

# “New Fathers,” Gender Attitudes, and Father Involvement in American Families

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In recent decades, gender roles have shifted toward greater overlap of men’s and women’s roles: women have entered the paid labor force in record numbers, while new norms of fatherhood now emphasize men’s involvement with their children in addition to their traditional role of financial provider (Furstenberg 1988; Gerson 1993; Townsend 2002). These “new fathers” are expected to be more equal partners in parenting (and other household work), spending time nurturing children and performing both interactive and physical caregiving activities.

Whereas a large research literature exists that examines attitudes toward work and family roles and their relationship to family behaviors, measures of these gender attitudes have typically focused on women’s roles (ex. “Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed”). Yet, beliefs about men’s roles as fathers may be distinct from beliefs about women’s roles in the public sphere. And, in fact, it may be beliefs about the father’s role in particular that matter most for understanding the parenting behavior of men. This study examines the relationship between attitudes toward the father’s role and attitudes toward women’s roles and how those attitudes relate to men’s involvement with their resident children in order to better understand “new dad” attitudes and behavior.

Research shows that gender attitudes may be related to parenting behavior. Much of literature on gender attitudes, however, is based on attitudes toward women’s work and family roles, as data on attitudes towards men’s roles are scant. Further, limited evidence available

suggests that attitudes toward women's and men's roles may be distinct, and some have posited that it may be men's attitudes toward the fathering role that matters most for understanding their fathering behaviors, rather than broader gender attitudes or those focusing on women's roles.

The current paper builds on this literature by exploring fathers' gender attitudes and parenting behaviors, in order to determine whether, in fact, a cohort of more involved "new fathers" is really emerging. I use data from the 1997 and 2002 waves of the Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID-CDS), which offer rich measures of both father involvement and gender attitudes, including attitudes toward fathers' roles specifically. The longitudinal nature of these data allows the unique opportunity to address the endogeneity of attitudes and behavior and to better assess a causal relationship, as much of the current research relies on cross-sectional data.

## BACKGROUND

In contrast to the father of times past who was expected to mostly be an economic provider, as Coltrane (1996) states, "modern fathering is no longer just procreation and bill paying" (5). A new culture of fatherhood expects men to be more involved in the home as well as the workplace, involved with his children and a more equal partner to his wife or partner (Furstenberg 1988; LaRossa 1988; Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Coltrane 1996; Gerson 2010). The cultural image of the "new father" describes a father who is nurturing and warm with his children; who is actively involved in their routine physical care as well as the traditional play activities; and who emphasizes the emotional aspects of fathering, including understanding, listening, talking, and simply "being there" for his children. The "new father" values his role as a father, believes in the importance of this role for the wellbeing of his children, and feels competent in his nurturing and caretaking capabilities. These qualities represent an overlap with

characteristics traditionally attributed to mothers, and as such, I anticipate that “new fathers” will also maintain egalitarian attitudes toward other work and family roles of men and women, as conventionally measured in most national surveys.

Some evidence shows these norms may be “catching on.” Fathers’ time with children has increased in recent years, including participation in the routine tasks of child care. There has also been a rise in nurturing fathers and in the belief that the nurturing and emotional bond is an integral part of the father-child relationship (LaRossa 1988; Cohen 1993; Gerson 1993; Townsend 2002; Harrington, Deusen et al. 2010). Attitudinal trends show evidence reflective of “new father” norms as well, including an increase in more egalitarian attitudes toward the work and family roles of men and women and more favorable attitudes toward fathering and the importance of fathers in the lives of children (Coltrane 1996; Galinsky, Aumann et al. 2008; Gerson 2010).

Some research suggests that these gender attitudes influence fathers’ involvement with their children (Bonney, Kelley et al. 1999; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Hofferth 2003; Bulanda 2004; Gerson 2010; Hofferth and Goldscheider 2010). It should not be surprising that values, beliefs, and attitudes about men’s and women’s roles in work and family life should influence how individuals allocate their work and family time. Nor should it be surprising that individuals with different attitudes about work and family roles, including the father role in particular, behave differently when it comes to work and family time. Gerson (1993) describes how these factors influence some individuals to act differently within the same structural constraints as others:

“Just as economic realities may exert pressure on families..., couples may negotiate arrangements that resist these trends, even if the parties involved are unaware of the way

broad structural factors are shaping their opportunities. Some men, influenced by popular images of the new, nurturant father, may choose to express their identities as fathers over their occupational identities, irrespective of the financial consequences (80).”

As she notes, some men may be more apt to actively adopt the “new father” norms than others.

So, which fathers (if any) respond to the cultural images of the “new father” and actively resist structural and other constraints to achieve it? Men with egalitarian attitudes toward work and family roles for men and women may be more likely to share both housework and parenting with their partner and similarly also value the involved fathering role. As such, this paper proposes two things: 1) fathers with relatively egalitarian gender attitudes will also believe in the value of involved fathers for children, and 2) it is these egalitarian fathers with “new father” attitudes who will also *behave* more similarly to “new fathers,” than those with more traditional beliefs about work and family roles.

