

Interviews with forty 10- and 11-year-old children (24 boys and 16 girls) investigated the effects of parents' division of child care responsibilities on children's self-esteem, their relationships with parents, and their gendered ideas and preferences. Children whose fathers participated relatively more in the emotional side of parenting (e.g., comforting) showed greater preferences for "feminine" activities and had higher self-esteem than children whose fathers were less involved. Children whose fathers performed a higher proportion of the "work" of parenting (e.g., transporting, planning activities, and arranging child care) endorsed a more gender-free model of family life. The absolute amount of time fathers spent with children had no independent significant effects. Egalitarian parenting clearly benefits children when fathers share "maternal" tasks, but even when fathers do not fully participate in those "maternal" aspects of parenting, dividing the time 50-50 may benefit mothers without hurting children.

Paternal Participation in Child Care and Its Effects on Children's Self-Esteem and Attitudes Toward Gendered Roles

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Men's participation in parenting is essential to any discussion of gender equality. Gender equality depends as much on the equal responsibility of men for family work as it does on equal opportunity for women in the public world of employment and politics (Deutsch, 1999; Risman, 1998; Silverstein, 1996; Steil, 1997).

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If gender equality were to be achieved inside as well as outside the family, what would be the effects on children? Would a brave new feminist world in the family be good for children? In this study, we examined the consequences of paternal participation on school-age children's conceptions of gender, the quality of their relationships with their parents, and their self-esteem. Unlike many previous studies of father involvement, we included fathers who equally shared parenting. In this work, we integrate the feminist perspective of the domestic labor literature as well as the child development perspective of the fatherhood literature.

Feminist scholars in the past have often examined men's parental contributions as a component of their contributions to domestic labor in general (Coltrane, 1996; Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993; Hochschild, 1989). Parenting is treated merely as an equity issue between men and women without reference to its consequences for children. The amount of time and energy fathers put into caring for their children relative to mothers indicates the fairness of the division of labor. If mothers are out working for pay, it is simply unfair for them to continue to shoulder the lioness's share of the work at home. In this vein, numerous studies document that women do a disproportionate share of parenting and housework even when they work outside the home for pay (e.g., Almeida, Maggs, & Galambos, 1993; Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Hersch & Stratton, 1994; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Shelton, 1992). Consistent with the equity approach, Ross and Van Willigen (1996) found that the higher proportion of child care women contributed, the angrier they felt. According to these researchers, women are angry because they perceive the division of labor to be unfair. Other studies examine the conditions under which women consider men's contributions unfair (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Thompson, 1991; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998).

Conversely, studies on fatherhood more explicitly address children's needs but often ignore the gender equity issues. This research examines images of what fathers should be, what fathers typically do with and for their children, and what influence fathers have on their children. Most studies of fatherhood from this vantage point are less focused on the work of parenting than are studies from the domestic labor literature and tend to use measures of what Pleck (1997) called *positive paternal involvement*—nurturing relationship indicators such as helping children to learn, being available for talks, sensitivity, and expressing positive affection. Images of the breadwinning Dad are giving way to the image of the nurturing father (Bronstein, 1988; Coltrane, 1996). Although these studies often skirt the issue of relative involvement of mothers and fathers, when they do address it, they tell the same story as the domestic labor literature. Fathers are

much less involved in the lives of their children than mothers (see Pleck, 1997, for a review). As LaRossa (1988) pointed out, there is more of a change in the culture than in the conduct of fatherhood.

Averages, however, obscure the tremendous variability between fathers that exists today. Absent and deadbeat dads coexist with fathers much more involved in the care of their children than their predecessors (Coltrane, 1996). A voluminous literature on the effects of paternal involvement examines the consequences of many types of paternal involvement on children, including the involvement of divorced fathers, stepfathers, never-married fathers, and gay fathers (see Lamb, 1997, for an excellent review of the current research on the effect of fathers on children). Our work concentrates on the participation of fathers in intact dual-earner families. Specifically, this study examines the effects of paternal involvement on children's self-esteem and their gendered ideas and preferences. We investigate the effects of the amount and nature of fathers' participation relative to mothers'.

Past literature has addressed the consequences of active fatherhood on a wide range of cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes for children. For example, fathers' interactions with their children seem to enhance their cognitive development. One study showed that when fathers were more positively engaged with their infants 1 month after birth, their infants were more cognitively competent at 1 year old (Nugent, 1991). Likewise, time fathers spend with school-age children sharing meals, playing, engaging in activities at home, or assisting with homework is associated with significantly better academic performance. For teens, talking with fathers, leisure time with them, and sharing home activities was associated with better grades (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996). (See Biller & Kimpton, 1997, for a review of the effects of paternal involvement on cognitive development and academic achievement in school-age children.) Nonetheless, some of the evidence on fathers' cognitive effects on children is subtle and contingent on the particular social context (Lewis, 1997).

Numerous studies show that paternal involvement can enhance social and emotional development from earliest childhood as well. Cox, Owen, Henderson, and Margand (1992) showed that when fathers engaged in sensitive, warm, and appropriate interactions with their 3-month-olds, those babies tended to be securely attached to their fathers at 1 year old. Esterbrooks and Goldberg (1984) found that toddlers with fathers who exhibited positive parenting attitudes and behaviors were more securely attached to those fathers and were more competent at a problem-solving task. In their review of the effects of paternal involvement on school-age

children, Biller and Kimpton (1997) concluded that children with “nurturant, active, and committed” fathers are more successful in their academic, social, and emotional lives. Children whose fathers are involved in give-and-take play are more popular with peers. One of the most striking findings was that paternal involvement at age 5 was a significant predictor of empathic concern for others at age 31 (Koestner, Franz, & Weinberger, 1990).

