian attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities. However, the analysis did not support hypothesis one.
Table 3
Mean Responsibility Scores by Race and Maternal Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian(^a)</td>
<td>19.56</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black(^b)</td>
<td>20.50</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic(^c)</td>
<td>20.09</td>
<td>19.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total(^d)</td>
<td>19.86</td>
<td>19.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The combined results (total) include subjects belonging in the "Other" ethnic category. Scores could range from 5 to 35. High scores indicate "Father's" responsibility, medium scores indicate "Both parents" equally, and low scores indicate "Mother's" responsibility. \(^a_n\) = 69, \(^b_n\) = 30, \(^c_n\) = 53, \(^d_n\) = 157.

Similar results were obtained when each individual ethnic group (excluding "other" due to the small sample size) was analyzed separately for the same variables. Across each of the groups no differences were found in attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities while controlling for maternal employment, (Caucasian, \(t(1, 67) = -1.06, p>.05\); Black, \(t(1, 28) = .31, p>.05\); Hispanic, \(t(1, 51) = .55, p>.05\)) (see Table 3).

For ease of understanding, the means from the five
questions which were combined to determine the overall responsibility toward child rearing scores, are listed in Table 4. As reflected in this table, it can be observed that while fathers expressed egalitarian attitudes toward each of the parental tasks, fathers attribute slightly more maternal responsibility to physical caretaking, and more paternal responsibility to recreational activities.

Table 4

Mean Responsibility Scores All Subjects Combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental task</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical care</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational tasks</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational guidance</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The mean scores reflect responses from all of the fathers combined. Individual scores ranged from 1 to 7. A score of 4 indicates shared parental responsibility. \(^{a_n} = 163\).
Hypothesis Two

A one-way analysis of variance was computed (for all of the subjects combined) in order to determine if a significant difference exists in fathers' attitudes toward basic child care responsibilities across different socioeconomic (SES) groups. Using Hollingshead's (1965) criteria for assessing socioeconomic status, the subjects were divided into five distinct SES groups (low, low-middle, middle, upper-middle, upper). It should be noted that the five questions aimed at determining child rearing responsibilities were summed for each subject in order to come up with a "total responsibility" score for each participant. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities between the different SES groups, $F(4, 144) = 1.72, p > .05$. Based on these results, no support was found for hypothesis two. However, as reflected in Table 5, although not significant, it can be seen that fathers from low SES conditions display more traditional attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities than do fathers from higher SES conditions.
Table 5

Mean Responsibility Scores by Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Status</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>20.42</td>
<td>19.60</td>
<td>19.57</td>
<td>19.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>20.60</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>20.56</td>
<td>20.31</td>
<td>18.91</td>
<td>21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total\textsuperscript{d}</td>
<td>17.75</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>19.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The combined results (total) includes subjects belonging in the "Other" ethnic category. Scores could range from 5 to 35. High scores indicate "Father's" responsibility, medium scores indicate "Both parents" equally, and low scores indicate "Mother's" responsibility. \( a_n = 70 \), \( b_n = 26 \), \( c_n = 48 \), \( d_n = 149 \).

Additional analyses were carried out to test this hypothesis for each individual ethnic group, excluding the "other" category. Similar nonsignificant results were obtained for each of the groups, (Anglo, \( F(3, 66) = 0.81 \) \( p > 0.05 \); Black, \( F(4, 21) = 1.33 \), \( p > 0.05 \); Hispanic, \( F(4, 43) = 0.58 \), \( p > 0.05 \)) (see Table 5).
Hypothesis Three

Prior to testing what effect social support has on fathers' attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities, separate one-way analyses of variance were computed to determine if fathers from the three ethnic groups differed significantly from one another on their mean social support scores. The analyses revealed no significant differences between the groups for the three mean social support scores (spouse's support, $F(2, 148) = .03, p > .05$; friend's support, $F(2, 148) = 1.58, p > .05$; parental support, $F(2, 148) = 1.13, p > .05$).

To assess the effect of differing social support systems on fathers' attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities, a one-way analysis of variance was computed on combined responsibility scores between fathers who perceive receiving no support, moderate support, and full support. Fathers were asked to respond to three questions regarding the social support they receive for parenting from their spouse/partner, friends, and family. These three individual scores were combined for each father in order to come up with a total social support score. The analysis on all of the ethnic groups combined suggests that differing levels of social support has no effect on fathers' attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities, $F(2, 152) = 1.24, p > .05$ (see Table 6).
Table 6
Mean Responsibility Scores by Ethnicity and Social Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Social support level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>19.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>21.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>20.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The combined results (total) includes subjects belonging in the "Other" ethnic category. Scores could range from 5 to 35. High scores indicate "Father's" responsibility, medium scores indicate "Both parents" equally, and low scores indicate "Mother's" responsibility. Only one Black father reported receiving no social support, therefore this mean score was excluded from the comparison. $^a_n = 67$. $^b_n = 29$. $^c_n = 51$. $^d_n = 153$.