Gerson’s (2010) recent ethnographic work on young adults finds that a majority of young adults prefer a more egalitarian division of labor for balancing work and family life, including housework tasks as well as child care. Many men in her study, for example, report the desire to be more involved with their children than their own fathers were, and they also voice preference for a more gender flexible arrangement of breadwinning and caretaking. This supports a notion of “new father” attitudes going hand in hand with egalitarian attitudes toward more conventionally measured work and family roles.

Other work, however, suggests that gender role attitudes may be more complex and multidimensional. Some have found, for example, that gender role attitudes vary by whether they focus on public roles (such as educational or employment roles) or private roles (such as those pertaining to division of labor in the home and the relationships between couples)

(Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Willetts-Bloom and Nock 1994; King et al. 1997; Zuo 1997).

Goldscheider and Waite (1991), for example, found in their factor analyses of NLS data on young and mature women that two distinct factors could be discerned: one pertaining to work and one pertaining to family.

These sets of attitudes may be conceptually distinct, and egalitarianism along one dimension may be independent of views on the other dimension. Indeed, some research shows attitudes are more egalitarian toward gender roles in the public sphere, such as those pertaining to maternal employment, but less so toward gender roles in the private sphere (Anderson and Johnson 2003; Goldscheider et al. 2010; McDonald 2000). Additionally, attitudes toward activities with children may be different from attitudes toward housework activities (Goldscheider et al. 2010). Men may be more inclined, for example, to share more responsibility for child care, an arguably more pleasurable activity than housework.

Most survey items about gender attitudes have focused on women's roles, whereas less is known about men's roles. Some have inferred roles about fathers based on mother's roles (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000) due to this data limitation. However, just as attitudes may vary regarding public and private sector roles, attitudes towards men's and women's roles may vary as well. Research on men's roles is quite limited, but a few sources suggest conflicting evidence. On the one hand, Gerson's (2010) work suggests that men's egalitarian attitudes toward breadwinning (often focused on women's roles in the labor force, for example) go hand in hand with men's roles in the home, particularly related to involved fathering. On the other hand, survey data on adolescent males suggests that attitudes toward male roles are conceptually distinct from attitudes toward female's roles (Pleck et al 1994). This work did not, however, address fathers' roles in particular. Wilcox (2004) also finds evidence of distinction between

attitudes about men's and women's roles: in his study of religion and family life, fundamentalist Christian men espouse traditional gender attitudes toward women's roles while simultaneously supporting an involved fathering role.

Turning to the link between gender attitudes and parenting behaviors, the research has been similarly scant (Roeters, Lippe et al. 2009), especially for fathers, but what is available tends to support a positive association between egalitarian gender attitudes and fathering. Data from the 1987 and 1992 waves of National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), for example, show greater involvement among fathers with egalitarian gender ideology in two-parent families (Aldous, Mulligan et al. 1998; Bulanda 2004); interestingly, mothers' gender ideology was not, however, found to be related to father involvement (Bulanda 2004). Similarly, Hofferth (2003) finds in more recent 1997 PSID-CDS data that fathers' egalitarian attitudes towards some aspects of gender roles are associated with greater father involvement: attitudes toward gender equity were significant, while attitudes toward marriage, traditional mothering, and individualism were not. A positive association between gender egalitarianism and father involvement with children is found in smaller, local or ethnographic samples as well (Palkovitz 1984; Deutsch, Lussier et al. 1993; Coltrane 1996; Bonney, Kelley et al. 1999; Seward, Yeatts et al. 2006). Many of these smaller studies contain much richer measures of gender attitudes than those found in the national data sets, a point I return to in more detail below.

In addition to the typical involvement measures of engagement and responsibility, some research shows men with nontraditional gender ideologies are more likely to take leaves, or longer leaves, following the birth of a child as well (Hyde, Essex et al. 1993; Almqvist 2008; Lammi-Taskula 2008). Other studies, however, find that gender role attitudes are associated only with certain types of involvement but not others, such as offering praise and showing

affection (Hofferth and Goldscheider 2010), or with reading and helping with homework for school-aged children (Marsiglio 1991).

Due to data limitations, most research on gender ideology, however, does not include measures of attitudes toward fathers' roles specifically, except a handful of studies based on smaller, less generalizable samples (Palkovitz 1984; Beitel and Parke 1998; Gaunt 2006). Beitel and Parke (1998) suggest, for example, that it may be the belief that the father's role is important that matters for father involvement, not gender attitudes in general, and data incorporating those beliefs are lacking. Consistent with this hypothesis, Gaunt (2006) finds in her small (n=209), local sample, that attitudes toward the father's role specifically are predictive of involvement with their very young children (6-36 months), whereas abstract gender ideologies are not related to involvement in child care. Thus, attitudes toward fathering may in fact operate independently of attitudes toward women's roles.