Self-esteem is an important aspect of children’s emotional development. Theories of self-esteem usually emphasize the importance of children’s relationship with their parents for the development of high self-esteem. For example, many researchers contend that children’s self-esteem is positively related to factors such as parental involvement, interaction, warmth, attachment, identification, and support (Burnett, 1996; Coopersmith, 1967; Growe, 1980; Mruk, 1995; Rosenberg, 1965). Furthermore, research has consistently shown that healthy self-esteem development is associated with authoritative parenting, in which parental nurturance and warmth are balanced with control and discipline (Baumrind, 1972). However, often when researchers invoke *parents*, they really mean mothers. Fathers’ specific contributions to self-esteem have been studied less frequently.

In one of the few studies to consider both maternal and paternal influences on the development of self-esteem, Coopersmith (1967) discovered that fathers of high-self-esteem children were generally more attentive to their children than were fathers of low-self-esteem children. Likewise, mothers and fathers who showed high acceptance of their fifth and sixth children boosted their self-esteem (Kawash, Kerr, & Clewes, 1985). In a more recent study, Amato (1986) explored the connection between children’s relationships with their fathers and their self-esteem in middle childhood and adolescence. Among intact two-parent families, when 8- and 9-year-old children reported that their fathers talked to them and that they were satisfied with the amount of help fathers gave them, their self-esteem was enhanced relative to other children. For both this group of boys and adolescent males, self-esteem was also bolstered by the perception that their fathers were interested in them. For adolescent girls, the only paternal variable associated with self-esteem was satisfaction with the help they received from fathers.

Much of the research that examines child outcomes, including the studies of self-esteem, focuses on the quality of paternal involvement rather than the quantity. Based on many of the measures used, a father who is very much a secondary parent can still be classified as an involved father if

the nature of the interactions he does have with his children is warm, affectionate, sensitive, and nurturing. Although this kind of involved fatherhood may be good for children, it may do little to ease the burdens on contemporary mothers. Moreover, even when outcome studies do include the effects of the amount of time fathers nurture their children, usually it is without reference to what the mother is doing. It is quite possible that the positive outcomes observed with increased paternal nurturance are simply due to an increase in the amount of nurturance children receive overall. To assess whether egalitarian families are good for children, it is necessary to examine the effects of relative rather than absolute paternal involvement. If fathers take on some of the responsibilities that mothers have traditionally borne rather than simply adding paternal involvement, what consequences will it have for children?

The fatherhood and equity perspectives have been most likely to meet in the study of fathers' effects on the gendering of children. Given that parenting is among the most gendered of adult activities, children have a lot to learn from both the nature and extent of fathers' involvement. Children certainly do pay attention to the gendered nature of adult lives. In one fascinating example, preschool boys and girls were asked to pose in a photo with an infant. The boys stood farther from the infant when asked to pose as a daddy, whereas the girls stood closer when asked to pose as a mommy than they did when given no special instructions (Reid, Tate, & Berman, 1989). In a review of the literature on sex-role development of preschoolers, Lewis (1997) reported that preschoolers are aware of distinct roles for mothers and fathers, and their conceptions are only slightly modified, if at all, when mothers work. As he pointed out, we know that maternal employment does not dramatically change the division of domestic labor. Children's adherence to stereotypes about adult gendered roles even when their mothers are employed may accurately reflect what they are seeing at home.

What happens, however, when mothers and fathers do construct an egalitarian division of labor at home? One study of preschoolers compared children whose parents equally shared their care to children from a more traditional group of families (Fagot & Leinbach, 1995). At 28 months, the median age for accurate gender labeling, fewer children from sharing families than from traditional families could accurately identify the gender of peers. Likewise, at age 4, children whose parents shared child care knew less about adult gender stereotypes than their more traditional peers. There was less difference between the groups in sex-typed play. Although the shared parenting children's play was less sex typed than the other chil-

dren's play at 27 months, in both groups, sex-typed play had increased in frequency between 18 and 27 months.

In another study comparing shared care and maternal care of preschoolers in Israel and the United States, the children of egalitarian parents differed little from those of traditional parents on their scores on the IT scale, a measure of their masculinity/femininity, with the exception that in the Israeli sample, the masculinity scores of the girls in the shared care group were higher than in the traditional group (Radin, 1981; Radin & Sagi, 1982). Carlson (1984) compared preschoolers in equal caregiving families with those in mother-primary families and found that boys in the egalitarian families had less stereotyped views of fathers' roles. Likewise, the less housework their mothers did (implying the more the fathers did), the less stereotyped both boys and girls perceived paternal roles. The gender effects of shared parenting of preschoolers may be quite long lived. A follow-up study of children whose fathers had shared child care when they were preschoolers showed that as adolescents, they endorsed nontraditional work and family roles to a greater extent than their peers raised with less involved fathers (Williams, Radin, & Allegro, 1992).

