

ROLE EXPECTATIONS AMONG FIRST TIME EXPECTANT FATHERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how expectant fathers conceptualize the role of father and how the domains of the role shape men's attitudes and decision-making processes regarding work and family life. Twenty-five first time expectant fathers were surveyed via a questionnaire regarding their thoughts about work and family in the spring of 2000. Fourteen of those fathers agreed to also be interviewed. All of the men held the concept of "breadwinner" as the highest priority regarding roles for fathers. The majority of men expressed the belief that childcare and domestic duties should be shared equally if both parents worked full time. However, the interviews revealed that only 2 of the 14 actually put those beliefs into action, describing truly egalitarian households.

Researchers and policy makers have been giving work and family issues considerable attention in recent years (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter 2000). Most of the focus on decision making regarding the process of balancing work and family has been on women (Haas 1999). When fathers are the focus, most information on men's beliefs comes from after-the-fact inquiries about their roles and responsibilities as fathers (Tanfer & Mott 1997; Plantin, Manson & Kearney 2003). The current study focuses on men's thought processes about fathering when they are often beginning to make decisions regarding work and family during their wife's first pregnancy. Such processes include questions such as: How do expectant fathers conceptualize the role of father or view their role responsibilities in the child-rearing process? How do men intend to balance their paid work demands with their father role? And how do the social contexts of work and family affect fathers' decision making?

ROLES ASSOCIATED WITH BEING A FATHER

In the mid twentieth century a number of trends began to transform the family. One trend was the redefining of parenting roles in both the masculine and the feminine consciousness (Tanfer & Mott 1997). The "traditional" role of the father in the 20th century included the domain of breadwinner or provider and in the last few decades, the domains of playmate and nurturer have been emphasized more (Atkinson & Blackwelder 1993). Less change has taken place regarding what both men and women consider a man's responsibilities. These include financial provision, financial planning, decisions

about work outside the family, and when to initiate lovemaking (Cowan & Cowan 1988).

Greater numbers of women entering the workforce contributed to a trend toward emphasizing more egalitarian ideas regarding gender roles in the family, including housework and childcare (Pleck & Pleck 1997). Although comparisons are difficult, fathers appear to spend more time today with their children than fathers did in the early part of the 20th century (Seward, Yeatts, Seward, & Stanley-Stevens 1993; Seward, Yeatts, & Stanley-Stevens 1996; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda 2004). The 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce found married fathers to be spending 24.3 hours per week doing things with and for their children, up five hours each week compared to a similar 1977 study (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg 1998). Yet parents still tend to follow more gender traditional lines, rather than egalitarian ones (Sanchez & Thomson 1997). Today's average father is responsible for a small percentage of work in the home compared to women (Pleck & Masciadrelli 2004). Even when both parents are working full time, the mother is responsible for the majority of the household duties and the father "helps out" (Leslie, Anderson, & Branson 1991; Seward et al 1993, 1996).

In an effort to describe what shapes a man's identity as a new father, Tanfer and Mott (1997) identified three critical roles. Ranked hierarchically, they are the roles of paid worker, husband, and father. Identifying the same roles, Hyde, Essex, and Horton (1993) noted that not all men evaluate the importance of these roles in the same way. Men who relate more to the paid worker role assign that a high priority, while those who see more merit in the father role tend to place

greater emphasis on the domains of companionship and nurturing (Lamb & Lewis 2004).

The Role of Paid Worker

Sanchez and Thomson (1997) explain that a significant proportion of men see themselves first as breadwinners and second as helpers with family responsibilities, with no primary roles in the home (cf., LaRossa & LaRossa 1981; Gerson 1993; Thompson 1993; Haas 1996, 1999). Some groups stress the domain of authority within the father role as the father's primary responsibility. Protestant evangelicals generally view men as fathers and husbands as being the head of the family and this authority is based on being responsible for providing for the material welfare of the family (Ellison & Bartkowski 2002). Even when the husbands were not the breadwinners, they often remained the symbolic head of the family (Hare-Mustin, Bennett, & Broderick 1983). Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) found that fathers who felt that their primary domain of the father role was being the provider did fewer of the tasks traditionally viewed as feminine (e.g., household tasks). Maume and Mullin (1993) found that men consider child care a woman's responsibility and therefore do not show stress when childcare responsibilities clash with work responsibilities. As fathers add family role domains to their work role domains they experience new stressors, (Berry & Rao 1997; Rosen 1991) while their wives experience stress reduction (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney 1989). However, with regard to family responsibilities, like childcare, husbands do not necessarily do what their wives prefer (LaRossa & LaRossa 1981; Belsky 1985; Cowan & Cowan 1988; Hochschild 1989; Kalmuss, Davidson, & Cushman 1992; Belsky & Kelly 1994; Pleck & Masciadrelli 2004).