Although not statistically significant, Table 6 demonstrates that those fathers who perceive receiving full support report being more egalitarian in their attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities than do fathers who receive only moderate support or no support.

To ascertain whether ethnicity effects the relation—
ship between social support and paternal attitudes, individual analyses were conducted on the aforementioned variables for each ethnic group (excluding "other"). No significant differences in fathers' attitudes toward child rearing were obtained while controlling for the level of social support and ethnicity [Caucasian, $F(2, 65) = .11, p>.05$; Black, $F(2, 27) = 2.86, p>.05$; Hispanic, $F(2, 49) = .16, p>.05$] (see Table 6).

**Hypothesis Four**

To test the influence of the subjects' fathers' emotional availability on their present level of involvement with their children, a one-way analysis of variance was computed with the subjects' fathers' emotional availability score as the independent variable and the subjects' response to the question "Generally speaking, do you spend less, the same, or more amount of time with your children than your father did with you?" (time score), as the dependent variable. Across all of the ethnic groups combined, a statistically significant difference was found to exist for mean time scores between subjects whose fathers were emotionally unavailable and those who were emotionally available during the subjects' childhood, $F(2, 149) = 16.12, p<.00001$. Specifically, subjects who reported that their fathers were emotionally uninvolved during their childhood report spending "more" time with their children today than their fathers did with them when they were
young. Fathers who report that they spend more time with their children had significantly lower mean father emotional availability scores than fathers who report spending the "same" amount of time with their children as their fathers did, \( t(149) = -5.62, p < .00001 \) (see Table 7). Based on these analyses, support was found for hypotheses four.

Table 7
Mean Emotional Availability Scores by Ethnicity and Current Level of Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Level of involvement^a</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian^b**</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black^c</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic^d^e*</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total^e**</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The combined results (total) include subjects belonging in the "Other" ethnic category. ^Current level of subjects' involvement with children in relation to subjects' fathers' involvement when subjects were children. \(^b_n = 152. \ ^c_n = 69. \ ^d_n = 28. \ ^e_n = 50.\) *\(p < .01. \ **p < .0001.\)

It should be noted that a Pearson chi square
statistic was computed in order to determine if a significant difference exists between ethnic groups in the frequency of responses to the question regarding level of current involvement in relation to their father's involvement. The results suggest that there is no appreciable difference between the three groups of fathers, $\chi^2(4, N = 150) = 1.32, p > .05$.

In order to determine if ethnicity is a factor in relation to the aforementioned variables, a series of one-way analyses of variance were computed for each ethnic group (excluding "others" due to the small sample size). The results of the analyses of Caucasian and Hispanic fathers was similar to the results from all of the ethnic groups combined in that fathers who report spending "more" time involved in child care than their fathers did when they were young had emotionally unavailable fathers during childhood, (Caucasian, $F(2, 66) = 13.33, p < .00001$; Hispanic, $F(2, 47) = 5.07, p < .01$). In contrast, when this analysis was done for Black fathers, no significant difference was found to exist, $F(2, 25) = .94, p > .05$. However, even though the results were not significantly different, the same trend was evident (see Table 7).

**Additional Analyses**

Additional statistical analyses were conducted in order to determine if fathers representing the three
ethnic groups included in this sample are homogenous with respect to demographic attributes. As reflected in Table 1, it can be seen that there are no differences between the groups of fathers on average age or marital status. However, statistically significant differences were found to exist between the ethnic groups on the total number of children in the family, $F(2, 154) = 10.08, p < .0001$; the fathers' highest level of education achieved, $F(2, 154) = 23.87, p < .00001$; and Hollingshead (SES) scores, $F(2, 142) = 23.38, p < .00001$. As Table 1 demonstrates, Caucasian fathers represent families with significantly fewer children than do either Black or Hispanic fathers; have achieved higher educational goals than their ethnic counterparts; and have a higher average SES score than Black or Hispanic fathers do.

Due to the lack of previous research on fathers' attitudes toward various parental roles, and the concomitant dearth of information available on fathers from different ethnic backgrounds, an intensive effort was made in this study to gather and analyze additional information on fathers. While the following discussion of results does not directly relate to any of the hypotheses offered, it will provide additional descriptive information on fathers from different ethnic backgrounds.