School-age children are also influenced by their parents' gendered family arrangements. For example, adolescents from single-earner families are less likely to anticipate creating dual-career families themselves than are adolescents who are growing up in dual-career families (Stephan & Corder, 1985). Those from dual-career families also had more liberal attitudes on the Attitudes Towards Women Scale. In another study, girls whose fathers spent as much time interacting with them as their mothers did avoided the decrement in math and science achievement that typically occurs among girls in early adolescence (Updegraff, McHale, & Crouter, 1996). In a study specifically focused on paternal participation in child care, Baruch and Barnett (1986) found that fourth-grade children had less stereotyped attitudes toward gendered roles, as measured by their own activity preferences, their occupational aspirations, and their views of family roles, if their fathers did a higher proportion of "feminine" household chores or child care and their mothers were employed or held non-stereotypical views toward men's roles. Because they used a randomly selected sample of families, it is quite possible that none or very few of them equally shared family work, which might account for the weakness of their findings.

To date, Risman and Myers (1997) is the only published study on the effects of parents' egalitarian division of labor on the gendering of children that includes school-age children. They interviewed 21 children,

ranging in age from 4 years old to teenagers, who were growing up in what the researchers called "fair families." Parents in these families spent approximately equal hours per week in paid work, housework, and child care as measured task by task at least 60/40, and described their relationships as fair on a number of dimensions. These self-consciously feminist parents were trying to raise their children without gender stereotypes. They did succeed in influencing their children to adopt egalitarian ideologies about gender in adulthood. Most of the children believed that men and women should share family work and should have equal opportunities in the workplace. However, these children adopted gender stereotypes when they talked about children. Boys and girls were different. Boys were "active, into sports, mean, bad, freer than girls, sarcastic, cool, aggressive, athletic, tough, stronger than girls, into fights, troublemakers, competitive, bullies, and into computers" (p. 244). Their own identities were gendered as well, with boys more likely to prefer "masculine" activities and girls preferring "feminine" ones regardless of their gender ideologies. However, the majority of children also crossed gender lines, but because there was no comparison group, it is difficult to know whether those cross-overs are attributable to the postgendered parenting they received.

The few studies of egalitarian families that systematically measured the effect of the parents' division of labor on measures of social and/or emotional well-being of children have been limited to families with very young children. Infants of fathers who provide primary care seem to thrive (Geiger, 1996; Pruett, 1987). Preschoolers whose parents shared their care had a more internal locus of control than preschoolers raised in more traditional families (Radin & Sagi, 1982).

Our study focuses on older children. We will examine the effects of parental division of labor on 10- and 11-year-old children's self-esteem as well as the children's gender ideologies and gendered preferences for activities. Our sample of families will include those with equally sharing mothers and fathers. Furthermore, we use measures of both the quantity and the nature of paternal involvement. Radin and Sagi (1982) discovered that in their American sample of couples, fathers' involvement in the caretaking of preschoolers, the work of parenting, was not significantly related to paternal nurturing. Likewise, although Carlson (1984) found that the egalitarian fathers were rated significantly higher on nurturing behaviors toward children than more traditional fathers, the differences were very small. We expect that the effects of an egalitarian division of labor might depend on just what is being divided.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Forty 10- and 11-year-old children participated in the study. Thirty-four children were obtained from a sample of 150 families recruited for a larger study of paternal participation in child care in dual-earner families. Initially, families were obtained through day care centers and schools, and subsequent families were obtained from referrals of participants. We recruited equally sharing parents as well as couples who ranged from highly unequal in their division of labor to slightly unequal (see Deutsch, 1999, for a more detailed description of the sample of families from which these children were drawn). An additional 6 children were recruited from one fifth-grade class.¹ All children lived in cities and towns in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut.

These children, 24 boys and 16 girls, were from Caucasian two-parent families.² In addition, all families but 2 were dual earner (mothers and fathers employed more than 20 hours per week), the exceptions being 1 family in which the mother was a full-time student and another family in which the father was a homemaker. The children ranged in age from 10 years 1 month to 11 years 10 months, with a mean age of 11 years. Age was restricted to avoid confounding developmental trends with the effects of paternal participation. In addition, research has indicated that by 10 or 11 years of age, children are able to think about others and themselves in abstract terms (Barenboim, 1981).

Parents had spent an average of 14.48 years married ($SD = 4.11$). Fathers had a mean age of 41.82 years ($SD = 5.30$), whereas mothers were slightly younger with a mean age of 39.28 years ($SD = 1.42$). Occupational prestige levels were coded according to Hollingshead's (1970) 9-point index. The mean occupational prestige level for mothers' jobs ($M = 7.2$) and fathers' jobs ($M = 7.1$) did not significantly differ. The mean occupational prestige rating of 7 corresponds to such professions as artist, grade-school teacher, reporter, and so on (the modal prestige rating for mothers was also 7, but for fathers, the modal prestige rating was 9 and corresponded to professions such as doctor, lawyer, judge, etc.). In addition, parents were almost evenly divided among the following religions: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, other, or none.

PROCEDURE

Telephone interviews were conducted with parents as part of the larger study of paternal participation and were done before the children's interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes, during which each parent was asked about the division of child care in their family. Demographic information about the family was also obtained at this time.

All children were interviewed by the same female interviewer for approximately 1 hour. The interview took place in the child's home in a room that afforded privacy and quiet.