A father's own socialization and the role-modeling of his parents also influence his conception and practice of fatherhood (Daly 1995; Tanfer & Mott 1997; Beaton, Doherty, & Rueter 2003; Masciadrelli, Pleck, & Stueve 2006). Men are affected by socialization factors, including a lack of preparation for their roles as fathers (Pleck & Masciadrelli 2004). The socialization of young boys does not focus on parenting skills. So as males become fathers, they tend to look to early role models for guidance, usually a traditional father who

focused on breadwinning responsibilities (LaRossa 1986). Exclusive exposure to this type of role model can lead to diminished involvement in their children's upbringing (Jordan 1997). More highly involved fathers tend to look to peers as role models rather than their own fathers (Masciadrelli et al 2006). Men's family of origin experiences plus later relationships and life events all contribute to an anticipatory or "working model" for fathers (Bretherton 1993).

The amount and type of employment leave men typically take after they become fathers reflects their primary identification as good providers derived from their paid worker role. Taking time off from work for the arrival of a new baby is more difficult for some new fathers because of an even greater fear of the financial and work sacrifices involved than for fathers who have already had children. For most men, taking such a leave is not part of their conceptions of being a father. Some men view taking time off as being uncommitted to their job, or as un-masculine (Alexander 1990). National surveys that collected systematic data in 1984 and 1990 found that only around 1 percent of eligible fathers officially took parental leave (Pleck 1993; 1997) but most fathers do take at least some time off from work. In a 1990-91 study, 91 percent of the fathers studied took at least two days off at the time of the birth of their child with the mean length being 5.0 days (Hyde et al 1993). The reasons given for taking leave were first, to take care of the needs of the baby, and second, to meet the needs and desires of the wife or partner. Thirty-three percent of the fathers rated financial considerations as the third most important factor in determining their leave. Twelve percent of men interviewed indicated that they feared losing their job as a result of taking time off (Hyde et al 1993). In a 1998 study, only 45 percent of the employed fathers reported taking leave but their mean of 12 days is close to twice as long as averages reported in earlier studies (Seward, Yeatts, Amin, & DeWitt 2006). Still, these fathers' average leave was less than one-fifth as long as the mothers' leave whose average was 68 work days. Most fathers did not view the days taken off as parental leave and few (19%) fathers said their leave was taken under the auspices of the Family Medical Leave Act. Fulfilling the provider domain or being the breadwinner was paramount for most fathers. Two of the

most common reasons that fathers gave for either not taking leave, or for not taking all the leave available to them, were a decrease in the family's income (39%) and possible difficulties at work (39%). Getting paid leave so they could still be providing was a key determinant of which fathers took leave. Most fathers (74%) only took leave when it was paid. None of the fathers' leave time was paid from a source specifically set aside for parental leave; the vast majority used vacation time (61%), personal days (17%), or sick leave (11%). Fathers in Hyde et al.'s (1993) study followed a similar pattern with 51 percent taking vacation days, 44 percent taking "other days" including personal days, and 17 percent taking sick days.

Both men and women often become more traditional in the division of labor after a baby is born. Fathers tend to take on more of the breadwinning responsibilities, while mothers take on more of the household responsibilities (LaRossa & LaRossa 1981; Sanchez & Thomson 1997; Christiansen 1998; Lamb & Lewis 2004). Once a child is born, fathers tend to work more and mothers tend to reduce their paid work hours or stop working outside of the home (Jordan 1997). Sometimes husbands and wives make decisions for the wife to reduce her working hours on a temporary basis, but then they become caught up in these traditional roles and she does not return to her pre-maternity work schedule (Lamb & Lewis 2004). A wife may find her husband verbally supportive of her commitment to employment but often does not find him as supportive when it comes to rethinking household obligations (Sanchez & Thomson 1997; Deutsch 1999).

While expectant fathers had higher career aspirations than their counterparts who were not about to become fathers, those expectations were not always met. Waite, Haggstrom, and Kanouse (1986) speculate that spending more time with their families and less time on the job, or trading off job status for jobs with current high earnings but less future potential may be the reasons the expectations are not met. In another study, fathers were asked to consider how being a father had affected their career. Over two-thirds (69%) of the fathers reported missing work to address certain needs of their children such as taking care of minor medical emergencies, school related activities, and extracurricular activities, including sports events

(Berry & Rao 1997). Although less frequent, some fathers reported taking their children to doctor appointments because their schedules are more flexible than their working wives' schedules (Berry & Rao 1997).

The Role of Husband

Pleck (1997) noted that the domain of being a good provider remained an important component of male identity in the 20th century, but couples are moving toward dividing their role responsibilities equally (Seward et al 1996; Christiansen 1998; Rost 2002). This increased focus on shared parenting is what Tanfer and Mott (1997) referred to as emphasizing the role of husband. One explanation for this division along egalitarian lines is that mothers and fathers are likely to receive similar job satisfaction (Jordan 1997). Additionally, division of labor prior to parenthood has some influence on post-parental divisions of labor. If parents share equally in work prior to parenthood, there is less of a pull toward gender-traditional division of labor after the child is born (Sanchez & Thomson 1997).