All of the subjects, regardless of their ethnicity, were in strong agreement when asked if they believe they
make an important contribution to their children's development. On a 7-point scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree, the mean score for all of the subjects was 6.28, reflecting agreement with the statement. When an analysis of variance was computed on this variable between the groups, no significant differences were obtained, $F(2, 152) = .85, p > .05$.

When asked if being a parent is as important for themselves as it is for their wives/partners, the majority of the subjects strongly agreed. The average score for this question across all of the groups combined was 6.42, reflecting strong agreement. A one-way analysis of variance revealed no difference between the group means for this variable (Caucasian, $M = 6.2$; Black, $M = 6.55$; Hispanic, $M = 6.64$), $F(2, 151) = 2.05, p > .05$.

The subjects' recollection of their fathers' emotional availability during childhood was also analyzed. Across all of the ethnic groups fathers were for the most part "neutral" regarding this issue. On a 7-point scale, the mean score for all of the subjects combined was 4.10. A one-way analysis of variance between the groups found no significant difference between the average scores, (Caucasian, $M = 3.71$; Black, $M = 4.33$; Hispanic, $M = 4.47$), $F(2, 150) = 2.19, p > .05$. However, it is interesting to note that Caucasian fathers reported less paternal emotional availability than did either Black or Hispanic fathers.
Fathers' confidence in their ability to be a good parent was also evaluated. The average combined score for all of the fathers was 6.22, indicating a great deal of confidence in their parenting abilities. A one-way analysis of variance yielded a statistically significant difference in mean "confidence" scores between the ethnic groups, (Caucasian, $M = 5.94$; Black, $M = 6.48$; Hispanic, $M = 6.43$), $F(2, 152) = 4.23, p < .01$. Caucasian fathers differed significantly from Black and Hispanic fathers in that they felt less confident in their ability to be a good parent, $t = 2.33, p < .05$ (Caucasian versus Black), and $t = 2.47, p < .01$ (Caucasian versus Hispanic). However, there was no significant difference between Black and Hispanic fathers on this variable, $t = .24, p > .05$.

Fathers were requested to state their degree of agreement with a statement aimed at determining their level of active daily involvement with their children. A one-way analysis of variance between the three ethnic groups on the active involvement variable produced a statistically significant difference in mean scores, $F(2, 152) = 3.67, p < .05$. Specifically, Caucasian fathers expressed significantly less active involvement with their children compared to Black or Hispanic fathers, $t = 1.91, p < .05$; $t = 2.48, p < .01$, respectively. The mean scores for each of the ethnic groups were 5.54 (Caucasian), 6.06 (Black), and 6.11 (Hispanic).
A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed in order to determine if there is an association between fathers' feelings toward contributing to their child's development and their level of confidence in their parenting abilities. Across all of the ethnic groups combined, a positive relationship was found to exist between the two variables, $R(N=160) = .50, p<.0001$.

To gain a better understanding of the relationship between fathers' attitudes toward child care responsibilities and their actual child care behavior, questions were worded in such a way as to elicit either "ideal" or "actual" responses. A Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a strong positive association between "ideal" and "actual" behavior for all of the ethnic groups combined, $R(N=160) = .55, p<.0001$. Similar analyses were computed for each of the three ethnic groups, yielding similarly significant findings: (Caucasian), $R(N=70) = .46, p<.00001$; (Black), $R(N=31) = .70, p<.00001$; (Hispanic), $R(N=54) = .54, p<.00001$.

Additional analyses of the questions aimed at determining who is actually responsible for child care were carried out while controlling for such factors as race, social support, and maternal employment status. A one-way analysis of variance using race as the independent variable yielded no significant difference between the groups on "actual" responsibility for child care, (Cauca-
sian, $M = 3.39$; Black, $M = 3.55$; Hispanic, $M = 3.47$), $F(2, 153) = .23$, $p>.05$. Similarly, there was no difference in "actual" responsibility scores between fathers representing different levels of social support, (full support, $M = 3.58$; moderate support, $M = 3.33$; no support, $M = 3.06$), $F(2, 152) = 1.95$, $p>.05$. Finally, maternal employment status did not appear to effect "actual" behavior scores, (Caucasian, $M$ employed = 3.44, $M$ not employed = 3.2), $t(61) = -1.07$, $p>.05$; (Black, $M$ employed = 4.10, $M$ not employed = 3.4), $t(28) = -1.8$, $p>.05$; (Hispanic, $M$ employed = 3.73, $M$ not employed = 3.38), $t(52) = -1.15$, $p>.05$.

