The Social Perception of Fatherhood:
A Comparison of Father's and Mother's
Caregiving During Mealtime

by

Suzanne Renee Smith

A masters thesis
submitted to the faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Child Development

Approved: _____
Michael J. Sporakowski, Chairman

_____   _____
Katherine R. Allen   Jay A. Mancini

May, 1992
Blacksburg, Virginia

THE SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF FATHERHOOD: A COMPARISON

OF FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S CAREGIVING DURING MEALTIME

by

Suzanne Renee Smith

Committee Chairman: Michael J. Sporakowski

Family and Child Development

(ABSTRACT)

Society perceives that fathers are taking a more active role within the family, this role is referred to as the conduct of father's, but what is perhaps changing more rapidly is the culture of fatherhood, or the shift in society's perception of what roles each parent is to play. The purpose of this study was to compare the caregiving roles of mothers and fathers during mealtime. Specifically, do mother's as compared to father's attend to more of the maintenance tasks required by children during this task oriented situation? The major goal of the researcher was to determine if the father's under study are taking on as much responsibility within the home as current literature seems to suggest.

Three families were observed during three separate meals each to determine which parent was fulfilling what needs the child may have had and who seemed to provide the needed child care during meals. Field notes were taken after each observation and these data were coded according to 26 coding categories. After the data were coded, analysis indicated similarities and differences among the

families, both of which provided useful insights into the general, as well as specific, research questions.

The families observed did maintain a fairly traditional division of labor as all of the families included mothers that stay home and father's that work at a university. All mothers had meals waiting for their husbands when they got home. The mothers seated themselves closest to the youngest children, the one's most likely to need help during the meal. Gender differences in parental behavior were seen only occasionally, probably due to the seating arrangement as well as the level of activity of the mother at the times observed. Father's were seen to have interacted more with the older children in a social capacity, although many signs of care such as changing diapers and helping to cut up food by them were also observed. Finally, with regards to discipline the families were each different. Each household had a different means of division of power. By this it is meant that in one family the father had the ultimate decision in matters and gave permission for things such as leaving the table while in the other two families the mother had the final say. The dominance of the mother as a disciplinarian can be explained, in part, by the fact that the mother was the one with the children most of the day and interacted more on a maintenance basis than a social or play basis as the fathers often did. The mother's primary concern was meeting the needs of the child, not social interaction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of women, especially mothers with younger children, in the labor force has prompted interest in many new areas of research (Bernard, 1981). In addition, the "traditional" family has basically ceased to exist as 75% of the population in the 1970's had living arrangements different then those previously considered to be typical (Levitan & Belous, 1981). These changes have brought about an increase in research concerning the effects of external variables such as divorce and increased working hours by women on marriage and the family. One topic which has been studied more in the last decade then ever before is that of the role of the father in the raising of children (Hanson & Bozett, 1987a). Whereas previous research tends to use women as the respondents on empirical studies with the focus on the maternal aspects of childrearing (Levitan & Belous, 1981), current researchers are taking interest in the father's family work as well. With women taking on new roles and families taking on new styles, how the role of the father is changing in conjunction with these shifts in mother's levels of participation in parenting is of particular interest to researchers in the field (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Pleck, 1983).

To cite the number of studies which mention or allude to the changes in men's participation in the family would be a formidable task. While it does appear that many fathers are meeting the

challenges brought about by women moving into the work force and by men's increasing participation outside of their "breadwinner role," this issue needs to be further explored. Men in contemporary American society have been shown to have increased their involvement in the family over the past 60 years, with substantial increases over the last two decades (Juster, 1985). Husbands do more of the housework, such as doing dishes, and more child care, such as changing diapers and helping children get ready for bed. However, what these data do not take into consideration is that this increased participation is based on an analysis of time spent in family roles, not the amount of responsibility these men are taking on within these roles. Pleck (1987a) states that the actual amount of responsibility in family roles has likely not changed as much as the amount of the father's participation has changed.