When fathers do participate more fully in childcare and household duties, it is thought to be due in part to gender politics and reevaluated traditionalism in relationships (Rost 2002). More frequently fathers' participation comes out of a growing cultural movement that looks upon non-gender specific parenting favorably (Sanchez & Thompson 1997; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda 2004). Because men still often view themselves as parenting helpers, a more equal division of family responsibilities may depend on the couple's rethinking traditional expectations (Matta & Knudson-Martin 2006). This appears most easily done when the couple's pre-parental attitudes were less traditional and more egalitarian (Sanchez & Thomson 1997).

In a study of dual-earner couples, Baruch and Barnett (1986), found that increased participation in childcare by fathers was related to higher self-esteem and to feeling more competent and satisfied in their parental roles. However, these fathers also reported having too little time for their careers and feeling that their family responsibilities interfered with their work. A more recent study of dual-earner parents by Feldman, Sussman, and Zigler (2004) found that when fathers took longer leaves they were more pre

occupied with their infants and exhibited higher family salience than fathers who took short or no leaves.

As the definition of fatherhood begins encompassing child-centered activities, a greater amount of involvement in housework follows (Coltrane 1989, 2000; Sanchez & Thomson 1997). A national study indicated that married men did 34 percent of the housework performed by couples in 1985, a notable increase over the 20 percent of housework reported in 1965 (Robinson 1988, similar results reported in Seward et al 1996). When wives are employed full-time, and have very young children at home, their husbands contribute the most to housework and childcare (Berk 1985; Coverman 1985; Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & McHale 1987; Darling-Fisher & Tiedje 1990; Leslie, Anderson, & Branson 1991; Peterson & Gerson 1992).

In describing men's adjustment to the reduction of the breadwinning domain, Mintz (1998: 27) asserts men have, "adopted a host of adaptive strategies". Those with no religious preference are most likely to be interested in egalitarian division of responsibilities with their wives. While few have adopted a truly co-parent, egalitarian division, other men have attempted to reassert patriarchal authority based on religious beliefs. Only twenty percent of Protestants and Catholics reported being supportive of an equal division of labor and Mormons were least likely to support an equal division of labor with only 9 percent responding favorably (Bahr 1982). More recently, Ellison and Bartkowski (2002) found that conservative evangelical Protestant wives performed more housework and spent "more time doing 'female-typed' labor than their nonevangelical peers" (2002: 950). The differences were traced back "to religious variations in spousal and household resources and . . . to a distinctive evangelical gender ideology."

Some fathers are not only doing more childcare and household maintenance, but they are also not waiting for mothers to tell them what to do (Deutsch 1999; Palkovitz 2002). They are taking on more of the organizing and initiating of household and child-rearing activities (Jordan 1997). In one study (Ehrensaft 1987: 90), parents were asked to specify "who did what with the children". Often, these parents described a "renaissance parent approach . . . 'Oh, we both just pitch in and do everything that needs to be done'".

The Role of Father

The role of father refers to a man's emotional and childcare involvement with his children. The ultimate responsibility for childcare has been delegated to the woman for a very long time (Coltrane 1996). Illustrating this point, Caruso (1992) noted that the U.S. Bureau of the Census lists "father care" as a type of childcare, even though they are caring for their own children. No such distinction is made for "mother care". Leslie et al. (1991) found that, when asked to show how many childcare activities they were responsible for, men reported such low levels that there were not enough reports to be considered any further. But a bit more involvement was reported in 1997, when the father was the primary child care provider during the mother's working hours in 20 percent of the families with a child under 5 years of age, when both parents work (United States Bureau of the Census 1997).

The norm among fathers during most of the last century was that they viewed their primary roles as instrumental, rather than expressive (Jordan 1997). But since the 1970s there has been a shift toward expecting fathers to be more involved with their children (Jump & Haas 1987), at least among dual-earner couples and those who hold liberal ideologies about gender roles (Volling & Belsky 1991). Where traditional fathers perceived themselves as providers of material resources, shelter and guidance for their children, and left the emotive domains to the children's mothers, today's fathers often expand their roles to include involvement in the nurturance and care-taking of their children (Jordan 1997). Those who promote egalitarian roles in parenting, emphasize that fathers should be spending more time with their children (Coltrane 1996). But men are often torn between the conflicting fatherhood domains presented by these newer expectations, which can cause expectant fathers confusion and stress (Hyde et al 1993; Seward et al 2006).

The role of the father has come to encompass childcare activities and chores, but not the complete responsibility for arranging or planning for that child (Seward et al 2006). Mothers still report having the specific responsibilities of making childcare arrangements, knowing when the child needs to visit the physician, and buying clothes. Maume and Mullin (1993) found that 94 percent of

mothers said that they made all or most of the childcare arrangements. Leslie et al. (1991) found that both mothers and fathers reported that women were primarily responsible for the decision about childcare. One study noted that fathers' involvement in childcare arrangements was typically when the care was a non-stressful, non-emergency-type event (Berry & Rao 1997).

However, Hertz (1997) found among dual earner couples that fathers played a big part in the decision about what kind of childcare the family would choose; were part of other decision-making processes related to children, made big adjustments to their work schedules and took on added responsibilities in the home. Among paid workers, fathers have been more likely to report childcare problems than mothers. In a 1987 survey of 1,200 employees in a Minneapolis company, 72 percent of fathers reported difficulties with childcare, while 65 percent of mothers reported such difficulties. Another study of dual-career families found 70 percent of fathers reporting difficulties with childcare compared to 63 percent of mothers (Berry & Rao 1997).