Further, many of the gender attitude measures typically found in major datasets are few in number and reflect only the role of the mother and not the father (Bulanda 2004). Hofferth (2003) provides the sole nationally representative study I could find that incorporates attitude items focused specifically on the father's role. Her findings are based on the Child Development Supplement to the 1997 Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID-CDS), and show that positive attitudes toward the father role are positively associated with both time spent with children and responsibility (Hofferth 2003).

Hofferth's (2003) study also illuminates how attitudes toward gender roles and fathering may operate in complex ways and may in fact not be complementary. Some fathers may value involved fathering and see that as important for the child's development, and thus be more involved with their children while simultaneously endorsing less egalitarian roles for men and

women and not sharing the housework or supporting employment of women outside the home. Latino men, for example, are more likely to report involved fathering attitudes but have traditional attitudes toward gender equity (Hofferth 2003). Similarly, Wilcox (2004) finds that some men, in this case conservative Protestant men, espouse traditional gender attitudes but are more engaged with their children than men with nontraditional attitudes. Thus, it is important to incorporate attitudes specifically about the father role as well as more typical measures of attitudes toward men's and women's work and family roles.

The current paper seeks to clarify some of these mixed findings, by comparing attitudes toward women's and men's roles in work and family, and by examining how these attitudes relate to men's parenting behaviors. The study builds on the existing literature by utilizing nationally representative data that include rich measures of gender attitudes, including father's roles in particular, and rich measures of father involvement, including both engagement and responsibility. Specifically, this paper addresses the following research questions and hypotheses:

1. Are attitudes about the fathering role similar to attitudes about other aspects of men's and women's work and family roles, particularly those conventionally focused on women's roles?

Hypothesis: I hypothesize that men with attitudes in favor of involved "new" fathering will also maintain egalitarian attitudes toward other work and family roles of men and women. Gender attitude measures in national surveys more commonly focus on the roles of women, rather than men, such as whether it is okay for preschool-aged children if mothers are employed outside the home.



2. Are fathers with “new father” attitudes more involved with their children? In other words, do attitudes translate to behavior?

Hypothesis: I expect to find that “new fathers” are indeed more involved with their resident children. Specifically, these men may not only spend more time with their children, but they will engage in more physical care of children (traditionally a female domain) as well as play/interactive care (a traditional component of fathering). Further, they will take more responsibility for children, also a traditionally female domain.

### METHOD

*Data.* This study employs the 1997 and 2002 waves of the Child Development Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID-CDS). The PSID is a nationally representative study of women, men, and children and the families in which they reside. It collects a wealth of economic and social information. In 1997, the CDS collected data on up to two randomly selected children of PSID respondents, including data on children’s health and development; parental investments of time and resources; and children’s time use, among others. Information was collected from primary caregivers, other caregivers, teachers or child care providers, and children themselves in 1997 and 2002. The CDS constitutes a representative sample of 2,394 child households containing 3,563 children, and had an overall response rate of 88 percent (Hofferth et al. 1999). Children were aged 0 to 12 in the 1997 wave, and 5 to 19 in the 2002 wave. These data offer rich measures of father involvement, employment, and fathering attitudes.

The analytic sample for this study includes both the 1997 and 2002 waves of the PSID-CDS: cross-sectional analyses focus on 1997, while fixed effects analyses examine change between 1997 and 2002. The sample is first limited to those children who were the child of the

head or wife in the main PSID file (91% of sample), in order to link information in the main PSID file to the data in the CDS file. The cross-sectional sample then consists of the 1,139 children living in two-parent households and for whom information on time use and fathers' gender attitudes was available. The sample is limited to children in two-parent households since there are too few single fathers to analyze separately. The fixed effect sample consists of 526 of these children who additionally participated in the 2002 wave and provided complete time diary and fathers' gender attitudes information.

*Dependent Variables.* Father involvement is operationalized as engagement and responsibility (Lamb 2004). I measure engagement using the child time diary. Dependent variables include a continuous measure of total time spent with his or her father, as well as time spent in specific types of activities, in order to differentiate between time spent in routine physical care, such as feeding, bathing, and diapering; achievement-related activities, such as reading to children and helping with homework; and play activities. This classification is consistent with categories used in previous research (Yeung et al. 2001).

The second domain of father involvement examined is responsibility the father takes for the care of the child, including activities such as scheduling doctor appointments, making decisions about the care and schooling of the child, and purchasing clothing for the child when needed (Lamb 2004). This measure is operationalized with the responsibility scale used in Hofferth (2003), which encompasses physical care, discipline, choosing activities, buying clothes, transportation, selecting doctors and making appointments, selecting child care or schools, and play activities. These items were recoded and summed into a scale from 0 to 16, indicating increasing responsibility. This scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77.

