

This article uses longitudinal data from the National Survey of Children to examine parent-child relationships in middle childhood and early adolescence. It analyzes parental nurturance, closeness, discipline, and authoritativeness by gender of parent and child. Logistic and OLS regression models of supportive parenting are also presented. Fathers are much more involved with sons and tend to concentrate on more instrumental facets of support, whereas mothers tend to be more supportive across genders in the traditional, affective sense. Results also suggest that children's, mother's, and couple/spouse's characteristics are robust predictors of supportive parenting. Fathers' traits are related only to relations with daughters. This article specifies further theoretical and substantive implications such as the relative influence of formal versus informal marital power and the distinction between child rearing and housework in examining the household division of labor. It also suggests areas for future research, including the implications of parent-child relations for marital and sibling relations.

Gender Differences in Parent-Child Relations*

MARJORIE E. STARRELS
University of Michigan

Fatherhood is in vogue. Due to a confluence of factors such as the women's and men's movements, the increasing prevalence of two-earner families, a shortage of affordable, high quality child care, and the aging of the baby boom generation, the media has heralded the development of men's child-rearing skills. Traditionally a female domain, child rearing is viewed increasingly as a series of genderless challenges and joys. Egalitarian parenting is advocated both in popular and academic spheres due to its alleged benefits for children, fathers, and mothers.

There seems to be little about the gender of the parent that distinctively affects his or her influence on children. The characteristics of the father as a parent rather than a male are most likely to influence child development (Lamb, 1987). Research reveals that infants can and do develop

**An earlier version of this article was presented at the winter meeting of the American Statistical Association, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, January 3-5, 1993. The author gratefully acknowledges Sarah Tarpley and Marc Haller for excellent research assistance and William Marsiglio and anonymous JFI reviewers for helpful comments on a draft of this article. Please address correspondence to the author at the School of Social Work, 1065 Frieze Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1285.*

JOURNAL OF FAMILY ISSUES, Vol. 15 No. 1, March 1994 148-165
© 1994 Sage Publications, Inc.

multiple attachment relationships with fathers (Lamb, 1980) as well as others (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1990). These findings refute theories based on psychoanalytic theory and ethology that espouse monotropism, the view that a single relationship with a special caregiver, typically the mother, is critical for physical and social nourishment (Bowlby, 1951; Smith, 1980).

Thus paternal nurturance may be as beneficial to children as maternal nurturance. Greater participation in fathering is consistently related to better child development with regard to academic achievement, personal identity, and social adjustment (Lamb, 1981). The emergent model of fatherhood regards men as psychologically able to participate in a full range of parenting behaviors with the exception of gestation and lactation (Fein, 1978).

Researchers further contend that healthy child development is most likely to occur in authoritative family settings where parents combine nurturance and discipline. Adolescents in authoritative homes in which parents are both nurturant and firm do better psychologically and scholastically, controlling for parents' educational attainment (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Hill, 1980; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Although there are some variations by race, parents of non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks in the United States are most successful if they are able to express love as well as constraint. Furthermore, results are consistent across age groups, social classes, and types of family structures. Although more educated parents are more authoritative, thus explaining some of the advantages which accrue to adolescents from higher social class backgrounds, it is remarkable that so little is known about the behaviors and situations that predict authoritative parenting (Dornbusch, 1989).

This study contributes to the literature by addressing these under-explored issues. Specifically, it identifies factors associated with strong parent-child bonds. Although much attention has been devoted to maternal employment and two-earner families, it is well established that the quality of parent-child relations is a better predictor than family structure of children's well-being (Demo, 1992). In light of the fact that most studies of parent-child relations focus on the quantity of time together, it is particularly important to examine the nature and quality of these relationships.