Fathers were requested to indicate their degree of satisfaction with the division of child care responsibilities in the home. The mean satisfaction score across all of the ethnic groups combined was 5.79, reflecting a great deal of satisfaction with the division of child rearing responsibilities. Results from a one-way analysis of variance looking at mean satisfaction while controlling for ethnicity suggests that there is no significant difference between the groups on this variable, $F(2, 152) = 2.26$, $p>.05$. However, although not significant, it is interesting to observe that Black fathers expressed the greatest amount of satisfaction ($M=6.2$), followed by Hispanics ($M=5.87$), and Caucasians ($M=5.56$).

Fathers were asked to indicate whether they would
like to spend less, the same, or more time involved in child care activities than they currently do. The majority (68%) responded that they would like to increase the amount of time involved, whereas 29% said that they would like for it to stay the same, and only 3% said they would like to spend less time involved in child care activities. The results of a Pearson chi square which was computed for this variable while controlling for race, suggests that there is no difference in the frequencies of responses between Caucasians, Blacks, and Hispanics, $X^2 (4, N=147) = 6.17, p > .05$.

A Pearson chi square on the frequency of responses to the statement "Being a parent is (1) more work than I expected it to be, (2) about what I expected, and (3) more rewarding/satisfying than I expected it to be", produced results which suggest that there is no significant difference in the frequency of responses between the three ethnic groups, $X^2 (4, N=153) = 2.67, p > .05$. It is interesting to observe that the majority of the fathers (60%) reported that it is more rewarding than anticipated, whereas 25% believe the role is what they expected, and only 15% responded that it is more work than they had anticipated.

Two open-ended questions which were included asked fathers to (1) briefly describe at least one thing you really like about your relationship with your child(ren),
and (2) briefly describe at least one thing you would like
to change in your relationship with your child(ren). One
hundred and forty (86%) responded to the first question,
whereas 136 (83%) responded to the second question. While
fathers responded in many different ways to these ques-
tions, an attempt was made to develop categories of re-
sponses so that an analysis could be done to determine if
fathers from the different ethnic groups differed substan-
tially from one another. The eight major themes which
emerged and the percent of responses to the first question
were as follows: (1) the time we spend together, 15%; (2)
the love we share, 22%; (3) watching them grow and
develop, 15%; (4) communication, 21%; (5) friendship, 9%;
(6) the fun we have, 6%; (7) their behavior, 3%; and (8)
"other" reasons, 9%. The results of a Pearson chi square
suggests that there is no significant difference in fre­
quency of responses between the three ethnic groups, \( \chi^2 
(14, N = 140) = 19.81, p>.05. \)

Similarly, responses to the second question were
categorized for comparison. The eight categories of re-
sponses included: (1) change nothing, 16%; (2) spend more
time together, 46%; (3) help them develop more responsibi-
licity, 8%; (4) improve communication, 9%; (5) spend more
money on them, 2%; (6) be more affectionate towards each
other, 2%; (7) their poor behavior, 4%; and (8) "other"
responses, 14%. (Note, due to a rounding error the per-
percentages do not add up to 100%). The results of a Pearson chi square yielded a statistically significant difference in the frequency of responses between the three ethnic groups, $x^2 (14, N = 136) = 25.06, p<.05$. As reflected in Table 8, it can be seen that a greater number of Caucasian fathers responded that they would like to spend more time with their children (60%), compared to Black or Hispanic fathers, 33% and 35% respectively.