*Independent variables.* The primary independent variable construct in this analysis is fathers' attitudes toward men's and women's work and family roles. Interchangeably calling these attitudes "gender attitudes" for brevity's sake, I am referring to attitudes about gender roles and gender equity, including the typically measured attitudinal items about mother's roles outside the home as well as less often measured attitudes about fathers' roles in the home and the value of father involvement for children. To measure this construct, I use a subset of the twenty-nine gender attitude items found in the household booklets completed by the primary and other caregivers, typically the mothers and fathers, respectively. These items reflect attitudes about gender roles, marriage attitudes, fathering attitudes, and one on spanking. The first twenty items reflect attitudes toward gender roles and marriage that have been included in several other national surveys. The fathering items at the end stem from the "Being a Father" scale (Pleck 1997) and from the "Role of the Father" questionnaire (Palkovitz 1984), and are intended to tap the belief that the father role is important for children's development (Hofferth, Davis-Kean et al. 1999; Hofferth 2003).

I first created a measure of fathering attitudes by factor analyzing seven of the eight items from the "Being a Father" scale and the "Role of the Father" scale that were included in both the first and second waves of the PSID-CDS. Where necessary, items were reverse coded so that higher values reflect nontraditional attitudes toward the father's role, namely that fathers should be heavily involved with their children and that fathers and mothers are similarly able to care for children. Examples of these items include: "A father should be as heavily involved in the care of his child as the mother," and "Fathers play a central role in the child's personality development." This factor analysis resulted in a single factor, and the Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.70 for the 1997 wave and 0.67 for the 2002 wave.

Of the other items, the items about spanking (“If children are seriously misbehaving it is best to spank them”) and about attitudes toward marriage (e.g., “Personal happiness is the primary goal in marriage,” “One sees so few good or happy marriages that one questions marriage as a way of life”) were excluded, as they do not reflect the intended construct of attitudes toward men’s and women’s work and family roles. In addition, five items were dropped that did not load well onto a single factor. The final factor analysis produced two factors with orthogonal rotation from the remaining nine items. A third factor was dropped due to weaker cohesion among items. The final two factors reflect attitudes about separate spheres for men and women (ex. “There is some work that is men’s and some that is women’s and they should not be doing each other’s.”) and the effect of maternal employment on children (ex. “Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed”). The Cronbach’s alphas for these two factors are 0.79 and 0.77, respectively, for the 1997 wave. These scales were not replicated with the 2002 data, because several of the attitude items were not included in the 2002 questionnaire.

*Control variables.* In addition to gender attitudes, several other characteristics of fathers, children, and families may affect father involvement. Biological relationship between the father and child, for example, is shown to be an important determinant of involvement, with greater involvement with biological children relative to stepchildren (Marsiglio 1991). Hofferth and Anderson (2003), however, point out that controlling for background characteristics of the father diminishes differences in father involvement due to biological ties. Some research also shows marital status to be important, with married fathers more involved than others (Hofferth and Anderson 2003).

In terms of other characteristics of fathers, some studies show that fathers from different race and ethnic groups exhibit differential levels of involvement (Marsiglio 1991; Hofferth and Anderson 2003; Hofferth 2003). Income and education level may be important, with more economically advantaged fathers exhibiting higher involvement levels (Hofferth 2003). Finally, religiosity may be associated with greater father involvement as well (King 2003; Wilcox 2004).

Turning to characteristics of the child(ren), Marsiglio (1991) finds that child characteristics are the strongest predictors of paternal involvement, relative to fathers' and wives'/partners' characteristics. In his and other studies, biological status, age, number, and gender composition of the child(ren) in the household are found to be related to father involvement. Younger and more children may be associated with lower levels of involvement in non-caretaking activities, since younger and/or more children may require greater caretaking time (Marsiglio 1991; Hofferth and Anderson 2003). Finally, several studies find that the presence of boys is associated with greater involvement by fathers (Marsiglio 1991; Raley and Bianchi 2006).

*Methods.* In the cross-sectional analyses, OLS regression models examine the relationship between gender attitudes and father involvement, while fixed effects models test whether a change in attitudes is associated with a change in father involvement. All analyses are weighted and control for the complex survey design and clustering of children within families.

## RESULTS

As seen in Table 1, the vast majority of fathers of children in this sample are married rather than cohabiting (92%). More than half are aged 35 or older (64%) and have at least some college education (57%). Three quarters of fathers (77%) are white; one tenth are Latino; seven percent are black; and five percent are from other races, including Asian, Native Americans, and

other groups too small in number to analyze separately. About one third (34%) of fathers attend religious services at least once a week, while nearly half (46%) attend services less than once a month. the vast majority (91%) works at least fulltime hours, including seventeen percent who work more than fifty hours per week. Only three percent of fathers do not currently work. Most mothers of children in this sample (72%) also currently work, and in forty percent of households both parents are employed fulltime. The large majority of the children are biologically related to the resident father (94%), and more than half are school-aged, with only 16% one year or younger. The large majority of children (82%) live with at least one other child in the household.