LaRossa (1988) refers to the discrepant phenomena described above as the asynchrony between the culture and conduct of fatherhood. The culture of fatherhood deals with the actual shared meaning and value society gives to fatherhood while the conduct of fatherhood refers to what behaviors fathers are actually exhibiting. People in society today seem to feel as if there has been a shift in the conduct of fathers due to the changes in family structure over the past few decades. However, the more likely change has been in the culture of fatherhood (Pleck, 1987b; Rotundo, 1985). People are believing that the role of fathers has actually changed now that mothers are not in the home as much as they used to be. Fathers are

perhaps filling the gap that mothers are leaving when they enter the work force. While it does seem that society has increased its acceptance of the role that fathers can play in the raising of their children, the amount of actual change in primary responsibility has probably not changed a great deal (LaRossa, 1988).

One way to study this claim is to analyze the interactions that fathers, as compared to mothers, are actually involved in with their children. Lamb (1987) provides one way of assessing this involvement. He divides parental involvement into three levels: engagement (solo time with a child), accessibility (parent is available to the child while involved in another activity), and responsibility (keeps up with the child's needs and welfare). From this breakdown one could further separate the categories into primary and secondary care (LaRossa, 1988). Primary care would include engagement and responsibility as the focus is on the tasks that need to be accomplished to meet the needs of the child. On the other hand, secondary care would include being with the child, and possibly even interacting with the child, but not completing all the basic maintenance tasks required by children.

Based on the previous description of levels of involvement, primary and secondary care, and LaRossa's (1988) hypothesized inequality between the culture and conduct of fatherhood, it would seem that research is required which assesses the relationship between these three components. A participant observational study of fathers' and mothers' involvement with children during mealtime

was conducted to meet this challenge. Fathers are more often seen as providing recreational or play roles (Lamb, 1981), while mothers are seen traditionally as the caretakers (Lein, 1979). Thus, while there are several variables which were examined, such as gender and age of the child, the primary objective of this study was to assess who is providing primary and secondary care of children within this task oriented setting. Based on the concept of salience, which is a part of the symbolic interactional framework, it was assumed that the behaviors a father exhibits during this isolated time frame will be similar to those usually practiced in the home because of the importance of the parents implied hierarchy of roles (LaRossa & Reitzes, in press). The aim of the present research was to examine how the culture and conduct of fatherhood is changing as can be shown by father's involvement with their children.

4

CHAPTER II.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Context

With the changes that are taking place in society, and the roles that are beginning to show some flexibility, it is important to first look at how those roles were developed historically so that one may better appreciate the ambivalence these changes are creating within our present culture. In the developmental years of this country, before the onset of industrialization, during the 1500 to 1800's, family life was characteristic of life in an agrarian society. Fathers worked closely with their children, especially sons, in the field and around the house to build a livelihood (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). The importance of fathers was also seen in the practice of passing down land and property to children upon the fathers death, as well as the practice of passing down the male-ancestral names to children (Smith, 1985). Demos (1986) extrapolates that there is an apparent cohesion felt by these families based on the fact that child abuse was almost nonexistent during the colonial period of history.

The paternal ideals began to shift during the pre-industrial era as the influence of the father as the disciplinarian and patriarchal dominator turned to a more sensitive influence. The importance of the emotional bond was slowly becoming realized in middle-class society, and fathers were starting to break free of the strict

practices some of their fathers utilized (Greven, 1973). Part of this was due to the increasing commercialized economy which caused men to be separated more from the community, thus prompting them to turn to the family for emotional support (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). In addition, religious and political affiliation began to change some of the traditional ideologies as both Protestantism and some branches of the Catholic church increased their emphasis on the family bond and emotional supportiveness (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). Of course, there is still debate among historians as to the actual amount of effect these changes really had on fathers during this time, as well as which groups or classes of people were effected. It is likely that the upper and middle classes could have been influenced by these sources first and then these social classes influenced the lower class. Some changes, such as the redefinition of the role of the father, were beginning to occur around the early 19th century with regards to fathers and the role of the family (McLaughlin, 1975).