This study also contributes to the ongoing debate among family scholars about the relative importance of mothers', fathers', children's (families structural) characteristics for predicting paternal involvement (see Marsiglio, 1991). Furthermore, I consider aspects of married couples to incorporate both individual and dyadic levels of analysis.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

PARENTING STYLE

A primary dimension of parental involvement is its *constructive/positive* or *destructive/punitive* nature (Robertson, Elder, & Skinner, 1991; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Melby, 1990). A more specific typology distinguishes among authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971, 1979). The latter model focuses on both nurturant and disciplinary practices (Kohn, 1969; Luster, Rhoades, & Haas, 1989; Simons et al., 1990).

Authoritarian parents adopt a standard of behavior that they expect their children to follow without question. Verbal exchange is not encouraged and physical punishment is often used when children do not meet the standard. On the other hand, authoritative parents control firmly but are warm and engage in verbal give-and-take (Dornbusch, 1989). Finally, permissive parents believe children develop best with little or no restrictions. They are available but undemanding.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Overall, our knowledge of parent-child relations by gender during adolescence is sparse (Steinberg, 1987). This is partially due to the fact that scholars have focused more attention on fathers' interactions with toddlers and infants (Demo, 1992). The limited research conducted to date reveals few differences in sons' and daughters' activities or behavior with their parents (Hill & Holmbeck, 1987; Montemayor & Brownlee, 1987). However, mother-daughter relationships are generally strongest, whereas father-daughter relationships are not very strong (Steinberg, 1987). Previous studies suggest that the father role is mainly disciplinary and that mothers dominate in affective and supervisory spheres.

These findings indicate the importance of differentiating among the four parent-child dyads: father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son (Dornbusch, 1989). Further research is needed on gender differences and similarities in these relations as they develop during childhood and are modified or reinforced during adolescence (Dornbusch, 1989). There is little reason to expect that fathers' parenting style and its antecedents are similar to those for mothers. For example, the type of personal network that supports a mother's child-rearing activities may oppose such activities by a father simply because it reinforces traditional roles for both (Riley, 1990).

CORRELATES OF PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT

The literature on paternal involvement is suggestive for the present study because the types of activities in which fathers and children are mutually engaged, and their levels of involvement, are probably reflective of different styles of fathering. For example, fathers who spend a great deal of time helping with homework, going on outings, and having private talks are probably closer with their children and display more nurturance.

Previous studies suggest that parenting style may be related to fathers' own characteristics such as education. Mothers' traits such as marital satisfaction may also be associated with styles of fathering. Research on maternal employment and contribution to family income has yielded mixed results. Neither have scholars reached a consensus on the influence of wives' gender ideology.

Several factors associated with children and family structure are also likely to influence fathers' parenting behavior. Fathers tend to be more involved with biological children (Marsiglio, 1991), older children (Belsky, Gilstrap, & Rovine, 1980; Russell, 1982), and sons (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Marsiglio, 1991).

Couple characteristics such as socioeconomic status (Kohn, 1969) may also be associated with fathers' parenting style. Similarly, because the mother is frequently a "gatekeeper" of father-child relationships (Backett, 1987; Haas, 1988), a mother's constructive parenting may predispose the father to adopt a similar style. Although some very involved mothers want exclusive intimacy with their children and thus tend to emotionally hoard their children (Hochschild, 1989), fathers and mothers may also share parenting orientations. This latter situation may develop, for example, when mothers directly or indirectly encourage their husbands to behave similarly toward their children.

ANALYSIS PLAN AND HYPOTHESES

This study uses nationally representative longitudinal data from the National Survey of Children (1976 and 1981) to examine parent-child relationships in middle childhood and early adolescence. Most previous studies use small, nonrepresentative samples that limit generalizability of findings and constrain analyses of parenting across the life course. The first goal of this article is to identify similarities and differences between fathers' and mothers' parenting styles and how these styles vary according to the gender of the child. The second goal of this article is to determine factors associated with supportive parenting.

The article examines three dimensions of supportive or constructive parenting—closeness, nurturance, and authoritativeness. It also explores discipline both to provide comparisons with the other features of parenting and to ascertain whether a traditional division of parental labor exists such that mothers focus their energies on nurturing and fathers on discipline.