Few studies have included men in their investigations of the decision making process involved in balancing work and family (Coltrane 1996). Especially expectant fathers have been omitted (Beaton et al 2003). Most information on men's beliefs come from after-the-fact inquiries about their roles and responsibilities as fathers (Tanfer & Mott 1997; Plantin, Manson, & Kearney 2003). The current study focuses on men's decision making and thought processes about childrearing as they begin experiencing it, during their wife's pregnancy.

The research questions for this study were how do expectant fathers view their role responsibilities in the childrearing process, how do they intend to balance their paid work demands with their father role, and how the social contexts of work and family affect fathers' decision making (e.g., work culture and family of origin).

METHODS

Data Collection

Building upon an earlier study of mothers, the first author adapted questions from Gerson (1985, 1993) and related sources to develop a survey instrument and an interview instrument in the spring, 2000. The instruments address topics including the

meaning of fatherhood, job satisfaction, parental leave, fatherhood expectations, childcare and household responsibilities, and the influence of family and friends on work and family decisions.

A purposive sampling procedure was used to ensure participants were first-time expectant fathers. Questionnaires were distributed to clinics, doctor's offices and childbirth classes that serve expectant parents in central Texas. Twenty-five expectant fathers volunteered to complete a self-administered questionnaire. To complement the quantitative data gathered all fathers were asked to participate in a semi-structured, face to face interview. Fourteen of the twenty-five fathers participated in the follow up interviews, which primarily provided in-depth qualitative data on the issues covered in the questionnaire (cf., Rost 2002). This was the first wave in a planned longitudinal panel study.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions conducted by eight trained student research assistants which lasted from thirty to forty minutes. Training continued even after the data collection began¹. The narratives were video and audio taped for use in interpreting the data and for future reference. Pseudonyms were used to identify the participants and to maintain their confidentiality. In order to minimize socially desirable responses, interviewers attempted to display neutral body language and nonjudgmental attitudes since the intent was to understand the fathers' attitudes and actions as expressed in their own words as much as possible. At the same time like Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006 23) "what we listened for and heard was influenced by our theoretical perspective and personal contexts". When the researchers assessed their efforts, they acknowledged being influenced somewhat by an ideology supporting gender equality, and their own experiences as children (8), spouses (3), and parents (3).

Analysis

The quantitative data from the surveys were entered into an EXCEL spreadsheet for analysis and frequencies and mean scores were generated. For the interviews, the principal investigator along with groups of three researchers viewed the videotapes for coding. Grounded theory was used to analyze the interviews in order to interpret the meaning of men's experiences as ex

Table 1: Surveyed Expectant Fathers' Attitudes on Likert Scale Items* (N=25)

	Means
Attitudes Regarding Work Orientation	
Feels job serves important purpose	4.40
My pay is essential to my family	4.29
Kind of work affects lives of other people	4.08
Advancement is important to me	4.04
Enjoys going to work	3.96
Invested a lot in job training	3.64
Job is emotionally satisfying	3.50
Job is boring	1.84
Fatherhood will have negative effect on job	1.60
Attitudes, Actions, Programs Regarding Childcare	
Both parents work full-time, childcare shared equally	4.00
Have discussed sharing childcare with wife	3.92
Concerned about finding childcare	3.36
My income will pay for childcare	3.20
Wish my father spent more time with me	2.96
Will use job related family support programs	1.63
Job offers family supportive programs	1.43
Attitudes Regarding Housework	
Both parents work full-time, housework shared equally	4.08
Both parents work full-time, housework up to me	2.28
Attitudes Regarding Gender Roles	
Father's role is to put family first	3.92
Mother's role is to put family first	3.84
After child's birth, prefers wife to work	2.52

*Likert items are measured on a 5 point scale with values of 1= *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*.

pectant fathers and their decisions regarding work by allowing various themes to emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Grounded theory is "derived from the data, systematically gathered and analyzed throughout the research process" (Strauss & Corbin 1998 12). Grounded theory relies on inductive analysis and interpretation of the data to confirm existing theory or to find new patterns outside existing theory, which may lead to alternative explanations for understanding social phenomena. Like Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006), the approach was similar to that of Charmaz (2000 23) in that no assumption of "an external truth independent of the research" was made. Common themes were identified and, once agreed upon used to categorize and code the data. Inter-rater reliability checks were made. When discrepancies occurred additional reviews were carried out to resolve them. The use of various checks and cross-checks increased the validity and reliability of the data.

Sample

All 25 respondents were married, with an

average age of 27. Fourteen percent were Hispanic and 86 percent were white, non-Hispanic, which reflects the region of central rural Texas from which the sample was drawn. This break down was about the same for the 14 fathers interviewed. Reported median family income was \$39,450. Most fathers (88%) had at least some college education. Fifty-two percent of the fathers worked for companies that had some sort of family-friendly programs but only twenty-three percent of fathers with such programs planned to take advantage of them. The interviewed fathers were a little more likely to work for family-friendly companies and a higher proportion planned to take advantage of available benefits.