With the industrial revolution during the late 18th century came many changes for fathers and their roles within the family as the father's status began to change. The importance of property was lessened as fathers had less land to pass down to their children and this decreased the amount of power fathers had over their children (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). Another change was that work became separated from the families as jobs were now located outside of the home in factories or companies in town. Fathers were also

sometimes employed some distance from where they resided as they had to go to the towns where factory jobs were available (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). The change in the type of work, as well as the increased tension felt by men at work, brought about new patterns within the family. Fathers were also seen to be more harsh with their children due to the strain they felt at work and their fatigue from being in the factory (Sterns, 1990). This brought with it an increased emphasis on the woman as the person responsible for home tasks and child care while the father was to go to work to support the family the mother was nurturing at home. An increase in the differentiation and specialization of roles due to the growth in the economic world was certainly a hallmark of modernization. The family lost its role as a productive unit and was now responsible for helping members to adapt to the socioeconomic change (Davis, 1986).

The economic shift from agrarian lifestyles to increased attention to life outside of the home was the dominant pattern well into the 20th century, especially for the upper and middle classes. The stresses within the work place, such as long hours, poor working conditions, and long commutes, did begin to lessen around the second decade of this century and this brought about an increase in the amount of time fathers spent in leisure activities. The availability of more free time also began the inclusion of children in father's recreational and leisure time activities as there was more money available and more time to use that money (Bozett & Hanson, 1991).

This shift in availability of time and resources is the beginning of the changes that have been taking place in society ever since, such as increased participation in the work force by women and increased participation of fathers in the home.

For women, the family has been the primary area of concern while for men work investments have been primary and could be expected to intrude upon the family (Berger, 1979). While this was especially true in the early 20th century, it is a carryover from previous decades, and is still in existence in much of today's society. Bernard (1981) refers to this as the good-provider role in that a father's primary role within the family is to be successful in his work so that the family could live a respectable life. The family was said to be a display case for the success of the father which had even come to be a sign of masculinity. This division of labor has established within our society a set of divergent sex role stereotypes to which parents should adhere (Sawin & Parke, 1979). It is these traditional roles, established centuries before when women and men took on responsibility for separate components of family life, that are being confronted in the women's liberation movement, as well as in some of the men's movement's.

There are pressures from many aspects of society which are making it difficult for men, as well as women, to escape these binding roles. Men have been socialized to exert most of their energy towards the breadwinning effort and family life was seen as diverting attention away from this role (Lein, 1979). While it is

possible to spend less time at work and more time with the family, there is still some ambivalence by men to change due to the restrictive nature of traditional society to maintain their stereotypical roles (Lein, 1979). There is a good deal of literature today on the influence of traditional attitudes on men's increase in paternal involvement (Aberg, Small, & Watson, 1977; Lein, 1979; Pietropinto, 1986: Pleck, 1987a; Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989). Fathers as a whole are seen as being more willing to participate in child care and house care tasks if their spouses, and other family members and friends, are accepting of the changing roles of men and women in families. However, if the family believes that fathers are inferior to mothers in child care, parents will not likely be motivated to change their traditional division of roles (Pietropinto, 1986).

Change's Seen in Family Roles

Pleck (1987a) describes three trends that are taking place in men's changes in family roles. These are traditionalism, superficial or negative change, and actual positive change. The first of these is exactly as it's name implies, a lack of change from the stereotypical norms. The second trend is studied a great deal by Ehrenreich (1983;1984) who indicates that men are now fleeing their breadwinning responsibilities leaving women and children subject to poverty while they pursue their own interests. While some of this may be true, there are obvious overstatements, as well as a lack of

consideration of confounding variables (Pleck, 1987a). The third change in men's family roles is the change that men are actually taking on more responsibility within the family, including house work as well as child care, and that they share all aspects of family life equally with their spouses. The third trend mentioned is the change that LaRossa (1988) and others have referred to as being the dominant change seen by society.

What has spurred the movement to study fathers, besides the historical changes that have taken pace within society? One powerful influence has been the media. Popular magazines have increased their publication of articles about fathers, as well as advice columns for fathers to learn to be better parents (Swain & Parke, 1979). Magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *Cosmopolitan* have also conducted surveys to elicit responses to how people feel roles are changing in the family. While Enos and Enos (1985) wrote an article from one such study that included 74,000 responses showing that men and women's roles are certainly more fluid now than in the past, the bias of the sample should be taken into consideration. Respondents were mostly females who chose to send in the survey from a magazine whose majority readership is female. The exclusiveness of the sample does not allow for the opinions of males to be considered. There has also been an increase in the amount of advice books written for fathers.