Because there is more relevant data for adolescents than for younger children, analyses focus primarily on the former. Bivariate analyses of parent-child relations in 1976 and 1981, by gender of the parent and child, are first presented. Next, multivariate models for fathers' and mothers' closeness, nurturance, and authoritativeness in 1981 are reported. These parenting styles are regressed on children's (and family structure), fathers', mothers', and couples' or spouses' characteristics using OLS models for continuous measures (closeness and nurturance) and logistic models for the dichotomous item (authoritativeness).

It is hypothesized that fathers are not as close as mothers to their children and are less nurturant yet play a larger role in discipline. Fathers are expected to be more involved with older children and sons, and closeness to daughters should be greater when they have brothers. Mothers, on the other hand, are expected to be closer to daughters and younger children. Biological fatherhood, being Black, father's age at first birth, education, infrequent arguing with child, and the couple's socioeconomic status and democratic parenting should be related to greater paternal support, as should wife's employment status, income contribution, decision-making authority, egalitarian gender attitudes, supportive parenting, and marital satisfaction.

DATA AND METHOD

SAMPLE

The National Survey of Children is based on a nationally representative probability sample of about 2,000 children and one parent (usually the mother) interviewed in 1976 and 1981. The children were ages 6 to 11 at Time 1, and 11 to 16 at Time 2 (see Furstenberg, Peterson, Nord, & Zill, 1983 for further description). A subsample of children and mothers (1,004 pairs, roughly half female and half male) is examined. Inclusion of only intact marriages facilitates comparisons of mothers and fathers.¹ The discussion that follows specifically indicates which items include mothers' responses and which include children's responses.

MEASURES

Dependent Variables

Measures of closeness from Wave 1 are kissing/hugging (mother's report, 1 = *rarely* or 2 = *sometimes/often*) and a dummy variable for children's perception of whether parents spend enough time with them. Wave 2 measures of closeness are closeness to parent (mother's and child's reports, 1 = *not too close*, 4 = *extremely close*), frequency of shared enjoyable activities (child's report, 1 = *hardly ever*, 3 = *often*), wanting to be like parent (child's report, 1 = *not at all*, 4 = *a lot*), and dummy variables for whether children choose parents as confidant(e)s when troubled or unhappy, and children's perception of whether parents spend enough time with them. An additive scale for closeness was constructed from Z-scores for closeness to parent (both reports), how much the child wants to be like the parent, shared enjoyable activities, and confiding (alpha is .73 for fathers and .61 for mothers).² The range for fathers is -1.8 to 1.3. Mothers range from -2.29 to 1.05.

Indicators of nurturance (child's report) are affection (1 = *much less than I want*, 3 = *all I want*), love and interest, appreciation, trust, and encouragement (1 = *not like parent*, 3 = *very much like parent*); and when the child is good, the parent telling the child that he or she is pleased, kissing or hugging the child, buying the child something special or giving money, and taking the child out (for all 1 = *never*, 3 = *often*).³ An additive scale (-2.75 to .73 for fathers and -3.70 to .57 for mothers) is comprised of Z-scores for love and interest, appreciation, trust, encouragement, telling child she or he is pleased, and kissing or hugging child (alpha is .80 for fathers and .76 for mothers).

For Wave 1, discipline is measured by firmness (child's report, 1 = *rarely or sometimes*, 3 = *often*). For Wave 2, three general measures (rule enforcement, serious discipline, and firmness) indicate overall levels of supervision and involvement. Specific types of punishment distinguish among supportive, punitive, physical, and psychological forms of discipline.

Rule enforcement and serious discipline are dummy variables based on mother's report of who usually sees to it that children follow rules and who usually gets involved if there is a serious discipline problem. Measures based on children's reports are firmness (1 = *not at all*, 3 = *very much*), and when children do something wrong, whether parents talk to their children about it, send them to their room or make them stay alone, make fun of them, threaten to spank or slap, yell, act as if they do not love them, take away their privileges (e.g., TV, movies, or dating), or actually

spank or slap them (1 = *never*, 3 = *often*). A dummy variable was created for authoritativeness (whether parents are both close to and firm with their children).