Other Quantitative Findings

The fathers in this study planned to take an average of 9.3 days off after the birth of their children. This average included a coach whose baby was due in May. Since he works a nine month school year, his projected parental leave was 42 days. When he was excluded, the average dropped to 7.6 days. Interviews of the 14 expectant fathers revealed

Table 2: Surveyed Expectant Fathers' Attitude Regarding How A Mother's Employment Will Affect Child's Well-Being, School Performance, Cognitive Development, and Emotional Development

	Negative Effect	No Effect	Positive Effect
Child's Well Being	20%	48%	32%
School Performance	24%	56%	16%
Cognitive Development	8%	72%	16%
Emotional Development	24%	60%	16%

that rather than taking paternity or parental leave, most of these father's like those in earlier studies (Seward et al 2006), were planning to take this time as vacation or other paid days.

On average, the 25 expectant fathers were working between 40 and 50 hours a week and expected to work slightly more once their children were born, typically reporting that they needed the extra income for their growing family. They did not expect that their families would cause any negative effects on their careers. Most agreed with the positive statements about their jobs (see top category in Table 1). The greatest agreement (i.e., the highest mean of 4.40) for the fathers was with the statement "I feel my job serves an important purpose." The fathers were the least likely to agree that "fatherhood will have a negative effect on my job" (ranked last or 8th). At least three-fourths reported neutral or positive responses regarding the anticipated effects of maternal employment on children's well-being, school performance, cognitive development and emotional development (see Table 2). Seventy six percent of respondents felt that childcare responsibilities should be shared equally when both parents work full time (Mean = 4.00), and the same percent also felt that housework should be shared equally (Mean = 4.08; see middle and bottom categories in Table 1). But most disagreed that housework is up to fathers, if both parents work (Mean = 2.28). In regard to childcare, most fathers reported having discussed sharing this care with their wives (Mean = 3.92) and most were concerned about finding childcare (Mean = 3.36). The qualitative data gathered during the interviews allows an elaboration on these and other issues.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: KEY THEMES

Based upon their responses, the 14 interviewed expectant fathers were categorized into three different role type emphases: 1) traditional, 2) combination (of traditional and

egalitarian), and 3) egalitarian. Respondents were categorized as traditional when the breadwinner role was the highest priority expressed by the fathers. These fathers typically expected to increase their paid work hours once the baby was born and planned to take zero to three days off when the child was born. The traditional men typically performed only a minimum amount of domestic work, such as the traditional male duties of yard and automotive work while assuming a helper capacity with regard to domestic areas and child rearing. Half of the men interviewed advocated and emphasized the traditional type role.

An unanticipated category was the combination type role, which combines traditional values with more of an emphasis on family involvement. Combination fathers prioritized their work over the work of their spouses and identified themselves primarily as breadwinners. But combination fathers contributed more to household labor, planned to take four or more days off work when the child is born, and recognized that they need to do even more domestic work once the baby is born. Combination fathers also expected to be more involved in childcare than the traditionalists. All agreed that childcare and domestic duties should be shared equally when both parents work full time. This was the second most popular type of father role found, with five of the men falling in this category. The emergence of this unexpected type illustrates the value of applying grounded theory to qualitative research data.

The egalitarian role type illustrates a trend toward equally shared decision-making, career opportunities, domestic responsibilities and childcare. Egalitarians did not prioritize their work over their spouse's, performed at least half of the domestic work and talked about their expected involvement with their children in considerable detail. Their descriptions included their expected involvement with child care while the children were infants. As in previous research (Pleck & Mas

ciadrelli 2004), few men fell into this category.

Traditional Fathers

Among the many factors affecting fathers' role concepts, the main influence appears to be the type of family structure the interviewees had growing up. Like Beaton and colleagues (2003) found, the interviewees own fathers' influences were extremely important in how the interviewees defined the role of fatherhood, either by providing a negative example (i.e., compensation) or, as with the majority, providing a positive role model. Of the seven interviewees who fell into the traditional category, all came from traditional family structures. Most of their mothers stayed at home until the interviewees were at least school age. The fathers of these interviewees were the primary breadwinners of the family and these roles were internalized by the interviewees. But despite the traditional gender roles of the men in the traditional category, only two of the seven had wives who would be staying home full time. Comparing the interview data with the responses on the questionnaire provides further insight into this and other incongruities between traditional and egalitarian beliefs and behaviors. For instance, four of the seven traditional interviewees expressed in their surveys that they believe childcare and domestic duties should be shared equally when both parents work full time, even though some interviewees whose wives were employed full time did not actually share housework equally even before the baby arrived. Hence some of these traditional fathers appeared to be paying only lip-service to plans for the future, probably reflecting and stating the current socially desired view. Henry's responses are just one example:

Interviewer: "How do you and your wife share housework?"

Henry: "She does a lot of it. I realize I should do more, but, I guess...I don't."