Another subject for the media was an enhanced awareness of films addressing the issue of men's changing roles. *Kramer vs.*

Kramer was one of the earliest of these movies. It dealt with a father who was given sole custody of his son, unwillingly. He came to love his role as a father and his struggles to reach this point presented a very touching and moving picture. Dustin Hoffman was in another box office hit, *Tootsie*, in which he dresses as a woman in order to work as an actress. Finally, *Mr. Mom* was a movie during which the father becomes the primary caretaker of the house and kids. Granted, an initial reason for choosing to see the movies could be the popularity of Dustin Hoffman, or the fact that the last two movies are comedies, but they also all brought in many viewers and positive responses to the films because of their content (Lewis, 1986).

While the role of the media is certainly important in bringing about changes in the study of fathers, another important contribution is the increased participation of fathers in the pregnancy and childbirth process. One example of this is the increased use of natural childbirth in which the father is an active participant in the preparation of labor, as well as the actual delivery process (Pedersen, 1980). The ability to actually touch and hold the infant is present much more quickly after birth than it previously was and this is thought to directly influence the fathers level of participation in care of the child (Pedersen, 1980). Lewis (1986) also cites a Gallup poll which showed that the percentage of fathers present in the delivery room is from 80-90% as opposed to only 27% a decade ago. If fathers are now being involved in the care

11

of the child prior to birth and during the birthing process, then the chances that they will continue to participate in these activities might be projected to be greater.

Increased Scientific Study

Media influences and increased participation in the childbirth process have also sparked an interest in the scientific study of fathers. Many writers from different theoretical orientations have begun including fathers in their research which was previously female-based. Perhaps one of the best examples of this inclusion, besides the child development literature which will be covered below, is the psychoanalytic literature. Diamond (1986) refers to the father as the forgotten parent in his writing on parenting in the psychoanalytic literature. This body of literature has traditionally placed the responsibility for children, as well as the blame, on the mothers (Cath, 1986). Within the past 20 years the gravity of the mistake of holding mother's solely responsible has been taken into consideration and is being addressed within the literature. Some writers with a psychoanalytic orientation say that children desire to be parents during childhood and that this desire is because of the role the father plays in the child's development (Hunt & Rudden, 1986). Hunt and Rudden also refer to the fact that research has led to the conclusion that men perhaps desire to be a parent out of their own desire for love and nurturance. Frodi and Lamb (1978) have indicated that fathers can develop a bond with their infants similar to that of mothers, and that the child is capable of responding to

12

either parent. Thus, the father has become an integral part of the psychoanalytic literature in recent studies (Hunt & Rudden, 1986).

Psychological and developmental researchers are increasingly concerned with more of the family unit than simply the mother-child relationship. Research on fathers, which until recently was restricted to the effects of parental absence, now includes studies of father's participation and feelings about being an actively involved parent (Pedersen, 1980). As was previously stated, the increased involvement of fathers in the delivery process has also increased the amount of study of father's participation in the child care activities once the child is born, especially during infancy (Pedersen, 1980).

There are other social trends which have also affected the study of fathers' participation in families. While some social trends were stated in the introduction, and these aspects were not assessed in the present study, it is important to mention them as other reasons for the increased study of fathers. The most obvious is the increased movement of women into the work force (Barnett & Baruch, 1987). Another influence is the increased awareness that fathers are capable of caring for children and that their involvement in the development of their children is important (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Day & Mackey, 1986; Mackey, 1985; Pleck, 1983). Finally, a recent influence is the increasing unemployment rate which is causing more men to be at home without a job, thus increasing the

likelihood that they will have the time for child care (Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989).

Father's Actual Involvement

How much are fathers actually involved in the care of their children? Several studies have been conducted which assess the apparent increase in men's family work and the findings are inconclusive at best. Lamb, Pleck, and Levine (1986) indicate that the levels of paternal involvement over the past two decades have increased significantly, although not as quickly as society believes them to have changed. However, Coverman and Sheley (1986) did not find such an increase in their study of changes in men's housework from 1965-1975. Both studies show that women reportedly performed, and continue to perform, the majority of child care tasks. Additional studies that do show an increase in fathers participation in home care, often do not show a significant change (Coverman &Sheley, 1986; Davis, 1982).