[Table 1 about here]

Descriptive characteristics of children in the smaller fixed effects sample parallel those of the larger sample, with a few exceptions. Given the requirement that children continue to reside with both parents between the two years, children in the fixed effects sample are more likely to live in married (as opposed to cohabiting) parent households and are more likely to live with their biological father. Their fathers are slightly less likely to be a race/ethnicity other than white, black, or Latino. Children were also somewhat more likely to be the only child in the household and less likely to live in a household with three or more children. Given these differences, cross-sectional models will be run on both the larger and smaller samples to understand the bias these differences may introduce to my estimates.

#### *Attitudes toward Men's and Women's Work and Family Roles*

To address whether fathering attitudes are consistent with other attitudes toward men's and women's work and family roles, Table 2 compares fathers' attitudes toward the fathering role to more conventional gender attitudes, including attitudes toward separate spheres for men

and women and toward maternal employment. The bivariate cross-tabulation suggests that these three gender attitude factors are distinct and not strongly correlated. For example, only 20% of men with the most traditional (top quartile) attitudes toward fathering also have the most traditional attitudes about maternal employment. In fact, nearly a quarter of men (25%) with the most nontraditional fathering attitudes have the most traditional attitudes about mothers working, and about one fifth (22%) hold the most traditional values about men and women occupying separate spheres. Further, the weighted correlation coefficient for fathering and separate spheres attitudes is significant ( $p < .0001$ ) but small ( $r = 0.12$ ), whereas fathering and maternal employment are not statistically significantly correlated.

[Table 2 about here]

#### *Bivariate Relationship between Attitudes and Father Involvement*

Turning to the relationship between these attitudes and fathering behaviors, Table 3 shows the bivariate relationship between the three attitude constructs and the father involvement measures. These bivariate results suggest a positive relationship between nontraditional attitudes and father involvement. Nontraditional gender attitudes are significantly, positively associated with each measure of father involvement, including both engagement and responsibility measures. Fathers with nontraditional attitudes toward fathering, for example, spend an average of 17.3 hours per week with the focal child, compared to 13.9 hours among fathers with the most traditional fathering attitudes ( $p < 0.001$ ). Fathers with nontraditional attitudes also engage in more physical care, play, and achievement-related activities with their children than more traditional fathers. Further, they take significantly more responsibility for the care of their children.

[Table 3 about here]

These patterns appear especially strong for attitudes toward involved fatherhood and are relatively weaker for attitudes toward separate spheres for men and women and toward maternal employment. That attitudes about the importance of fathers' involvement in children's lives are most closely related to what fathers actually do with and for their children should not be surprising. In contrast, attitudes pertaining more to mothers' roles may have less to do with what fathers do with their children. Since, as seen in Table 2, separate spheres and maternal employment attitudes are less consistent with fathering attitudes than anticipated, it is not surprising that these attitudes do not appear to be as strongly correlated with fathering behavior.

#### *Multivariate Relationship between Attitudes and Father Involvement*

These patterns, however, may be the result of other sociodemographic characteristics associated with both attitudes and father involvement. Table 4 presents multivariate models predicting father involvement based on gender attitudes, controlling for various characteristics of the father and the child and parental employment. These results confirm the bivariate findings: fathering attitudes are significantly associated with greater father involvement, both in terms of engagement and responsibility, even after controlling for a wide range of covariates. Nontraditional fathering attitudes are associated with significantly greater time spent in physical care, such as feeding and bathing ( $p < 0.01$ ); time spent in achievement-related activities such as reading to and helping with homework ( $p < 0.05$ ); and responsibility taken for the management of care for the child ( $p < 0.001$ ). These "new father" attitudes may also be associated with greater overall time with children ( $p < .10$ ). They are not, however, significantly related to time spent in play activities.

[Table 4 about here]



The other two domains of gender attitudes—those pertaining largely to women’s roles—show minimal to no relationship, however, with father involvement. Nontraditional attitudes toward separate spheres for men and women are marginally positively associated with engagement in achievement-related activities ( $p < 0.10$ ), while maternal employment attitudes are not significantly related to any of the measures of father involvement.

Some degree of collinearity between fathering attitudes and separate spheres attitudes, however, may be at play. When included in the models without the other two attitudinal constructs, attitudes toward separate spheres for men and women are significantly positively related to time spent in achievement-related activities ( $p < 0.05$ ) and may be related to time spent in physical care ( $p < 0.10$ ) (results not shown). When included in the models together, however, the effects of fathering attitudes tend to dominate.