Independent Variables

Children's characteristics are age, gender composition of sibship (mixed- vs. same-sex), relationship to father (dummy variable for step-child),⁴ race (dummy variable for Black), and parent-child conflict (child's reported frequency of arguments with mother and father).⁵ Fathers' characteristics are years of education and age at first birth.

Mothers' characteristics are employment status (1 = *none*, 3 = *full time*), education (years), age at first birth, final say in decision making in the event of a disagreement (1 = husband, 2 = both, 3 = wife), (see Berk, 1985; Blood & Wolfe, 1960), an index ($\alpha = .68$) for gender role ideology, proportion of family income (two dummy variables were created for less than one half and one half or more, with the reference category being none), and marital satisfaction (1 = *not too happy*, 3 = *very happy*).⁶ The gender ideology index is composed of three items: whether marriages are better when the husband works and the wife runs the home and cares for the children, whether children are better off if their mothers do not work outside the home, and if working women make more interesting partners in marriage. Items were measured using a 5-point scale, *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, with higher values indicating stronger egalitarian beliefs.

Couples' and spouses' characteristics include family income, an index ($\alpha = .60$) for democratic parenting (children's say in making up family rules, 1 = *none*, 3 = *a lot*, whether parents talk over important decisions with their child, 1 = *hardly ever*, 3 = *often*, and whether they listen to their child's side of an argument, 1 = *hardly ever*, 3 = *often*), and spouses' parenting style (closeness and nurturance scales discussed above).

RESULTS

Table 1 reveals that fathers are typically less involved with their daughters than are mothers. At ages 6 to 11, daughters report that fathers hug and kiss them less than their mothers. At ages 11 to 16, they are much closer to and nurtured by their mothers, and they receive from them most of their discipline, including rule enforcement, serious discipline, and talking (fathers, however, yell at them more). They are significantly less

close to their fathers for the closeness index and individual items except satisfaction with time spent together, and fathers are consistently less nurturant across measures. However, fathers do not differ from mothers in authoritativeness.

Table 1 also shows that boys from 6 to 11 report less physical affection from fathers yet more firmness and satisfaction with the amount of time they spent with fathers. Males from 11 to 16 are less close and confide less in their fathers but identify and engage in mutual activities more with their fathers. They are also more satisfied with the amount of time spent with their fathers. The index of closeness suggests that, overall, they are closer to their fathers. Thus sons reveal more similarity in their relationships with fathers and mothers than do daughters.

Sons nearly always report less nurturance from fathers. The only measure for which fathers are significantly more nurturant is buying something or giving money as a reward for good behavior (trust and outings show no differences). Thus they receive less affective nurturance from fathers (e.g., love/interest, affection, kissing/hugging, verbal praise, appreciation, and encouragement) and more instrumental attention from fathers (receiving money or a gift). Interestingly, for this instrumental item, daughters receive less from fathers, demonstrating a same-sex pattern of gift giving and monetary exchange. For discipline, although sons indicate that fathers do less rule enforcement and talking, fathers threaten to hit them more often and are firmer.

REGRESSION RESULTS

The following results indicate factors associated with supportive parenting by gender of parent and child. Table 2 reveals that father-son closeness and nurturance are related to the father being the biological parent, infrequent arguing by child, higher marital satisfaction of wives, more democratic parenting, and greater mother-son closeness. Father's closeness, but not nurturance, is greater when mothers have more decision-making authority within their marriage and when they are not earning less than their husbands. Fathers' authoritativeness with sons is positively associated with the presence of daughters, biological parenthood, infrequent arguing, an increase in mother's employment, traditional gender attitudes, mother's greater marital satisfaction, and more parental democracy.