PATERNAL PARTICIPATION MEASURES

The telephone interviews required each parent to indicate the following: (a) the percentage of total participation each contributed, (b) the number of hours each spouse spent alone as well as together with the children, and (c) the percentage contribution of each parent for each of 32 specific child care tasks. Principal-components extraction with varimax rotation was calculated separately for mothers' and fathers' assessments of paternal involvement in the 32 specific child care tasks. (This analysis was calculated for the larger sample of 300 couples.) Six factors with eigenvalues of 1 or greater were identified; however, only four were used in the present study. (The two factors eliminated dealt with parenting tasks relevant to younger children, such as diapering, dressing, and putting to bed.) Because the same child care tasks loaded on the same factors for both mothers and fathers, factors were created that applied to both mothers' and fathers' assessments. The first factor was Logistics and included taking children to the doctor or dentist, taking them to lessons or parties, planning activities, arranging child care, arranging play dates, and taking care of sick children. The second factor was Emotional Involvement and included comforting, playing, helping children to learn, helping children with problems, and taking children on outings. The third factor was Discipline and included setting limits and disciplining. The final factor was Attention, which included worrying, making decisions, and responding to children's needs for attention. The variables comprising this last factor were added to the telephone protocol after a number of interviews had been completed. The Attention scale was used with only 23 families in this sample.

These factors were then transformed into separate scales for each parent's assessment of paternal involvement. There was, for instance, a scale

for the father's assessment of his emotional involvement and one for the mother's assessment of the father's emotional involvement. Alphas for the scales for fathers' assessments of their participation in logistics, emotional involvement, discipline, and attention were .85, .76, .58, and .50, respectively. Alphas for scales derived from mothers' assessments of fathers' participation were .83 for logistics, .75 for emotional involvement, .90 for discipline, and .73 for attention. Three variables were dropped from the scale for mothers' assessments of paternal emotional involvement as the alpha analyses showed better coherence without them. Two variables, fathers' comforting and helping children with problems, remained. To summarize, paternal participation as assessed from each parent included percentage of total parenting, number of hours alone, number of hours with wife, and relative contributions to the three types of child care described earlier.

Children's measures of paternal participation were derived from the parent measures. Children were asked to rate on a 7-point scale (1 = *father only*, 7 = *mother only*) who took care of them. On the same scale, children were then asked which parent did more of the three types of child care tasks. Each scale was presented as a list of examples, and the children were asked to identify which parent did more for each list. They were also asked which parent they thought spent more time with them or if it was the same.

GENDER IDEOLOGY

To assess gender ideology, we used a questionnaire that had been written and used previously with a sample of fourth graders (Baruch & Barnett, 1986). Each question was presented orally by the interviewer while giving children a card on which the possible answers were listed.

First, children were asked about current interests and activities. There were 18 items, 9 female (e. g., sewing) and 9 male (e.g., building models). Children were asked about their preference for these activities, and they could respond with one of five answers from 1 (*don't like at all*) to 5 (*like a lot*). Cronbach's alpha for the 9 female activities was .74. Four variables were dropped from the male activities scale as the alpha analyses showed better reliability without them. Five questions remained, including working on science projects, playing with electric trains, building models, fixing things with an adult, and fixing things alone. These remaining items had an alpha coefficient of .64. In addition, although not part of the original scale, children were asked what chores or responsibilities they had.

This line of questioning was based on research indicating that children, especially boys, tend to perform more stereotypically gendered chores in more traditional households (McHale, Bartko, Crouter, & Perry-Jenkins, 1990).

Next, children were asked about adult occupational roles. This section consisted of questions pertaining to 18 occupations, half female (e.g., nurse) and half male (e.g., mechanic). Using similar 5-point bipolar scales, children indicated how much they would want the job (1 = *definitely not want*, 5 = *definitely want*) and what proportion of men and women they thought performed that job (1 = *men only*, 5 = *women only*). Cronbach's alpha for female occupations was .73 and for male occupations was .68.

Finally, children were asked whether mothers or fathers should do each of 12 household and child care tasks (1 = *father only*, 5 = *mother only*). Cronbach's alpha for this family roles scale was .73.

CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM

Children's self-esteem was assessed using the Self-Perception Profile (Harter, 1983). This scale was written for children ages 8 to 13 and is administered as a paper-and-pencil test that takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The measure assesses perceptions of scholastic competence, social acceptance or acceptance by peers, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth. The task consists of a "structured alternative format" in which subjects are presented with two sentences, such as "Some kids often forget what they learn" and "Other kids remember things easily." Children were asked to decide which sentence is more like them and then to indicate whether the statement was *really true* or just *sort of true* for them. The answers yield a score from 1 (*low perceived competence*) to 4 (*high perceived competence*).

Each subscale contained six questions; thus, the entire measure contained 36 items. Reliabilities based on Cronbach's alpha were between .80 and .85 for scholastic competence, .75 and .80 for social acceptance, .80 and .86 for athletic competence, .76 and .82 for physical appearance, .71 and .77 for behavioral conduct, and .78 and .84 for global self-worth (Harter, 1983).

In addition, children were administered 10 questions that pertained to the importance of the first five subscales. The format was similar to the other questions, and children were presented with statements such as "Some kids think it is important to do well at school work in order to feel

good as a person.” These questions yielded importance ratings between 1 (*not at all important*) and 4 (*very important*).