Table 8

Frequency of Responses to Desired Changes in Father-Child Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change nothing</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more time together</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children be more responsible</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve communication</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more on children</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>.015%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display more affection</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>.015%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, a multiple stepwise regression was computed with the fathers' total attitudes toward child care responsibility scores as the dependent variable and father's age, education, SES score, maternal employment, ethnicity, subject's fathers' emotional availability, and social support as independent variables. This test was done in order to determine which of the independent variables accounts for the largest amount of variance in total responsibility scores. Only two variables achieved the cutoff $F$ test criteria for inclusion in the analysis. Maternal employment was stepped in first, accounting for 8% of the variance in total responsibility scores, and social support was stepped in next, accounting for an additional 4% of the variance. Together, both variables account for only 12% of the variance in attitude scores.
The interpretation of the results from this study must be made with caution due to several unforeseen factors which may have ultimately affected the generalizability of the results to the general population. First, as previously mentioned, over 1,900 questionnaires were fielded to fathers, however, only 163 (8.5%) were returned complete. Due to the poor response rate, and the nature of the self-selected sample, one is left wondering how representative the sample actually is with regard to the general population from which the sample was drawn. Several reasons may be offered to help explain the poor response rate. First, the method of data collection, which was revised several times prior to the commencement of the investigation, was flawed in that actual contact with most subjects was minimal. While relying on others to distribute the surveys (e.g., teachers, priest, etc.) may not have produced an optimal response rate, it did allow the researcher access to large groups of potential participants. One criticism previously expressed over existing fathering research, has been the small sample sizes utilized in various study designs. Reflecting back to this research, it is not surprising that difficulty was encountered in attaining a large sample size from each of
the ethnic groups. Furthermore, it should be noted that there was a differential response rate between the ethnic groups. Specifically, Black and Hispanic fathers refused to participate more frequently than did Caucasian fathers. Based on this it becomes apparent that more time and effort needs to be placed on developing strategies to increase father participation in such research. Perhaps if fathers are lacking intrinsic motivation to participate in research, which the response rate would suggest, researchers would be wise to offer extrinsic motivation and or/reinforcement for participation (e.g., provide monetary reimbursement for participation). Unfortunately, most researchers do not have access to funds to pay research participants.

Aside from the poor response rate, an additional problem was encountered which may effect the interpretation of comparisons between fathers from different ethnic groups. It may be recalled that fathers representing the three ethnic groups differed significantly from each other on three out of five demographic variables. Fathers from the three ethnic groups were similar on mean age and marital status. However, significant differences were found between the groups for the total number of children in the family, the father's educational level, and socio-economic status. As Table 1 demonstrates, Black and Hispanic fathers have significantly more offspring than their
Caucasian counterparts; Caucasians have achieved higher educational goals than either Black or Hispanic fathers; and Blacks have achieved higher educational attainment than Hispanics.

The significant difference in SES scores between the groups suggests that Caucasian fathers in this sample represent upper middle-class families whereas Black and Hispanic fathers represent middle-class families. Although the groups differed significantly on these demographic variables, the results are supported by national data which suggests that in comparison to Blacks and Hispanics, Caucasians have fewer children, have achieved higher educational goals, and have a higher average socioeconomic level (Kenkel & Voland, 1975; U.S. Bureau of Census, 1987).

Based on such supportive information one may infer that the participants in this research are actually quite representative of the population from which they were selected, thereby generating support for the generalizability of the results. However, although supported by national data, one should still exercise caution when interpreting the results of comparisons between ethnic groups because of the disparity in demographic attributes.

The results from the analysis of the effect of maternal employment on fathers' attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities (Hypothesis 1) suggests that maternal
employment status has no effect on paternal attitudes. Across both groups (i.e. employed versus not employed) egalitarian attitudes toward child care were displayed with little variation in group means (see Table 3). This result is not supported by previous research which found that fathers with employed spouses assume more responsibility for child rearing activities compared to those whose partners are not employed (Bahr, 1974; Baruch & Barnett, 1981; Beckett & Smith, 1981; Ericksen, Yancey, & Ericksen, 1979; Hoffman, 1974; Osborne & Morris, 1982; Robinson, 1977; Russell, 1982; Walker & Woods, 1976). Additionally, it should be noted that in comparison to a national data set (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1985) this sample had a lower than national average of employed wives with school-age children. This discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents came from middle to upper middle-class socioeconomic conditions, thereby minimizing the need for an additional income which lower class families might find necessary to subsist.

No support was found for the second hypothesis which postulated that there would be a significant difference in fathers' attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities between socioeconomic groups. While there was not a statistically significant relationship between SES and paternal attitudes, there was a trend for fathers from
lower SES conditions to display more traditional attitudes toward child care, compared to fathers from higher SES groups who displayed more egalitarian attitudes. This trend is consistent with results from previous research which has demonstrated that social class factors play a contributing role in determining father involvement with children (Bradley, 1985). Reviews by various researchers suggest that fathers from working class backgrounds display more traditional attitudes and behaviors toward child care than fathers from middle or upper class socioeconomic conditions (Bloom-Feshbach, 1981; Lamb, 1982; Lambert, Hamers, & Frasure-Smith, 1979; Gecas, 1976; Osborne & Morris, 1982).