For those studies which do show a significant change, Coverman and Sheley (1986) note that one should take into consideration that some studies that compare previous and current levels of participation and show a positive increase in child care do not take into consideration that the number of children per household has changed over the past few decades. This might lead one to conclude that actual participation with each child has increased as the number of children has decreased while the number of minutes spent with children has increased. In Coverman and Sheley's recent study,

14

however, this was not the case after they adjusted the means for the 1965 and 1975 data. The most notable change in child care was the increase in time spent with preschool children. This increased activity was not present among parents with older children in this sample (Coverman & Sheley, 1986).

<u>Infant Involvement</u>

It is important to assess the level of involvement within four different age groups: infants, toddler (12-24 months), preschool (3-5 years of age), and school age children (ages 6-12). In the first group, infants, fathers have been found to be active participants in interactions with their newborn infants when presented with the opportunity to feed them (Sawin & Parke, 1979). During the 10 minute observation, fathers were observed to be involved in more social interaction than actual feeding behaviors, but the same tasks as were completed by the mothers were completed by the fathers (Sawin & Parke, 1979). Hanson and Bozett (1987a,b) also found that fathers were more likely to be involved in social play with their children. Infants were thought to relate to parents differently as fathers are often more engaged in rough-and-tumble play, or as playmates, while mothers are thought to be more involved as primary sources of affiliative behaviors, or as being the actual caretakers of children (Hanson & Bozett, 1987b).

LaRossa and LaRossa (1981) also discuss some of the literature comparing work and play roles as provided by each parent. While both of these are important, mothers usually engage more in the

15

work tasks while fathers usually are involved with play. While women spend at least twice as much time in child-care activities, only a tenth of women's time with infants is play while over half of all males child-care is play. LaRossa and LaRossa (1981) use the information from several studies to conclude that 10% of all child care activities are play-related, thus, men are spending 50% of their time with their infant doing only 10% of the actual care required tasks. The researchers extrapolate from this finding that men seek to engage in activities requiring less custodial responsibilities than mothers are involved in on a daily basis.

Differentiation can be made not only between work and play, but also between the types of play that each parent is more likely to engage in with an infant. Mothers typically are involved in more conventional and toy-mediated play with their infants while fathers are generally more physically stimulating (Pedersen, 1980). Pedersen's study also supported the previous conclusion drawn by LaRossa and LaRossa (1981) in concluding that mothers also engage in more of the routine caretaking than fathers (e.g., changing diapers, feeding, dressing, bathing) while fathers are more likely to act as a playmate by physically interacting with the infant (Pedersen, 1980).

Preschool Involvement

The literature has shown that participation by fathers in child care for preschool age children will generally increase. Fathers are still more likely to engage in play with children than are mothers

and their interactions are often times more outdoors, or recreational, type interactions (Baruch & Barnett, 1981). Fathers usually play more physically while mothers use more verbal interaction causing the fathers during this time to often be the preferred playmate of children (Pietropinto, 1986). Fathers are also less likely to participate in care tasks when alone, such as buying the children clothes or taking them out to eat (Baruch & Barnett, 1981).

School-Age Involvement

The research on fathers and their involvement with school age children is still in the beginning stages (Hanson & Bozett, 1987b). Most of the activities fathers participate in with their children are recreational in nature ranging from boy scouts to sports activities with sons. Contact with daughters in this stage of development is often awkward for fathers as they are either unaware, or unable to meet the special needs girls feel during this time period. Because of this, relationships between fathers and daughters are often strained during this time (Hanson & Bozett, 1987b).

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical framework guiding this study of parental participation in child care is symbolic interactionism and a feminist perspective. The first provides a better understanding of the reasoning for why behaviors will be observed, and how to structure this observation, while the latter provides a deeper interpersonal

understanding of the data. Each could sufficiently support the data on its own, but the combination of the two adds the depth that the researcher is hoping to capture.