The mother-son dyad, on the other hand, is closer and more nurturant when sons are younger, parental democracy is greater, and fathers are more supportive. Mothers and sons are also closer when children are

(text continues on page 160)

TABLE 1
Quality of Parent-Child Relations by Sex of Parent and Child^a

	Daughters			Sons		
	Mother	Father	T/χ^2	Mother	Father	T/χ^2
Ages 6-11 (1976)						
Kiss/hug	1.60	1.43	57.37**	1.57	1.37	74.23**
Firm	2.10	2.11	-.35	2.03	2.10	-2.34*
Enough time	.39	.42	2.58	.29	.46	50.08**
Ages 11-16 (1981)						
Closeness activities	2.66	2.07	5.52**	2.19	2.41	-6.12**
Close (mother)	3.24	2.84	60.07**	3.24	3.1	17.20**
Close (child)	3.30	2.94	18.40**	3.35	3.21	16.60**
Confidant(e)	.59	.11	224.97**	.54	.26	91.65**
Identify	2.97	2.73	5.58**	2.89	3.17	-5.99**
Enough time	1.72	1.69	1.58	1.79	1.85	10.41**
Index	.07	-.79	5.68**	-.07	.76	-6.18**
Nurturance	2.86	2.69	23.36**	2.87	2.80	11.36**
Love/interest	2.71	2.61	3.34**	2.76	2.68	2.74**
Affection	2.34	2.10	7.26**	2.28	1.74	6.27**
Kiss/hug	2.69	2.46	7.48**	2.70	2.54	5.66**
Verbal praise	2.72	2.55	5.51**	2.74	2.69	2.30*
Appreciation	1.86	1.76	5.78**	1.85	1.78	4.32**
Encouragement	1.79	1.75	1.88	1.76	1.79	-.22
Trust	2.20	2.03	5.08**	2.07	2.14	2.26*
Buy/money	1.94	1.80	4.63**	1.97	1.95	.56
Takes out	.00	-.02	.74	.00	.02	-.72
Index						

Discipline	1.92	1.60	114.57**	1.83	1.68	27.85**
Enforce rules	1.88	1.75	14.45**	1.82	1.81	.29
Serious discipline	1.40	1.34	2.08*	1.55	1.50	1.89
Seclude	1.12	1.10	1.09	1.07	1.06	.08
Ridicule	1.43	1.40	1.09	1.46	1.52	-2.35*
Threaten	1.43	2.03	7.03**	2.15	2.13	.62
Yell	1.22	1.22	-.22	1.17	1.15	.82
Withdraw love	1.70	1.67	1.24	1.75	1.77	-.68
Withdraw privileges	1.36	1.33	1.13	1.42	1.40	.66
Hit	2.55	2.30	7.86**	2.62	2.53	3.08**
Talk	2.43	2.47	-1.30	2.40	2.59	-6.40**
Firm						
Authoritativeness	.30	.31	.12	.27	.38	11.85**

NOTE: $N = 523$ daughters, 552 sons.

a. Means for mother and father and the t statistic for the difference are reported except in the case of dichotomous variables, for which the χ^2 statistic based on the McNemar test is used.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

TABLE 2
 OLS and Logistic Regression Models of Supportive Parenting for Sons in 1981^a

Characteristics	FC	FN	MC	MN	FAUTH	MAUTH
Children						
Child's age	.00	-.01	-.07**	-.04*	-.05	-.22**
Sibship genders ^b	.01	-.01	.08	.02	-.57*	.00
Relationship ^c	-.49**	-.33**	—	—	-.80*	—
Race ^d	-.18	.07	.33**	.19	.79	1.94**
Arguing	-.23**	-.11*	-.10*	-.08	-1.09**	-.28
Father						
Education	.00	.01	-.02	.00	.01	-.07
Age at first birth	-.01	.00	—	—	.02	—
Mother						
Employment status	.03	.02	.02	.06	.45**	.08
Education	-.02	-.01	.01	.01	-.05	.06
Age at first birth	—	—	.00	.00	—	.10**
Decision making	.24**	.06	-.23**	.05	.46	.30
Gender role attitudes	.05	.03	.00	-.04	-.48**	-.24
Less than half of income	-.21**	-.12	-.02	.10	-.07	.09
More than half of income	-.19	-.05	-.01	.04	-.54	-.44
Marital satisfaction	.22**	.13**	.05	-.01	.90**	.28