Interviewer: "Will that change after the baby is born?"

Henry: (Pause) "I'm going to try and do a lot more."

Some, such as Peter, divide chores along traditionally gendered lines (e.g., male takes automotive, maintenance and outside chores, while female handles domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning and child

care), leaving the majority of responsibilities to their wives, and do not expect much change.

Peter: "Usually I get everything outside and she gets everything inside, pretty much. But we help each other out. We're good about that. I help with dishes and stuff... odds and ends, whatever."

Interviewer: "How do you feel about that?"

Peter: "It doesn't bother me at all. I enjoy doing stuff like that, I guess."

Interviewer: "Will that change after the baby's born?"

Peter: "No I wouldn't think so...No, I wouldn't think so."

Even though Peter's wife works full time, Peter appears to think he's doing his fair share. Others, too, claimed to share equally but when describing the specifics, it was clear they were taking a back seat, either because they could not name specifics or because they had not discussed specifics with their wives. Zack's response is an example:

Zack: (Household responsibilities are) "Pretty much 50-50. I think it's a great compromise. [When asked to list his responsibilities] Mainly I take out the trash and uh, clean up around the garage and outside and mow the yard and stuff like that."

Zack does not expect that to change once the baby is born. In summary, the incongruity between the survey responses and the interview responses indicates that, although these men clearly have been exposed to egalitarian views and trends, their traditional backgrounds and personal views take precedence, to the point of clouding their objectivity.

Employment is the major part of the traditional males' identities. When asked if they would stay home if it were financially feasible, many of the interviewees needed prompting on the question. (One asked, "You mean, like if I won the lottery?") They have never considered staying home with their children while their wives worked. This might be explained by the survey results that showed that all but one of the interviewees felt that their pay was essential to their family's survival. But traditionalists such as Tim and Zack

felt that they would work outside the home even if they could afford not to. Tim did not feel it was appropriate for the male to stay at home:

If I could afford not to work...I don't know. I'd probably feel...I probably couldn't do it. I would not feel...I would not feel that would be an appropriate thing for me to do...Well, the male stereotype, you know.

Zack felt that if he did not work he would be "totally lost." These men keenly identify with the breadwinner domain of the father role and rely on their careers for a large part of their personal fulfillment.

With regard to expectations about domestic responsibilities almost all the 25 surveyed fathers stressed equal sharing, yet 43 percent (3 of 7) of the traditional fathers did not expect to have to do more domestic work once the baby is born. All of the traditionalists fall into the "helper" category regarding housework and childcare. In other words, they will rely on their spouses to direct what duties to perform. The term "helper" is very appropriate with respect to this role as every traditional interviewee used the terms "help her" or "help out" with respect to domestic duties and childcare issues.

Interestingly, none of the traditional fathers expressed plans to interact with their children while the children were infants, even when asked how they thought their lives would change after the birth of their child and what fatherhood meant to them. In fact, most described taking time off at the birth as time to address the spouse's needs, again in a "helper" capacity, rather than as a time to get to know their babies:

Zack: "Maybe a couple of days...I thought that maybe it would be helpful to my spouse and everything to take a few days off."

Tim: "When the baby's first born, probably two to three days. She'll be off work, so...I felt that's probably best to help with her and help her get her, a full day's sleep probably—yeah, recuperating."

Only two traditional fathers mentioned interacting with their children at all. They talked about sharing time with their children by involving the child in their own hobbies or in attending their children's school and extra-

curricular functions.

Interviewer: "How do you think your life will be different once your child is born?"

Vance: "There'll be, probably, less free time."

Interviewer: "What about your hobbies and sports?"

Vance: "There'll still be time for that—I hunt and fish, my main hobbies, so I plan on teaching the kid how to hunt and fish."

Jerry: "I love to fish and I could fish every weekend if I wanted to, but with a child, I know there's gonna come a time when you gotta go to track meets, you gotta go to basketball games, whatever, volleyball. And that'll change, I expect, I'll just focus more on her life and...still make her a good fisherman, one way or the other."

Combination Fathers

The influence of their families of origin was also apparent with the combination fathers. Norm illustrates a father's influence when he was asked if his view of child care differed from his father's:

I don't think so because I know that I learned from my father that he always valued time with us. That whenever he was not working...whenever he could get away, he would, 'cause I knew that we were special. So I think seeing that, because of the many positive qualities that my father had on me, I think in turn it's just automatic for me to want to do the same, so I think my view of child care is pretty much the same as his.

Norm's wife will stay at home full time, even though Norm himself fell into the combination category.

The combination category has the breadwinner domain still at the top of the hierarchy, but with more of an emphasis on family interaction, including childcare, domestic duties, and shared decision-making with their spouses. Breadwinning was just as important to these interviewees as the traditional interviewees, but they felt it was important to be more involved in family life. All of the combination interviewees also indicated on their surveys that it is both the mother's and the father's duty to prioritize family over career or paid work. They also expressed a preference

for spending more time with their families than their own fathers had with them. For instance, Norm and Greg both planned for their wives to stay at home, yet they appreciated the difficulties of taking care of children fulltime and described how they would take over and give their wives a break on their days off.