CHILDREN’S CLOSENESS TO PARENTS

Father-child intimacy was assessed with an eight-item questionnaire, the Child’s Perception of Closeness to the Father (Crouter & Crowley, 1990). The children were presented with an index card on which potential answers were listed. Children were instructed to choose their answers for each question from that list. The interviewer presented the items orally and recorded answers on the questionnaire form. The questions included ones such as, “How much do you go to your father for advice or support?” Answers ranged on a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .77. The scale was adapted by using analogous questions about the child’s relationship with his or her mother to assess the child’s perception of closeness to the mother. Cronbach’s alphas for the paternal and maternal closeness scales were .77 and .79, respectively. Further analyses showed that children’s perceptions of closeness with their mothers and fathers were very highly correlated ($r = .79$, $p < .001$). Consequently, for all analyses, the two measures were combined in a measure of parental intimacy.

RESULTS

FATHER’S PARTICIPATION VARIABLES

Maternal and Paternal Assessments

Contributions to child care for fathers in this sample are reported in terms of time (Table 1) and as percentages of the child care performed by fathers (Table 2). Correlations between mothers’ and fathers’ assessments on each variable ranged from .44 to .86, and all were significant at $p \leq .01$. The correlations between mothers’ and fathers’ assessments of overall proportion of paternal child care, number of paternal solo hours of child care, and paternal proportion of logistics were $r = .72$, $p \leq .001$; $r = .66$, $p \leq .001$; and $r = .86$, respectively. Because of these high correlations, composite variables were created by using the mean of both parents’ assessments for each variable. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for these three composite variables were .79, .74, and .93, respectively. Mothers’ and fa-

TABLE 1
Fathers' and Mothers' Assessments of
Paternal Time in Child Care (hours/week)

<i>Type of Care</i>	<i>Mothers' Assessments</i>			<i>Fathers' Assessments</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Paternal solo care	11.2	8.35	0 to 50	15.1	11.9	0 to 55
Shared child care	32.4	15.5	10 to 68	30.9	14.7	3 to 90
Total parent time ^a	54.8	22.3	27 to 155	68.2	25.2	27 to 145

a. Total parent time includes maternal and paternal solo hours and shared child care hours.

TABLE 2
Fathers' and Mothers' Assessments of
Paternal Proportion of Child Care (in percentage)

<i>Type of Care</i>	<i>Mothers' Assessments</i>			<i>Fathers' Assessments</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Paternal proportion of discipline	46.3	10.4	2.5 to 65	49.6	11.0	15 to 75
Paternal proportion of attention	39.8	11.2	10 to 50	46.3	5.96	25 to 53
Paternal proportion of emotional involvement ^a	39.7	14.4	7.5 to 75	44.2	10.7	17 to 68
Paternal proportion of total child care	39.3	15.4	10 to 75	40.9	15.5	10 to 80

a. The maternal assessment contains only two of the five variables in the paternal scale.

thers' assessments of paternal emotional involvement, discipline, and attention were analyzed separately.

CHILDREN'S ASSESSMENTS

In terms of paternal contributions to overall child care, 62.5% of the children reported that the father contributed equally. Ten percent indicated that the father contributed a little more than the mother, 20% indicated the father contributed a little less than the mother, and 7.5% reported that the father did much less than the mother. Children perceived a greater difference between their parents on logistics. Approximately 37.5% thought logistical child care was shared equally, 5% thought their fathers did a bit

more than mothers, 27.5% thought their fathers did a lot less, and 2.5% reported that their fathers contributed none of the logistical care. For emotional involvement, discipline, and attention, 72.0%, 77.5%, and 82.5% of the children, respectively, reported that these types of child care were shared equally. Because of the lack of variability for these types of child care, they were dropped from subsequent analyses.

Correlations between children's assessments of overall proportion of child care contributed by the father and fathers' and mothers' assessments were $r = .38$, $p \leq .01$, and $r = .53$, $p \leq .001$, respectively. There were no significant differences between the child/mother and child/father correlations.

ANALYSES

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Preliminary zero-order correlations were performed between each paternal participation measure and the measures of gender ideology, self-esteem, and intimacy in relationships. These correlations were performed for the sample as a whole as well as for boys and girls separately. From these analyses, correlates of each outcome measure were obtained. These correlates were then entered into multiple regression analyses to determine more precisely the relationships between different aspects of paternal participation and the different outcome measures.

CHILDREN'S GENDER IDEOLOGIES

Activities. Zero-order correlations revealed no significant relationships between paternal participation in child care and boys' or girls' preferences for typically male activities. The following two variables, however, were correlated with children's preferences for female activities: mothers' assessments of paternal emotional involvement ($r = .29$, $p < .05$) and the composite assessment of paternal solo hours ($r = -.31$, $p < .05$). These two variables were then entered simultaneously with gender into a multiple regression with preference for female activity as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 3, the equation was highly significant, $F(3, 36) = 11.01$, $p < .0001$, accounting for 44% of the variance. Feminine activities are preferred significantly more by girls than by boys and significantly more by children whose fathers are relatively more emotionally involved. When controlling for emotional involvement, there was a trend for feminine ac-

TABLE 3
Multiple Regression Dependent Variable:
Children's Preferences for Female Activities

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Mothers' assessments of paternal emotional involvement	.26	2.10**
Child's gender	-.52	-4.05****
Composite assessments of paternal solo hours of child care	-.23	-1.79*

$F(3, 36) = 11.01, p < .0001$ *****, Adjusted $R^2 = .44$.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. **** $p < .001$. ***** $p < .0001$.

tivities to be preferred less by children whose fathers spend relatively more time alone with them. Thus, the effects of paternal involvement on preference for female activities depend on the nature of that involvement.