Couple/spouse							
Family income							
Democracy							
Spouse's parenting style							
Constant							
R^2/χ^2							
(p)							

NOTE: N = 469. FC = father closeness; FN = father nurturance; MC = mother closeness; MN = mother nurturance; FAUTH = father authoritative; MAUTH = mother authoritative.

a. Unstandardized regression coefficients.

b. 0 = mixed, 1 = same.

c. 0 = biological, 1 = step.

d. 0 = White, 1 = Black.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

Black, there is less arguing, and mother's decision-making authority is lower. Mother's authoritativeness is positively related to children being younger and Black and to having their first child at a later age.

Table 3 demonstrates that fathers are closer and more nurturant when children argue with them less, father's age at first birth was younger, and wives are more satisfied with their marriage. They are also closer when they are related biologically, have less decision-making authority than their spouse, and earn a lower family income. They are more nurturant when they have more education, do not have a wife earning less than they do, are more democratic, and have a wife who is more nurturant toward their children. Fathers' authoritativeness is predicted by less child arguing, lower educational attainment, wives having more education, more traditional attitudes, and greater marital satisfaction, and with democratic parenting.

Mother-daughter closeness and nurturance are predicted by infrequent arguing, higher family income, greater parental democracy, and more father-daughter closeness and nurturance. Mothers are also closer if they have lower education and marital satisfaction. They are more nurturant if they have less decision-making authority. Mother's authoritativeness is positively associated with lower education and more democratic parenting.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Parenting is undoubtedly a gendered activity. Mothers tend to be more constructive in the traditional, affective sense for sons and daughters, whereas fathers are much more involved with their sons (with respect to closeness, nurturance, and discipline) and tend to concentrate on the more instrumental facets of support and on discipline. Findings for shared activities between fathers and sons and sons' satisfaction with time spent together demonstrate that father-son interactions resonate with larger cultural trends in same-sex male relationships. That is, male relations are often shaped by doing things together rather than by talking or confiding (Cancian, 1989). As expected, adolescent sons and daughters also identify with their same-sex parent more than their opposite-sex parent.

Furthermore, children's, mothers', and couple/spouses' characteristics are robust predictors of supportive parenting. Fathers' traits, however, are related only to relations with daughters. In light of the above findings that fathers, on average, are closer to sons, these associations may partially reflect the greater variation in fathers' relations with daughters. Note, however, that these conclusions should be interpreted cautiously, because these data are much richer for mothers' than for father's characteristics.

TABLE 3
OLS and Logistic Regression Models of Supportive Parenting for Daughters in 1981^a

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>FC</i>	<i>FN</i>	<i>MC</i>	<i>MN</i>	<i>FAUTH</i>	<i>MAUTH</i>
Children						
Child's age	.00	-.01	-.03	-.03	.15	-.04
Sibship genders ^b	.08	.04	-.04	.00	-.10	-.01
Relationship ^c	-.43**	-.15	—	—	-.50	—
Race ^d	.00	.13	.28	.03	.80	.40
Arguing	-.26**	-.21**	-.22**	-.23**	-.64**	-.34
Father						
Education	.01	.03**	-.01	-.02	-.12*	.03
Age at first birth	-.01*	-.02**	—	—	-.02	—
Mother						
Employment status	.00	.00	.01	.04	.25	-.17
Education	.03	.01	-.04*	.00	.13*	-.14*
Age at first birth	—	—	.01	.00	—	-.02
Decision making	.20**	.11	-.12	-.15**	.05	-.06
Gender role attitudes	-.02	.01	-.04	.02	-.36**	-.18
Less than half of income	.01	-.15*	.00	.00	.05	.27
More than half of income	-.08	-.17	.06	-.02	.46	.18
Marital satisfaction	.30**	.18**	-.08**	.00	.89**	.08