The analysis on the effect of the differing levels of social support on paternal attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities yielded results which suggest that there is not a significant difference in attitudes between the groups. Across all of the groups (i.e. low support, moderate support, full support), fathers displayed remarkably egalitarian attitudes toward child care. However, although not statistically significant, it is interesting to observe that a trend exists with regard to social support levels and attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities. Specifically, fathers who perceive receiving full support for their parenting roles, report being more egalitarian in their attitudes toward child
rearing responsibilities than do fathers who receive only moderate or low support. This trend is supported by previous research which found that fathers' social support networks affects their level of involvement in child care (Riley, 1983). Interestingly, there were no significant differences between the ethnic groups when this analysis was done while controlling for ethnicity. This finding possibly occurred because there were no differences in average social support scores between the three groups of fathers. Regardless of ethnicity, the majority of fathers responded that they receive full support for their parenting roles (54%). When the ethnic groups were looked at separately, Hispanic fathers revealed the highest percent of full support (60%), followed by Blacks (57%), and Caucasians (48.5%). This finding is supported by previous research which found the extended social support network to be a more salient feature of Black and Hispanic families than White families (Hayes & Mindel, 1973; Lynn, 1974).

A significant relationship was found to exist between the subjects' fathers' emotional availability and the amount of time subjects spend with their children in relation to the amount of time their fathers spent with them when they were children. Subjects who had emotionally unavailable fathers report spending more time with their children today than their fathers spent with them during
childhood. Similarly, this result was also found when individual analyses were computed for each of the ethnic groups, with the exception of Blacks. While there was no significant difference in mean "time" scores between Black fathers who had emotionally available fathers, versus those whose fathers were not available, a trend was evident in that respondents who had uninvolved fathers report spending more time with their children.

While these findings contradict social learning theory, which would suggest that fathers develop their attitudes toward parental roles from models provided to them during the process of early childhood socialization (Nye, 1976), it is nonetheless supported by past research. In a series of investigations Radin and Sagi (1982) and Price-Bonham and Skeen (1979) found a lack of homogeneity in child rearing practices across generations. Such a lack of continuity in paternal behavior suggests that perhaps fathers compensate for the lack of availability of their own fathers when they were young by being more actively involved in their children's lives. As Soltz (1967) suggests, fathers may modify their child rearing practices as a response to the characteristics, values, beliefs, or practices expressed by their own fathers during childhood. The results from this analysis support such a theoretical perspective by demonstrating the importance of attending to early parent-child interactions.
As reflected in the results section, additional analyses were carried out in order to determine the effect of ethnicity on certain variables as well as to gain more knowledge regarding fathering in general. These results will be briefly discussed below.

In viewing Table 4, it can be seen that regardless of ethnicity, fathers attribute slightly more responsibility to the mother for physical child care. Conversely, fathers expressed a belief that recreational activities should be more their responsibility than the mothers. This result is supported by previous research which has found that traditionally, fathers assume more responsibility for recreational activities than do mothers (Baruch & Barnett, 1981), and mothers assume the majority of primary child care tasks (Gecas, 1976; Kellerman & Katz, 1978; Osborne & Morris, 1982). These findings suggest that while fathers are becoming increasingly more egalitarian in their attitudes, there still minimally exists traditional assumptions regarding attribution of parental responsibility.

Irrespective of race, the majority of fathers who participated in this study expressed the following beliefs or opinions: (1) that they make important contributions to their child(rens) development; (2) that being a parent is just as important to them as their spouse/partner; (3) were satisfied with the division of child care responsi-
bilities in the home; and (4) find parenthood more rewarding or satisfying than they had anticipated. While the majority of fathers expressed a great deal of confidence in their parenting skills, it is interesting to observe that Caucasians felt less confident in comparison to Blacks and Hispanics. This result may be partially attributed to the finding that Caucasian fathers are significantly less involved with their children on a daily basis compared to Black or Hispanic fathers. These two results suggest that confidence in one's own parenting skills may be a direct result of the amount of time spent actively parenting. An explanation of why this effect was found for this one ethnic group of subjects may be that Caucasian fathers in this sample have attained higher educational levels and also come from higher SES groups than do Black or Hispanic fathers. It may be possible that Anglo fathers in this sample are investing more time in getting an education and working at jobs that are very time consuming and/or physically and mentally draining, thereby leaving little time to interact with their children.

Across all of the ethnic groups, a strong positive correlation was found to exist between attitudes toward "ideal" and "actual" parenting behaviors. This finding indicates that father's attitudes toward child rearing responsibilities are congruent with actual parenting
behaviors. This finding is not supported by previous research (Nye, 1976) which found a minimal relationship between attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing responsibilities.