Occupational aspirations. A 2 (child's gender) \times 2 (femininity/masculinity of occupational aspirations) repeated-measures analysis of variance found a significant interaction such that girls aspired to feminine occupations more than boys, and boys aspired to masculine occupations more than girls, $F(1, 38) = 18.39, p < .001$. Zero-order correlations showed no significant relationships between any of the paternal participation measures and children's aspirations to either feminine or masculine occupations.

Family roles. Zero-order correlations revealed significant relationships between mothers' and children's assessments of paternal involvement in logistics and children's attitudes toward family roles, $r = -.29, p < .05$ and $r = -.34, p < .05$, respectively. As fathers did more of the transporting children, arranging activities for them, and taking time off from work when they were ill, children endorsed a less stereotypical view of the family. Because mothers' and children's assessments were significantly correlated, $r = .58, p < .001$, each was entered into a separate regression with composite assessments of overall paternal proportion of child care as a control. Although in each equation paternal proportion of logistics reached significance ($t = -2.36, p < .05$ and $t = -2.23, p < .05$, respectively) and overall proportion of child care was marginally significant in the equation that included composite assessments of paternal logistics ($t = 1.72, p < .10$), these effects were relatively weak. Overall, the equations only accounted for 7% to 9% of the variance.

These findings do suggest that it is the nature of the involvement rather than the amount that influences children to adopt less stereotypical ideas about family roles. Note that when paternal logistics is controlled, the proportion of child care contributed by fathers is associated with more traditional ideas about family roles. If fathers' child care is limited to gendered ways of interacting with them, then that kind of involvement seems to lead to more stereotyping on the part of children.

We further examined the interpretation that what fathers do influences what children think they should do by examining the relation between how much fathers cook and the extent to which children think they should cook. Both mothers' and fathers' assessments of how much the father cooks are significantly correlated with how much children think fathers should cook, $r = .37, p < .05$ and $r = .27, p < .05$, respectively. Taken together, these findings indicate that the more fathers engage in counter-stereotypical child care, by contributing more to the chores of parenting, the more likely children are to believe that fathers should do those activities.

CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM

A modification of the self-esteem scales was first conducted so that five of the six subscales were weighted by the importance rating for that subscale. Inclusion of importance ratings in the measure allowed a more accurate picture of self-esteem to emerge. These five weighted subscales were then combined to achieve a composite global self-esteem score for each child. This measure was then used in the analyses.

Analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis that emotionally available parenting promotes a sense of pride and self-worth that then is reflected in higher self-esteem. Zero-order correlations were performed with children's self-esteem and all of the paternal participation measures. None of the assessments by fathers or children was significantly correlated with children's self-esteem. However, mothers' assessments of emotional involvement, discipline, and attention were significant correlates of children's self-esteem: $r = .58, p \leq .01$; $r = .62, p \leq .01$; and $r = .30, p \leq .10$, respectively. There were no effects of gender on self-esteem as well as no gender interaction effects. It was also thought that not only the types of child care that fathers engage in but also the nature of the parent/child relationship might be related to children's self-esteem. Thus, a similar zero-order correlation was performed between the parent intimacy variable and self-esteem, which indicated that intimacy with the parent was a significant correlate of children's self-esteem, $r = .31, p < .05$. These correlations indicate that as paternal attention, discipline, emotional involvement, and

TABLE 4
Multiple Regressions With Children's Self-Esteem

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Mothers' assessments of paternal attention	.68	3.53**
Composite assessments of paternal proportion of child care	-.25	-1.31
<i>F</i> (2, 20) = 6.24, <i>p</i> ≤ .01		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ² = .32		
Mothers' assessments of paternal discipline	.53	3.42**
Composite assessments of paternal proportion of child care	-.05	-.31
<i>F</i> (2, 37) = 6.62, <i>p</i> ≤ .01		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ² = .22		
Mothers' assessments of paternal emotional involvement	.51	2.94**
Composite assessment of paternal proportion of child care	-.11	-.61
<i>F</i> (2, 37) = 5.02, <i>p</i> ≤ .05		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ² = .17		
Father/child intimacy	.40	2.58**
Composite assessments of paternal proportion of child care	.29	1.89
<i>F</i> (2, 37) = 4.00, <i>p</i> ≤ .05		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ² = .13		

***p* ≤ .01.

parent-child intimacy increase, so do children's self-esteem. In addition, strong intercorrelations were found among mothers' assessments of paternal attention, discipline, and emotional involvement (ranging from *r* = .60 to *r* = .76). The only one of these variables that correlated with parental intimacy was mother's assessment of paternal attention, *r* = .36, *p* < .05.

Paternal emotional involvement, attention, discipline, and parental intimacy were each entered into a separate multiple regression simultaneously with the composite measure of paternal proportion of child care, which was included to control for overall paternal involvement. In each of these regressions, despite the control for total paternal involvement in child care, each of these variables was still a significant predictor of self-esteem (see Table 4).