Effects of the covariates on father involvement vary. Married men are more engaged than cohabiting fathers overall ( $p < 0.05$ ) and in play activities ( $p < 0.05$ ). Age of fathers may be negatively related to responsibility ( $p < 0.10$ ), but not engagement. Latino fathers ( $p < 0.001$ ) and fathers of “other” races ( $p < 0.01$ ) take significantly more responsibility for resident children, relative to white fathers, and fathers who attend religious services frequently spend more time overall ( $p < 0.05$ ) and take more responsibility ( $p < 0.05$ ) than those who do not attend services frequently. Interestingly, neither maternal nor paternal employment is related to father involvement. Compared with stepfathers, biological fathers are significantly more engaged with their children overall ( $p < 0.01$ ) and in physical care ( $p < 0.05$ ) and achievement activities ( $p < 0.01$ ). Age of child is significantly, negatively related to time fathers spend with them overall ( $p < 0.001$ ), in physical care ( $p < 0.001$ ), and in play activities ( $p < 0.001$ ). Fathers spend less time in achievement-related activities with daughters relative to sons ( $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, engagement

time with the focal child decreases as the number of children in the household increases, both overall ( $p < 0.001$ ) and in play activities ( $p < 0.01$ ).

[Table 5 about here]

Table 5 displays results from fixed effects models of these relationships, and shows that the effects, although generally in the same direction, weaken and in some cases lose significance. The positive effect of fathering attitudes on physical care remains significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), and the effect on total engagement remains marginally significant ( $p < 0.10$ ). These results compare within individuals, rather than across individuals, in effect controlling for the unobservable characteristics that plague cross-sectional research. As such, they suggest that holding “new father” attitudes may be causally related to higher levels of involvement in physical care of children and overall time spent with them. The fixed effects analyses do not include the separate spheres and maternal employment attitude factors, as some of the attitudinal items included in them were not asked in the 2002 wave, and the factors could therefore not be constructed for both years.

While the analytic sample for the fixed effects models is smaller, it is not likely that the differences in estimates are due merely to differences in the sample size or characteristics. Identical cross-sectional models run on the smaller, fixed effect sample produce similar results to those on the full cross-sectional sample (results not shown). In these models, nontraditional fathering attitudes remain significantly positively related to all measure of father involvement at least at the 10% level, except for time spent in play activities, despite the substantially smaller sample sizes.

The results run on the smaller sample do, however, provide some evidence that in this smaller, more select sample, nontraditional attitudes about separate spheres for men and women

may be positively related to father engagement overall ( $p < 0.05$ ), and possibly in play activities ( $p < 0.10$ ). In addition, counter to expectation, nontraditional attitudes toward maternal employment may be negatively related to time spent in achievement-related activities ( $p < 0.10$ ). These deviations from the results in Table 4 suggest that whereas “new father” attitudes may influence father involvement among all fathers in two-parent families, other gender attitudes may play a role in father involvement among this smaller, more select sample characterized by relatively stable family structure.

## DISCUSSION

The cultural image of the “new father” describes a father who is nurturing and warm with his children; who is actively involved in their routine physical care as well as the traditional play activities; and who emphasizes the emotional aspects of fathering, including understanding, listening, talking, and simply “being there” for his children. Because these qualities represent an overlap with characteristics traditionally attributed to mothers, one might expect that men with attitudes favoring involved fathering would also maintain egalitarian attitudes toward other work and family roles of men and women, such as those pertaining to employment of mothers and whether men and women should occupy separate spheres. This hypothesis reflected Gerson’s (2010) findings of young adult men favoring egalitarian sharing of breadwinning and caretaking and desiring greater involvement with their children than experienced in previous generations.

Contrary to this expectation, however, results of the current study show that men’s attitudes toward the “new fathering” role are not consistent with nontraditional attitudes toward maternal employment and separate spheres for men and women. These findings suggest that some men may be more “enlightened” about their own roles in the private sphere than about mothers’ roles in the public sphere and are reminiscent of research suggesting that attitudes

toward men's and women's roles are distinct concepts (Pleck et al. 1997; Wilcox 2004). In the public-private dichotomy, maternal employment attitudes reflect the public roles of women, while separate spheres and fathering attitudes most closely line up with the private roles of women and men, respectively. The lack of significant correlation between fathering and maternal employment attitudes suggests that attitudes toward the public role of women and private role of men are distinct. Attitudes toward the private sphere roles of women and men, however, may be somewhat more similar, judging by the slight correlation between the two factors, but are still fairly different. Thus, just as egalitarian views of women's public sphere roles do not necessarily imply egalitarian views of women's private sphere roles (Anderson and Johnson 2003; Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Goldscheider et al. 2010; King et al. 1997; Zuo 1997), these findings suggest that egalitarian views of parenting—particularly involved fathering attitudes—do not necessarily occur in conjunction with egalitarian views of women's roles in the public sphere. Finally, this also suggests that these different attitudinal constructs—attitudes toward involved fathering, maternal employment, and separate spheres for men and women—may operate independently, rather than similarly, in their relationship with father involvement behaviors.