While there have been numerous studies previously cited on the subject of fatherhood, there seems to be no single theoretical perspective used within these studies. In fact, the only studies which I have come across to date which mentioned theoretical grounding are those articles which either deal with the psychoanalytic perspective or provide multiple perspectives, which are usually the less developed theories in the field causing them to often times be either too specific or too broad. The problem with the psychoanalytic literature is that it has just recently allowed a place for the father in its writings (Cath, 1986; Diamond 1986; Hunt & Rudden, 1986). While one can speculate, based on the content of the literature, the underlying theory of orientation, the authors do not state their theoretical orientation.

Symbolic interactionism provided a solid framework for this methodology. Observations of fathers during isolated time intervals does not really allow for one to draw many conclusions about the actual day to day routines and beliefs these fathers and their children hold concerning the topic of fatherhood. Fathers and/or mothers interactions with children will be observed to determine which roles each parent exhibited during mealtime. Symbolic interactionism describes the concept of salience (Stryker, 1968) which seeks to explain why mothers are more likely to provide the

18

custodial care for their children and why they will probably maintain ultimate responsibility for the children (LaRossa & Reitzes, in press). "The salience of an identity is the probability of an identity being invoked in a given situation or in a variety of situations" (Stryker, 1968, p.560). McCall and Simmons (1978) refer to salience as a motivational factor in that the greater the prominence of an identity, or role, the more likely the person is to strive to excel. Based on this concept, by observing the tasks each parent is doing, one should be able to draw some conclusions about the roles each parent assumes in other settings because of the salience of the roles each seems to hold based on their display during observation.

Another important aspect of this theory for the proposed research is the concept that individuals in society restrict their behavior based on the norms and values held by society (LaRossa & Reitzes, in press). Traditionally the father has been seen by society as a breadwinner while the mother was responsible for the care of the children (Berger, 1979; Pietropinto, 1986; Pleck, 1987b). Numerous studies have shown that this role appears to be shifting (Lein, 1979; Pietropinto, 1986; Pleck, 1987b; Sawin & Parke, 1979). If this is true, society is changing the value it places on fatherhood and, thus, fathers are able to take a more active role in the care of children. This study is intended to show that fathers are participating in the care of children which would help to support this point.

While symbolic interactionism does provide a basis for my observations, a feminist perspective plays an important part in analyzing results and drawing conclusions. Boss and Thorne (1989) list three principles that are included within the feminist perspective. The first of these is the idea that family structures can differ. The second concept is that both instrumental and expressive tasks must be completed within the family system. The final point in this list concerns the fact that men and women are of equal human value.

The observation of parents can help support the second two points, as well as cover other aspects of the feminist perspective. In order for a child to survive, it is necessary that both primary and secondary tasks be completed. This includes the specific child care tasks that must be attended to as well the social interaction, or play aspect, of child care. Both of these should be observable during mealtime. It is one hypothesis, based on the literature, that fathers will play a more secondary role in the completion of the tasks than the mothers will.

The third point, that men and women are of equal value, was shown indirectly. From my interpretation of the feminist perspective, women have been oppressed by the family system itself for many years as their role has been restricted to mother and homemaker (Thorne, 1982). Other opportunities, such as earning an income outside of the home, have been taken away from some mothers who take on the sole responsibility of child care (Thorne,

1982). The movement of fathers to do more family work is the first step towards the removal of this oppression. A change in the roles of mothers and fathers is also important because of the internalization of sex role behaviors by children. To maintain traditional role patterns is to teach younger generations that it is acceptable to continue these oppressive patterns (Glenn, 1987) However, change is not taking place as rapidly as society believes (LaRossa, 1988). While one will find that more fathers are in contact with their children and more attentive to them, it is predicted that it will still be the mother who is completing the instrumental tasks associated with the care of the child.

Research Question's

The exploratory research conducted was a qualitative study using a participant observational methodology. It addressed the overlying question of what do mothers and fathers do with their children during mealtime.   During the time of observation several specific research questions were investigated as well: (1) Do men attend to secondary care while women attend more to the primary care of the children? (2) Does the age of the child effect the interaction level of the father?, and (3) Who do the children turn to for discipline and/or permission?