Given the level of intercorrelation among the paternal engagement variables (i.e., attention, discipline, and emotional involvement), the separate effects of each variable on children's self-esteem are difficult to discern. When all three variables are entered into the same regression analysis, paternal attention and emotional involvement cease to be significant predictors because of multicollinearity effects. However, because more

TABLE 5
Final Multiple Regression Dependent Variable:
Children's Self-Esteem

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Beta*</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Mothers' assessments of paternal attention	.24	0.80
Mothers' assessments of paternal discipline	.55	2.64**
Mothers' assessments of paternal emotional involvement	-.26	-1.03
Paternal intimacy	.40	1.89*
Composite assessments of paternal proportion of child care	.03	0.12

$F(5, 17) = 5.48, p < .01$ ***, Adjusted $R^2 = .50$.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

variance was accounted for by entering all three variables simultaneously into a regression than by entering just one or two, the best model would include all three. Thus, these three variables and parent intimacy were entered simultaneously into a multiple regression, and that regression accounted for 50% of the variation in children's self-esteem, as shown in Table 5.

These results indicate that when controlling for total paternal involvement, children who experience intimate parental relationships and have fathers who contribute a high proportion of the caretaking that is attentive, firm, and emotionally involved have higher self-esteem than other children. The father's firmness seems to be mediated by love and emotional involvement and indicates interest in children's well-being rather than disapproval, which then results in children feeling better about themselves.

DISCUSSION

Egalitarian parenting can benefit children. Shared care, however, can mean quite different things in different families. In some, an equal division of labor means that mothers and fathers spend an equal amount of time with children, in another that the chores of parenting are shared, and in still another that parents equally tend to children's emotional needs. The most striking finding in this study, which included egalitarian parents, is that the precise effects of men's participation in parenting depend on precisely what fathers are contributing. In this study, we examined children's gendered ideas and preferences and their self-esteem. In both domains, the overall division of labor between their parents had little direct effect.

Children's ideas about adult roles were shaped by witnessing their fathers take on the work of parenting. When fathers comforted them and helped them with their problems, it encouraged their interest in feminine activities. When fathers participated in the attentive work of parenting—the worrying, disciplining, and responding to their children's requests for attention—their children had higher self-esteem.

As in previous studies (Carlson, 1984; Risman & Myers, 1997), children's exposure to nontraditional adult roles led them to endorse a less gendered model of adulthood. Small wonder that children who believed that men and women should have equal opportunities and responsibilities at home and at work were those whose fathers were most involved in juggling family life and paid work—who left work to pick them up at school when they were sick, called another parent to arrange a play date, called the babysitter, or took them to the doctor. The parts of parenting they witnessed their parents share are typically those most likely to be taken on by mothers even in families in which fathers are involved (Deutsch & Karpf, 1997).

Fathers' emotional involvement was associated with children's preference for feminine activities such as sewing, cooking, jump rope, and art for both boys and girls. It is unclear how sensitivity from fathers with respect to children's emotional lives translates to interest in feminine activities. Perhaps fathers who attend to children's upsets are more feminine themselves and either model interest in feminine activities or even encourage children to explore these kinds of activities by initiating them when they are together. Alternatively, a father tuned in to the emotional side of children's lives may simply value feminine pursuits and endorse them for his children. Dad's approval may offset the stigma attached to femininity in any form, particularly for boys.

Notably, no aspect of paternal involvement was related to children's interest in masculine activities such as sports or science. One might argue that because highly participant fathers are nontraditional, they might be less likely to pursue masculine interests themselves and encourage them in their children. However, it is difficult to make that argument when some of fathers displayed a highly gendered version of equal sharing in which they spent as much time as their wives with children but participated in the more masculine aspects of parenting. These fathers drove their children to sports games, coached their teams, played with their children, disciplined them, and helped them with their math homework but left the comforting and arranging play dates to their wives. Although we did not measure it, these men probably have masculine gender identities. Earlier research suggested that available affectionate fathers produced masculine sons as

long as those fathers had masculine gender identities themselves (Billler, 1981), probably because in those earlier studies a higher proportion of participant men were still gender typed in their involvement.

Sharing fathers might have a bigger influence on feminine than on masculine interests because masculine pursuits are relatively more valued anyway. In our study, girls were just as interested as boys in so-called masculine activities. Likewise, Thorne's (1993) observations of children in an elementary school showed that boys were much less likely to try seriously to participate in girls' games than the reverse, and when they did, they were more subject to social censure. In Risman and Myers's (1997) study of children from fair families, although the majority of both boys and girls showed some preferences in behavior or interests that crossed gender lines, girls emphasized the ways in which they differed from other girls, whereas boys denied the ways they differed from male peers. Children may be freer to pursue masculine interests, whereas less valued feminine interests may benefit from more encouragement.

Finally, children's occupational aspirations were gendered but were not affected by any measure of paternal participation. This contradicts Baruch and Barnett's (1986) finding that fathers' solo and proportional interaction time was associated with more masculine occupational aspirations in similar-aged boys. Although we did not have information on the sex typing of parents' jobs, we did have the occupational prestige levels of mothers' and fathers' jobs. Occupational prestige levels are correlated with the masculinity/femininity of professions. In our sample, the mean occupational prestige levels of mothers' and fathers' jobs did not differ, whereas in Baruch and Barnett's study, fathers' jobs had higher occupational prestige. Thus, more exposure to a father did not mean more exposure to a higher status profession, as it did in their study. A decade may have made a difference in the relative status of mothers' jobs.