The second hypothesis of this study was that “new fathers,” as identified by nontraditional attitudes toward men's and women's work and family roles, would be more involved with their resident children. Specifically, these men would not only spend more time overall with their children, but these men would engage in more physical care of children (traditionally female tasks) as well as interactive care, and would take more responsibility for children. Bivariate results suggest that this is indeed the case: almost all measures of father involvement vary significantly by the three gender attitude factors, with more nontraditional

attitudes associated with greater overall time with children; more engagement in physical care and achievement-related activities; and greater responsibility taken for children. It is perhaps not surprising that play activities do not vary significantly by fathering attitudes, as play has always been part of the father's role.

Multivariate analyses of these relationships indicated that nontraditional attitudes towards fathering—those supporting an involved, hands-on role for fathers—matter most for father involvement, whereas attitudes toward other aspects of work and family roles appear less important. This suggests that “new father” attitudes do translate to behavior, but that fathering attitudes are the key element, not the broader attitudes about gender, including those pertaining mostly to women's roles. These findings confirm those previously found in research based on smaller, ethnographic samples (Beitel and Park 1996, Gaunt 2006).

The fixed effects findings, however, suggest that many of these relationships are *not* causal by eliminating the potentially confounding effects of fixed unobservable characteristics over time. When examining change over time *within* fathers, rather than *across* fathers, fathering attitudes remain significant only in the case of physical care ( $p < 0.05$ ) and marginally significant in the case of overall engagement ( $p < 0.10$ ). These results are nonetheless encouraging in the context of the gender revolution, since physical care activities have typically been the domain of mothers.

The significant cross-sectional associations observed for other outcomes, however, may be a result of unobserved characteristics influencing both attitudes and fathering behavior. It may be, for example, that fathers who are more family-oriented are both more involved with their children and have pro-fathering, egalitarian attitudes. Without controlling for this unobserved heterogeneity, estimates of these relationships can be misleading, a finding which

constitutes an important contribution to the research literature which has otherwise largely relied on cross-sectional data.

### CONCLUSION

We know a great deal about attitudes toward women's work and family roles, but attitudes toward men's work and family roles have largely been omitted from measurement and discussions of gender attitudes and their relationship to various family outcomes. This study has demonstrated that not only are attitudes towards men's and women's work and family roles distinct, but that it is attitudes about the father's role specifically that matter most for understanding fathering behavior. Further research is needed for understanding what shapes these potentially disparate gender attitudes.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Analytic Samples

Characteristic (1997)	Cross-Sectional Sample		Fixed Effects Sample		Unweighted Difference
	N	Total	N	Total	
<b>Father Marital Status</b>					
Married	1038	92.3	498	95.2	*
Cohabiting	101	7.7	31	4.8	*
<b>Father Age</b>					
<30	196	15.1	80	13.5	
30-34	229	20.6	115	22.0	
35-39	360	33.1	161	31.4	
40+	354	31.2	173	33.1	
<b>Father Education</b>					
Less than high school	173	15.5	68	12.5	
High school grad	332	27.1	150	25.0	
Some college	313	26.3	143	26.1	
College grad or higher	321	31.0	168	36.4	
<b>Father Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White	781	76.6	383	78.9	
Black	197	7.4	78	6.2	
Other	47	5.4	13	3.3	*
Latino	80	10.6	44	11.5	
<b>Father's Attendance at Religious Services</b>					
Once a week or more	378	33.7	177	35.9	
1-3 times per month	210	17.9	96	18.0	
Less than once a month	527	45.9	245	43.1	
<b>Father's Work Hours</b>					
0	39	2.9	16	2.4	
Part-time (1-34)	71	6.7	29	5.8	
Full-time (35-40)	418	33.6	192	32.9	
Overtime (41-50)	429	40.0	204	41.9	
Overtime (51+)	182	16.9	88	17.0	
<b>Mother's Work Hours</b>					
0	302	28.4	125	24.8	
Part-time (<35 hours)	310	27.5	141	28.4	
Fulltime (35+ hours)	527	44.2	263	46.7	
<b>Child biologically related to the father</b>					
	1061	94.2	505	96.9	*
<b>Child Age</b>					
Infant (0-1)	174	15.9	80	15.7	
Preschooler (2-5)	351	29.9	166	31.4	
School age (6+)	614	54.2	283	52.9	
<b>Child Sex</b>					
Male	569	48.8	253	47.7	
Female	570	51.2	276	52.3	
<b>Number of Kids in HH</b>					
1	242	18.5	132	22.7	+
2	550	46.1	258	46.9	
3+	347	35.5	139	30.5	+

Note: Percents are weighted.