When an analysis was done on the question "In your family who is responsible for basic child care tasks?", the results suggest that overall, fathers attribute slightly more of the caretaking responsibility to the mother. On a 7-point scale, with 1 representing "mother's responsibility", 4 representing "both parents equally", and 7 representing "father's responsibility", the mean score across all of the groups was 3.45. However, this average is very close to 4, thereby suggesting egalitarianism in familial responsibility. Further analyses revealed no differences between the ethnic groups on the effect of social support or maternal employment on attitudes toward "actual" parenting behaviors.

The results from two additional analyses suggest that the majority of fathers, regardless of race, want to spend more time interacting with their children. Forty-six percent of all of the respondents replied that they would like to spend more time with their children than they currently do. Of all of the responses to the open-ended question, "Describe at least one thing that you really like about your relationship with your child(ren)", the largest percentage responded that they enjoy the love and
affection they share.

Finally, the results from the stepwise regression are interesting in that maternal employment and social support were identified as contributing the largest amount of variance in combined responsibility scores. Together, both variables account for only 12% of the total variance, indicating that possibly other (non-measured) variables may be more influential in determining paternal attitudes towards child rearing responsibilities.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion of results has demonstrated the importance of attending to a large number of variables which may interact to influence paternal attitudes and behaviors toward child rearing responsibilities. Overall, the results suggest that while demographic characteristics may differ between the ethnic groups of fathers represented in this sample, their general attitudes and orientation to the father role are more similar than dissimilar. Overall, the fathers expressed egalitarian attitudes demonstrating an "emergent" perspective on child rearing (Lamb, 1981).

However, as previously mentioned, caution must be used when interpreting and generalizing the results from this study due to several methodological flaws. As manifest in this study, more time and effort needs to be devoted to developing alternative strategies for data
collection in order to increase response rates in future studies of fathering. An effect of implementing more efficacious methods of subject recruitment would be a more representative subject sample thereby leading to better generalizability of the results.

**Recommendations For Future Research**

As previously mentioned, this study was the first attempt by any researcher to integrate such mediating variables as maternal employment, SES, ethnicity, social support, and early childhood socialization experiences into a single study design. While the results from this study demonstrate an equitable sharing of responsibility for child care between parents, additional research is indicated. For example, in order to more thoroughly understand the dynamics of parental roles and the manner in which they evolve, a study should be developed whereby information is collected not only from the father, but additionally from the mother and children as well. Furthermore, the measures used for collecting information from all family members should include a lie scale and social desirability scale in order to determine the level of honesty and the effect of social desirability on attitudinal responses. By gathering information from additional family members, one would be in a better position to objectively evaluate paternal attitudes and behaviors.
toward child rearing responsibilities, thereby strengthening the validity of the obtained results. Such comparative research needs to be conducted for each of the ethnic groups utilized in this study, with the addition of Asians due to their rapid influx into the American culture. Results from such proposed research would provide not only the scientific community with a better perspective on fathering, but would also provide parent educators and family therapists with additional information which might be useful in client centered interactions.
APPENDIX A

FATHER PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: The following questionnaire was developed in order to learn more about fathers' involvement with children. Please take a few minutes to answer each question thoughtfully. There are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for your help.

1. Total number of children in your family, including stepchildren and/or your spouse's children: ____________

2. Sex and ages of children. Please indicate own children and stepchildren (or spouse's children) separately:

   Own Children
   Sex      Age
   ________  ______
   ________  ______
   ________  ______

   Stepchildren/Spouse's Children
   Sex      Age
   ________  ______
   ________  ______
   ________  ______

3. Your age: ____________

4. Your spouse's (or partner's) age: ____________

5. Marital status: (Check the categories which apply to you).
   ☐ Married and living with spouse
   ☐ Separated
   ☐ Divorced
   ☐ Widowed
   ☐ Remarried
   ☐ Cohabitating (living with partner)
   ☐ Custodial parent (your children live with you)
   ☐ Non-custodial parent (your children do not live with you)

6. Your education:
   ☐ Less than 7th grade
   ☐ Junior high school (9th grade)
   ☐ Partial high school (10th or 11th grade)
   ☐ High school graduate
   ☐ Partial college (at least 1 year) or specialized training
   ☐ Standard college or university graduate
   ☐ Graduate professional training

7. Your occupation: ________________________________

8. Your spouse's (or partner's) occupation: ________________________________

Location __________________
9. Your spouse's (or partner's) education:
   - Less than 7th grade
   - Junior high school (9th grade)
   - Partial high school (10th or 11th grade)
   - High school graduate
   - Partial college (at least 1 year) or specialized training
   - Standard college or university graduate
   - Graduate professional training

10. Ethnic status:
    - White
    - Black
    - Hispanic
    - Other

Please circle the number on each scale to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. I believe that I make an important contribution to my children's development.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

2. Being a parent is just as important for me as it is for my wife/partner.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

3. My father was emotionally available to me when I was growing up.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

4. I feel confident in my ability to be a good parent.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

5. On a day to day basis, I believe that I am actively involved in my children's lives.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   strongly disagree neutral strongly agree
Please circle the number on each scale that best describes your feelings or beliefs concerning each question.