When we turn to children's self-esteem, parents' division of labor in the disciplining, attention, worrying, and comforting were most influential. Children had higher self-esteem when their fathers shared in these aspects of parenting equitably than when their mothers did a disproportionate share. Paternal relationships that consist of attentive and firm but nurturing parenting seem to increase self-esteem. Although discipline was part of the configuration of critical variables, given the context, we can assume it was the kind of discipline that is loving.

These results are similar to those of a number of previous studies, such as Baumrind's (1968), concerning parental discipline. Baumrind defined authoritative parenting as discipline with verbal give-and-take and a rational, issue-oriented manner (as opposed to authoritarian parenting that re-

gards obedience as a virtue, uses forceful disciplinary tactics, and does not encourage verbal give and take). The style of parenting increasing self-esteem in this study is emotionally supportive and firm and thus most closely resembles authoritative parenting in its moderation and caring context.

Although Baumrind (1968) did not study children's self-esteem, other researchers have (e.g., Adams & Jones, 1983; Coopersmith, 1967). They found, as did we, that authoritative parenting enhances children's self-concept and self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967) argued that this type of discipline is important for children because it conveys parental respect, which engenders a "resultant sense of personal significance . . . which should contribute to heightened feelings of self-esteem" (p. 194). In the context of Cooley's (1902) "looking-glass" theory, children deduce that if parents see them as worthy of concern, they must be worthwhile people. This deduction creates a sense of pride, which is expressed as self-esteem.

The difference among the findings of the present study and those of previous studies is that the predictor of increased self-esteem was not overall authoritative parenting but increased sharing of that kind of parenting between fathers and mothers. Thus, our results indicate that the warm, concerned, yet firm parenting contributed by parents individually is not as important as the extent to which parents share this child care. Children of sharing parents infer that they have two parents concerned about their welfare and as a result feel more cared for than when one parent is uninvolved.

One caveat is in order. We cannot rule out the possibility that parents who equally share the disciplining, attention, and comforting are really providing more of those things. If mothers maintain the same level of involvement with those aspects of parenting and fathers simply add the same level of intensity, children would be getting double parenting. In that case, it might be the amount of nurturing care that is promoting high self-esteem rather than its distribution across parents. Risman and Myers (1997) did find a pattern among a small group of their fair families in which two equal parents seemed to double the parenting, although that pattern was relatively unusual. In Deutsch's (1999) study of 50-50 parents, some described how they had learned not to repeat each other's efforts. When parental time spent with children was compared across 50-50, 60-40, and 75-25 couples, it was roughly the same. The 50-50 couples differed because fathers spent more time with children, mothers spent less, and the couple spent more time together with children than couples did in other families (Deutsch, 1999). These findings suggest that shared loving care between parents rather than simply more of that care from fathers

promotes children's self-esteem, but it would wise for future studies to include both proportional and absolute measures of the different types of parental care to support this interpretation.

Interestingly, when parents responded to children's upsets, worried about them, disciplined them, and answered their requests for attention, children's self-esteem was enhanced regardless of whether those children reported a close relationship with their parents. Close relationships with parents also enhanced self-esteem but independently of the kind of care we examined. In fact, attention was the only care variable that correlated with parental intimacy. Thus, the effects of discipline, attention, and comforting on self-esteem are not mediated by the closeness of the children's relationships with parents. Care and closeness both facilitate self-esteem in their own ways.

The overall proportion of care provided by fathers did not affect the gendering of children, and neither did it promote their self-esteem when specific types of care were taken into account. When fathers simply "do time" with children, it has few benefits for them, although to be fair, neither does it hurt them. Children whose mothers specialize in the nurturing, attentive care they receive do no worse when their fathers are highly involved in their overall care than when their fathers are simply unavailable. Time with fathers seems to be neither harmful nor helpful to children when mothers specialize in dealing with children's emotional lives. However, we must emphasize that the children in this study were 10 and 11 years old. It is unclear whether these findings would generalize to younger children.

Egalitarian parenting can relieve a heavy burden from employed mothers. The ideology of intensive motherhood, which prescribes that any other caregivers, including fathers, are second-best substitutes (Hays, 1996), does a disservice to mothers, fathers, and children. Our study shows that even when mothers continue to specialize in the emotional care of children, an increased proportion of paternal care of children is not harmful. Moreover, when equally sharing parents divide the work, children see and come to endorse a just, gender-free model of shared family work and occupational opportunity (Okin, 1989). When their fathers are as engaged as their mothers in their emotional lives and socialization, children benefit from enhanced self-esteem. It appears that the less gender matters for who does what in the family, the better it is for children. Lamb (1997) argued that fathers promote positive development in their children the same ways that mothers do. Maybe we will not need the terms *mother* and *father* in the 21st century. *Parent* may say it all.

NOTES

1. We recruited children and their parents from a fifth-grade class to increase the sample size. We were only successful in obtaining 6 additional participants.
2. Three children were from families with stepparents (one girl and one boy lived with their biological mothers, and another girl lived with her biological father).

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