Even though the interviewees who fell within the combination category leaned toward spending more time with their families, the amount of time was dependent upon how important family involvement was to them. When asked how he would feel about staying home full time if he could afford it, Norm said that if he did not work, he could be "totally consumed with my family" and would not miss work. However, Roger felt that he would enjoy spending time at home, but that eventually he would not have enough to do: "I enjoy the accomplishment of work." Both expressed that they wanted to spend more time with their families than their own fathers did with them but they also identified with the breadwinner domain to varying degrees, which might be correlated with their fathers' influences. For instance, Roger sees his role as very much like his father's with the exception that he wants to spend more time with his children. He sees the father's responsibility extending beyond just being a breadwinner.

Three of the five combination fathers described actual interaction with their children but only one of them mentioned this interaction occurring during infancy. He mentioned changing diapers.

Egalitarian Fathers

The two interviewees who were considered egalitarian in their approach to family life came from families where there was a negative male role model and, similar to Masciadrelli, Pleck and Stueve's (2006) findings, looked to peers for positive role modeling. Sid was a child of divorce and Ike's father left home when he was young. Both had mothers who worked outside the home and fathers who were not involved in their home lives or extracurricular activities. Of all the interviewees, only Sid and Ike indicated on their surveys that they wished their fathers had spent more time with them growing up. Both of these men took the role of father very seriously and were determined to provide a good male role model for their chil-

dren by being actively involved in their care. They are excellent examples of the compensation pattern (cf., Beaton et al 2003). Ike expressed it thusly:

In that my father chose to leave, I think they (his father's and his views of childcare) differ greatly. It's not about my life, it's about that child's life. I mean that child didn't choose to come into this world. That's my responsibility and it's about laying down my will so I can serve that kid,...that child,...my baby.

The egalitarian fathers' views on paid work included considerations of their wives' paid work as well. Both Sid and Ike voiced concern about assisting their spouses in furthering their careers by sharing decision-making and domestic duties, and giving their spouses more time to devote to work. For instance, Sid offers,

I don't know if she'd want me to tell you or not but my wife doesn't have a very strong stomach. So I told her, I plan on changing all the diapers.

Ike and his wife, Isabel, plan on sharing childcare until Isabel finishes college. Ike works nights and will take care of the baby during the day and Isabel attends classes during the day and will take care of the baby at night.

Only the egalitarians talked about bonding with the child. Sid explains,

Because, you know, I want to be there for the birth and all that. I felt it was needed time, like it's just as important for me to bond with the child as it is for my wife. There's already a special bond right that they're having right now. Actually I feel it's make-up time for me, to make up for lost time. I mean she's nine months with the bonding. I feel when I'm starting I have nine months to make up. I know two weeks is not enough but it's what I can afford to do right now.

While past studies have found religious men to be oriented toward traditional roles and headship (Bahr 1982; Ellison & Bartkowski 2002), the egalitarians in this study were both evangelical Christians.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

The sample's lack of randomness re-

stricts generalization to a larger population. The restrictions encountered during data collection contributed to a smaller and less representative sample than desired. Self-selection bias probably occurred because fathers who were having positive feelings about their family and work situations were more likely to complete the survey and agree to an interview. However, since most studies involve people from urban areas, this study provides important introductory information regarding expectant fathers in primarily rural areas. Additionally, this study surveyed and interviewed men while their wives were still pregnant with their first child rather than relying on after-the-fact reconstructions by respondents regarding their feelings and situations before they had children.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Gender strategies (cf., Hochschild 1989) help explain how men and women negotiate their behavior and emotions resulting, in most cases, with women doing most of the housework and childcare. Gender strategies are based on peoples' childhood conceptualizations about gender combined with teenage experiences and finally rectified with current feelings about societal norms and how one's own attitudes and behavior compare to those norms. Harville Hendrix's (2001) theory about "getting the love you want" further contributes to our understanding of how people make the decisions they do. He describes how people evaluate the structures and events of their childhoods. The attitudes, structures and actions they evaluate positively are the ones they seek out as adults. Attitudes, structures and actions that elicited negative reactions are avoided when they become adults. Hence, fathers consider the things that made them happy or made them feel like they had good families and then they extract these characteristics from their childhoods and want to apply them in their new families. However, role modeling is a powerful socializer. Sometimes people fall back into old patterns despite their original intentions.

These explanations apply to the fathers studied and help to provide insights about their current attitudes and actions. Some men wanted to be like their fathers and defined their fathers as good fathers even when most of what they had to say about their own fathers was that they worked a lot. Others

didn't plan to work less than their dads but expected to do more with their children. This was often expressed by saying they would help their wives rather than direct involvement of bonding or being involved with the child. In contrast to more positive experiences with their fathers and a tendency to model their behavior after them were the two fathers who came from divorced parents. They strongly wanted to be different from their fathers or compensate for their fathers' inappropriate behavior, saying they wanted to be there for their children and provide stability.