(continued)

TABLE 3 Continued

Characteristics	FC	FN	MC	MN	FAUTH	MAUTH
Couple/spouse						
Family income		-.03**	.08**	.06**	.08	
Democracy	.27	.32**	.43**	.30**	1.07**	1.46**
Spouse's parenting style	.23	.36**	.26**	.42**	—	—
Constant	-1.35	-.83	.31	-.61	-6.04	-1.12
R^2/χ^2	.41	.47	.31	.44	404.71	414.56
(p)					(.31)	(.25)

NOTE: $N = 481$. FC = father closeness; FN = father nurturance; MC = mother closeness; MN = mother nurturance; FAUTH = father authoritative; MAUTH = mother authoritative.

a. Unstandardized regression coefficients.

b. 0 = mixed, 1 = same.

c. 0 = biological, 1 = step.

d. 0 = White, 1 = Black.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

The above results also suggest that informal power within marriage is equally, if not more, important than formal power, such as employment, income, and education. Mothers' decision-making authority is often positively related to fathers' parenting style yet negatively related to mothers' support. Interestingly, the measures of structural power (i.e., mothers' employment status, contribution to family income, and education) and gender role attitudes generally show weaker associations than decision making.

A further theoretical implication is that relations with children may also have an impact on marital and sibling relations. Given the reported results regarding marital satisfaction, it is important to determine whether mothers and fathers who adopt more supportive parenting styles tend to have better marriages as well. It would also be useful to examine whether supportive parenting is related to better sibling relations. If relationship quality is typically homogenous within families, such a result would support a systems perspective on family relations.

In addition, housework and child care should continue to be analyzed separately in studies of family work, particularly in light of contrasting findings for fathers' age at first birth. Although Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz (1992) find that fathers' age at first birth is directly related to their levels of housework, this study demonstrates an inverse relationship between age at first birth and father-daughter closeness and nurturance. It is also important to examine mechanisms through which stepchildren's, particularly stepsons', disadvantage in father-child relations might be reduced.

For those committed to rearing children in an environment as constructive as possible, this study supports the notion that fathers need to expand their repertoire of supportive parenting practices and to participate in cross-sex parenting to the same degree as same-sex parenting. Given the increasing number of dual earner and single parent families and the rising number of divorced and separated men seeking custody of their children, fathers' responsibility for child rearing may very well increase. Because we have an interest in the well-being of our youth at both the societal and individual levels, it seems worthwhile for all parents to be supportive on a comprehensive rather than selective basis.

NOTES

1. Because there were very few cases in which the father reported instead of the mother, these cases were deleted from the subsample. Thus all reports are either from the mother or child.

2. Because the alpha for mothers is lower than expected, these results should be interpreted more cautiously.
3. Whereas taking out, giving money, and buying something reflect a more masculine type of nurturance, verbal praise, appreciation, encouragement, affection, and kissing and hugging are more feminine expressions of closeness (Cancian, 1989).
4. Because the number of stepfathers far exceeds the number of stepmothers (118 vs. 13), only a stepfather measure is included.
5. However, the direction of causation cannot be definitively established.
6. Note, however, that satisfaction may be an effect rather than a predictor of greater involvement.