+ p&lt;0.10 \* p&lt;0.05 \*\* p&lt;0.01 \*\*\* p&lt;0.001

Table 2. Cross-tabulation of Attitude Factors

Separate Spheres Attitudes			
Fathering Attitudes	Most Traditional	Middle 50%	Most Nontraditional
Most Traditional	26.6	58.9	14.5
Middle 50%	25.5	49.9	24.6
Most Nontraditional	22.3	42.3	35.4
Correlation coefficient: 0.12, $p < 0.0001$			

Maternal Employment Attitudes			
Fathering Attitudes	Most Traditional	Middle 50%	Most Nontraditional
Most Traditional	19.6	55.9	24.6
Middle 50%	27.8	49.3	23.0
Most Nontraditional	25.3	45.7	29.1
Weighted correlation coefficient: 0.03, $p = 0.32$			

Note: Results are weighted.

Table 3. Bivariate Relationship between Attitudes and Father Involvement

Attitudes	Father Involvement (Means)				
	Total Engagement Time	Physical Care Time	Play Time	Achievement Activities Time	Responsibility Scale
Fathering					
Most traditional	13.9	3.2	7.1	0.2	5.4
Middle 50%	14.8	3.8 *	7.5	0.3	6.1
Most nontraditional	17.3 ***	4.7 ***	8.5 *	0.6 ***	6.4 ***
Separate spheres					
Most traditional	14.4	3.6	7.4	0.3	6.4
Middle 50%	14.9	3.9	7.3	0.3	5.9 *
Most nontraditional	16.6 *	4.1 *	8.5 +	0.6 **	5.8 *
Maternal employment					
Most traditional	14.8	3.6	7.4	0.4	5.9
Middle 50%	14.7	3.8	7.3	0.4	6.2
Most nontraditional	16.5 +	4.3 *	8.6 +	0.3	5.6
N	1138	1138	1138	1138	965

Note: Engagement times measured in hours per week.

+  $p < 0.10$  \*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4. Father Involvement with Resident Focal Child: Cross-sectional Models, 1997

	Total Engagement	Physical Care	Play Activities	Achievement- Related Activities	Respon- sibility
<u>Fathers' gender attitudes</u>					
Pro-fathering attitudes	0.82 +	0.40 **	0.39	0.10 *	0.43 ***
Separate spheres attitudes (+ = nontrad)	0.53	0.18	0.03	0.08 +	-0.04
Pro-Maternal employment attitudes	0.42	0.10	0.28	-0.05	0.07
<u>Father characteristics</u>					
Married (Omitted=Cohabiting)	3.45 *	0.21	2.26 *	0.14	0.22
Age	-0.09	0.01	-0.08	-0.01	-0.03 +
Education					
High school grad (Omitted=<hs)	-0.52	0.16	-1.05	-0.24 *	0.12
Some college	-0.86	-0.25	-0.95	-0.01	-0.37
College grad or higher	-1.47	-0.03	-1.93 +	0.17	-0.42
Race/Ethnicity					
Black (Omitted=white)	-1.83	-0.22	-2.47 ***	0.16	0.36
Other Race	-0.63	0.08	-1.12	-0.13	1.67 **
Latino	0.73	0.21	-1.82 +	-0.23 *	2.59 ***
Attendance at religious services					
Once/week or more (Omitted=Less than 1x/month)	2.01 *	0.40	0.20	-0.02	0.62 *
1-3 times a month	1.28	0.55	0.16	0.09	0.58 +
<u>Employment</u>					
Mother's work hours	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Father's work hours	-0.06	-0.02	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02
<u>Child characteristics</u>					
Biologically related to father	3.93 **	1.01 *	0.97	0.26 **	0.74
Age	-0.04 ***	-0.01 ***	-0.03 ***	0.00	0.00
Sex: Female	0.01	0.27	0.03	-0.21 *	-0.21
Number of kids in household	-1.49 ***	-0.10	-0.82 **	-0.05 +	0.09
N	1126	1126	1126	1126	954
R <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.08	0.10	0.08	0.22

Note: Results are weighted. Models also include control variables for missing data on religious service attendance.

+ p<0.10 \* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

Table 5. Father Involvement with Resident Focal Child: Fixed Effects Models, 1997 and 2002

	Total Engagement	Physical Care	Play Activities	Achievement- Related Activities	Respon- sibility
Pro-fathering attitudes	0.89 +	0.36 *	0.19	0.07	0.01
<u>Father characteristics</u>					
Married (Omitted=Cohabiting)	0.65	-1.07	2.21	-0.04	-1.33
Father age	-0.13	0.03	-0.10	-0.02	-0.11
<u>Attendance at religious services</u>					
Once/week or more (Omitted=less than 1x/month)	-1.56 +	-0.44	-0.31	0.04	-0.16
1-3 times per month	1.02	0.84	0.06	0.44 **	-0.33
<u>Employment</u>					
Mother's work hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.02 *
Father's work hours	-0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.03
<u>Child characteristics</u>					
Focal child age	0.00	0.00	0.01	-0.01 **	0.01
Number of kids in hh	-1.12	0.21	-1.57 *	-0.06	-0.36
N	516	516	516	516	420
R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.11

Note: Results are weighted. Models also include control variables for missing data on religious service attendance.

+ p<0.10 \* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001