The men's strong affinity for their bread-winning duties when describing what it means to be a father could also be interpreted as expressing how separated they feel from their actual families. What they consider most important happens separate from family interaction. What makes them feel most like a good father is what they are doing away from their family.

Many fathers stated that they want to be involved, good fathers yet they were not planning to reduce hours or take more than a few days parental leave after the birth, even when the mothers were employed. Some even plan to increase paid work hours. Therefore, these men's notions of fathering do not appear to be associated with actual increases in time with the child, especially the baby. Even when the children would be older, the men talked about their involvement in terms of activities like going to games and fishing more than actual child care.

Almost all of the men (79%) did not mention any anticipated involvement with their newborns during infancy or as toddlers. This might indicate that many of the participants do not consider these stages as critical times for father and child interactions and that they do not see themselves as instrumental in the development of their children during these times. At a minimum, these men have not identified themselves fully as fathers yet, as they are not clearly visualizing life with a baby, except in terms of provider and spouse support responsibilities. It might also be the result of very little information, understanding, and experience with the capabilities and behavior of infants. Further, it appears that although expectations for parental roles are changing, the prevailing views still support the mother as most instrumental during the time of infancy.

Supporting the idea that fathers are the primary breadwinners puts extra pressure on men to succeed. This is an unfortunate measure of success since they can always find someone who makes more money than they do. These comparisons are likely to make them feel like they need to do more. It could also give men license to selfishly pursue their careers at the expense of their families, particularly of their wives. It is the wives who most often will be forced to shoulder more of the family responsibilities, rather than pursue their own employment or career, because someone has to take up the slack.

One of our cultural myths tells us to think that we have missed out on something if our moms were not stay-at-home moms but to feel okay if our fathers not only worked but worked a lot of hours. While people, like Ike say "My mom had to work but it would have been nice if she could have been at home," he says this like an afterthought, like it is how he's supposed to feel. But Ike is not alone in expressing this view even today. None of these men said, "My dad had to work but it would have been nice if he'd stayed home"—not even when the father is seen as the more approachable parent, personality-wise. Such a perspective devalues the important inter-relational aspects of fathering, favoring a perspective that views their time as a commodity to be traded for income.

The combination and egalitarian fathers already share domestic duties much more than the traditionalists, and they expect to pick up even more responsibility after the birth of the baby. Although most of the interviewees (11 of 14) expect to have to do more domestic chores, the available evidence suggests they will merely be continuing their existing domestic duty arrangements: The egalitarian arrangements will continue to be egalitarian in nature, and the traditional arrangements will continue to be traditional, usually divided along gender lines. This finding supports the earlier research of Sanchez and Thomson (1997). However, some recent research findings suggest that changes in fathers' attitudes and actions are possible. Doherty, Erickson, and La Rossa's (2006) study of a diverse but mostly white middle class sample of 165 first time parent couples found that intervention training starting during pregnancy can have a positive impact on fathers' skills and involvement with their ba-

bies. Carl Mazza's (2002) study of sixty urban African-American adolescent first-time fathers found positive changes as a result of attending parenting classes and working with an assigned social worker on life needs. The young fathers made significant gains in "feeling positive about their current relationships with their children" and "being able to plan for the future" (2002 681). Goldberg, Clarke-Stewart, Rice, and Dellis' (2002 379) study of 73 middle class families with six month old infants found several factors associated with fathers being "more sensitive and/or engaged with their infants." These factors included fathers who

did not suffer from job stress, possessed positive coping skills, held more child-centered beliefs, wanted to be like their own fathers, had wives who were more engaged when they played with their infants, and had male infants.

When fathers "were in more harmonious marriages and the infants were temperamentally easy" they tended to be more affectionate toward their infants.

Increasing mothers' paid work income relative to fathers' should also increase father involvement with their children. Rost's (2002) findings from interviews with 25 couples where the woman's earnings were as high as or higher than those of her partner's suggest this relationship. All of these couples had an egalitarian division of labor and most

couples divided parental leave so that neither partner had to drop out of employment for a long period of time. (Rost 2002 371)

The couples' egalitarian attitudes and actions "had a positive effect" on their relationships and increased their satisfaction with the relationships.

Providing fathers paternity and parental leaves with pay will also promote more involvement with children (cf. Seward et al 2006). Feldman and colleagues (2004 459) found that among fathers in 98 dual-earning couples with three to five-month-old infants, those men who took longer leaves had "higher paternal preoccupation with infant[s], more marital support, and higher family salience" than those fathers who took short or no leaves.

Although the studied expectant fathers were profoundly affected by their reactions to their own upbringing, these studies and others suggest that attitudes and actions by fathers can be directed toward more sharing of domestic responsibilities with mothers and greater involvement with children. An obvious question is how will the studied expectant fathers' attitudes and actions change after the birth of their children. To answer these questions, follow-up interviews are now being scheduled with the fathers in order to investigate how expectations and earlier actions influenced the actual reality of childrearing, as well as to identify similarities and differences between expectation and reality.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ As a result of interviewer inexperience and respondent introversion, the first interview lasted only ten minutes. This tape was viewed by the class and techniques were further developed and applied in subsequent interviews.

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