REFERENCES

- Backett, K. (1987). The negotiation of fatherhood. In C. Lewis & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Reassessing fatherhood: New observations on fathers and the modern family* (pp. 74-90). London: Sage.
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monographs*, 4(1, Pt. 2), 1-103.
- Baumrind, D. (1979). Parents as leaders: The role of control and discipline. In *Families today: A research sampler on families and children* (pp. 289-297). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.
- Belsky, J., Gilstrap, B., & Rovine, M. (1980). The Pennsylvania infant and family development project, I: Stability and change in mother-infant and father-infant interaction in a family setting at 1, 3, and 9 months. *Child Development*, 55, 692-705.
- Berk, S. (1985.) *The gender factory*. New York: Plenum.
- Blood, R. O., & Wolfe, D. M. (1960). *Husbands and wives*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1951). *Maternal care and mental health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Cancian, F. M. (1989). Gender politics: Love and power in the private and public spheres. In A. S. Skolnick & J. H. Skolnick (Eds.), *Family in transition* (6th ed., pp. 219-230). Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Coltrane, S., & Ishii-Kuntz, M. (1992). Men's housework: A life course perspective. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 43-57.
- Demo, D. H. (1992). Parent-child relations: Assessing recent changes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 104-117.
- Dornbusch, S. M. (1989). The sociology of adolescence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15, 233-259.
- Dornbusch, S. M., Ritter, P. L., Leiderman, P. H., Roberts, D. F., & Fraleigh, M. J. (1987). The relation of parenting style to adolescent school performance. *Child Development*, 58, 1244-1257.
- Easterbrooks, M., & Goldberg, W. (1984). Toddler development in the family: Impact of father involvement and parenting characteristics. *Child Development*, 55, 740-752.
- Fein, R. A. (1978). Research on fathering: Social policy and an emergent perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34, 463-474.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr., Peterson, J. L., Nord, C. W., & Zill, N. (1983). The life course of children of divorce: Marital disruption and parental contact. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 656-668.

- Haas, L. (1988, November). *Understanding fathers' participation in child care: A social constructionist perspective*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, Philadelphia.
- Harris, K. M., & Morgan, S. P. (1991). Fathers, sons and daughters: Differential paternal involvement in parenting. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 531-544.
- Hill, J. P. (1980). The family. In M. Johnson (Ed.), *Toward adolescence: The middle school years* (pp. 32-55). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hill, J. P., & Holmbeck, G. N. (1987). Disagreement about rules in families with seventh-grade girls and boys. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 16, 221-246.
- Hochschild, A. (1989). *The second shift*. New York: Viking, Penguin.
- Kohn, M. L. (1969). *Class and conformity: A study in values*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey.
- Lamb, M. E. (1980). The development of parent-infant attachments in the first two years of life. In F. Pederson (Ed.), *The father-infant relationship: Observational studies in the family setting*. New York: Praeger.
- Lamb, M. E. (1981). *The role of fathers in child development* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Lamb, M. E. (1987). The changing roles of fathers. In *The father's role: Applied perspectives*. New York: Wiley.
- Luster, T., Rhoades, K., & Haas, B. (1989). The relation between parental values and parenting behavior: A test of the Kohn hypothesis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, 139-147.
- Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. M. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In E. M. Hetherington (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Socialization, personality, and social development*. New York: Wiley.
- Marsiglio, W. (1991). Paternal engagement activities with minor children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 973-986.
- Moen, P. (1982). The two-provider family: Problems and potentials. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *Nontraditional families: Parenting and child development*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Montemayor, R., & Brownlee, J. R. (1987). Fathers, mothers, and adolescents: Gender-based differences in parental roles during adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 16, 281-291.
- Riley, D. (1990). Network influences on father involvement in childrearing. In M. Cochran, M. Larner, D. Riley, L. Gunnarsson, & C. R. Henderson, Jr. (Eds.), *Extending families: The social networks of parents and their children* (pp. 131-153). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robertson, E. B., Elder, G. H., Jr., & Skinner, M. L. (1991). The costs and benefits of social support in families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 403-416.
- Russell, G. (1982). Shared-caregiving families: An Australian study. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *Nontraditional families: Parenting and child development*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Scarr, S., Phillips, D., & McCartney, K. (1990). Facts, fantasies and the future of child care in the United States. *Psychological Science*, 1, 26-35.
- Simons, R. L., Whitbeck, L. B., Conger, R. D., & Melby, J. N. (1990). Husband and wife differences in determinants of parenting: A social learning and exchange model of parental behavior. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 375-392.
- Smith, P. K. (1980). Shared care of young children: Alternative models to monotropism. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 26, 371-389.
- Steinberg, L. (1987). Recent research on the family at adolescence: The extent and nature of sex differences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 16, 191-197.