6. Indicate the amount of emotional support you receive from your spouse (or the child's mother) for taking an active role in parenting your child(ren).

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<td>full support</td>
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7. Indicate the amount of emotional support you receive from your friends for taking an active role in parenting your child(ren).

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8. Indicate the amount of emotional support you receive from your parents for taking an active role in parenting your child(ren).

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9. Who should be responsible for the physical care of your child(ren), e.g., dressing, feeding, bathing, cleaning up after, and taking the child(ren) to the doctor?

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<td>both parents</td>
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10. Who should participate in active recreational tasks with your child(ren), e.g., taking a walk, playing catch, and going to the movies?

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11. Who should be responsible for your child's educational guidance, e.g., helping your child with school work, reading to your child, and teaching your child to count?

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12. Who should be responsible for your child's emotional support, e.g., comforting your child when he/she is upset, hold and hug your child, or make your child feel better when he/she is hurt?

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13. Who should be responsible for disciplining your child(ren), e.g., punishing the children?

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14. In your family, who is responsible for basic child care activities such as feeding, bathing, comforting, disciplining, reading to, and playing with the child(ren)?

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<tr>
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<td>both</td>
<td>parents</td>
<td>equally</td>
<td>child's father</td>
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15. Indicate your degree of satisfaction with the division of child care responsibilities in your home.

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<td>dissatisfied</td>
<td>neutral</td>
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16. Generally speaking, would you like to spend less, the same, or more amount of time involved in child care activities than you currently do?

17. Generally speaking, do you spend less, the same, or more amount of time with your children than your father did with you?

18. Being a father is: (Check one)

    (Check one)  
    ⬜ More work than I expected it to be  
    ⬜ About what I expected it to be  
    ⬜ More rewarding/satisfying than I expected it to be
19. In one or two sentences, briefly describe at least one thing you really like about your relationship with your child(ren).

20. In one or two sentences, briefly describe at least one thing you would like to change in your relationship with your child(ren).
Debriefing Statement

The purpose for having you complete the former questionnaire was to enable us to better understand fathers' involvement with their children. The answers you provided will be compiled with many other fathers' answers to the same questions. These will then be analyzed in order to learn more about father's behaviors and attitudes toward various child-rearing responsibilities. We wish to thank you for your time and effort in helping us with this study. Do you have any questions which you would like to ask?
If you would be interested in obtaining a copy of the research results, please fill in the spaces provided below for your name and address. In order to insure confidentiality and anonymity, this information will be kept separate from the actual questionnaire.

Name:________________________________________
Address:_______________________________________
City:___________________________________________
State:____________________ Zip:________       


To: All CSUSB Children's Center Fathers
From: Sandy Kantor-Fish

Nov. 18, 1986

Greetings,

My name is Sandy Kantor-Fish and I am a graduate student in Psychology here at CSUSB and a former Children's Center parent. In order to fulfill the requirements for an M.A. I am required to design and implement an original study. The area I'm researching deals with fathers' involvement with their children. To date, very little information has been collected on the fathers' role in the family. In order to more fully understand the fathering role, I have designed a short questionnaire to measure certain aspects of father involvement in the home.

If you would be interested in voluntarily participating in my study I would be very grateful. The criteria for inclusion are: You must be a father of at least one child ranging in age from 2 to 15. Both natural fathers and stepfathers are encouraged to respond. Attached you will find a copy of the questionnaire. Please take a few minutes to thoughtfully and honestly answer the questions. Once you have completed it, please read the accompanying debriefing statement. If you would be interested in obtaining a copy of the research results, please complete the form provided for your name and address. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous at all times.

Please return the completed questionnaire and copy of results form to the Children's Center on or before the last day of the Fall quarter. A large box will be provided for you to deposit these items in.

Thank you for your time, effort, and participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Sandy Kantor-Fish

CSUSB Children's Center Approval Date: 11/11/86

Dear Parents,

I feel this is a very worthwhile study and hope that you will take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to the Center.
REFERENCES


Hollingshead, A. (1975) Four Factor Index of Social Status. Unpublished manuscript, Yale University, Department of Sociology, New Haven.