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

I utilized a qualitative participant observational methodology. Reasons for this are varied. First, most of the studies previously cited used instruments such as time logs, diaries, and questionnaires. While these means of assessment offer a great deal of advancement in this field of research, their use has been extensive. The purpose of this research was to explore an avenue of fathers' participation in child care that is untapped as of yet. The method is also advantageous because it does not rely on the participant to tell of his or her parenting practices.

The concept of salience, as has been discussed with reference to the symbolic interaction perspective, also provides support for this type of methodology. The behaviors a father exhibits during mealtime will be similar to those practiced in the home at other times because of the importance of the parents implied hierarchy of roles (LaRossa & Reitzes, in press). If this is the case, then a qualitative participant observational study comparing the roles of fathers and mothers during mealtime would lend itself to hypothesizing about life within the home environment under different circumstances.

Another reason for this type of methodology was to allow for collection of a rich data base. Were I to simply ask the participants what it was like during mealtime at their houses, or who carried out what tasks during mealtime, this would leave the data open to further interpretations. Parents may either feel they are being truthful about their participation or they may purposely inflate their responses to look better in the eyes of the researcher, or society. Since a participant observational methodology was utilized, the researcher was witness to the proceedings during mealtime and was able to question behaviors that she did not understand. A similar strength was the ability to question the parents as to the typicality of the meal that I shared with them. This can also provide some perspective to the data collected through observation.

Being a participant in the observation alleviated some of the biases present in a typical observational study. There was no question as to the nature of the group being studied as they were all families I am familiar with through the Virginia Tech lab school. It was also easier to establish motives for behaviors that are exhibited as I questioned the parents, or the children, if it was needed.

Of course, there are limitations involved in qualitative studies, as there are in all types of research. The first of these is the "observer effect" which is the effect the observer has on the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This is existent in all research forms to some extent, however. I helped to minimize this

potential problem by interacting in a manner which was relaxed, comfortable, and as unobtrusive as possible by trying to blend into the family and its routines.

Another problem often confronted in qualitative research is the objectivity of the researcher when recording field notes and drawing conclusions. This problem is minimized in several ways. First, detailed field notes recording all actions during the observation leave little room for prejudiced writing. Field notes also contain a section specifically for the observers comments so that the thoughts or ideas of the researcher can be kept separate from the actual factual data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1984; Taylor & Bogdan,1984). Finally, as observer, I was careful to acknowledge my own biases prior to writing.

Finally, mealtime observations provide an appropriate and innovative setting for my research based on the underlying core of the proposed research. To reiterate this point, studies previously cited have resulted in interpretations that imply that although society seems to feel that fathers are taking a more active role in the rearing of their children, fathers actual level of participation has not evidenced the dramatic changes cited in the popular media. The present study is based on an assumption that part of the reason this fatherhood movement is perceived to have the strength it does, beyond the media stereotypes, is because fathers are seen more with children now than, perhaps, they were in the past. While there is no data to show fathers level of involvement during mealtime, it will

24

be important to show that fathers are now seen as being involved with their children. The participation might be interpreted as suggesting that since fathers are seen interacting with their children in one setting, these same behaviors are also taking place within all aspects of the home environment. However, what this researcher attempts to document is that while fathers may be interacting with their children during meals, the mothers are still the ones carrying out the primary caregiving role.

Participants

Participants in this study included fathers, mothers, and their children as they were observed during mealtime. Three families consisting of a mother, father, and at least one child were chosen on a volunteer basis from among families with children in the Virginia Tech lab school. I asked families at random from the 3 and 4 year old classrooms to participate in a study based on family interaction during mealtime. Confidentiality was promised as well as compensation for any costs incurred because of the research. Possible costs included the price of the meal the researcher ordered while in a restaurant with the family. Family members were informed that a participant observational study of families during mealtime would be taking place and that all behaviors exhibited during this time were subject to written recording.

Families included in this study were all white and middle class in which the father worked full time for a university in teaching positions with departments such as aerospace engineering,

industrial systems engineering, and veterinary medicine and micro-pathology. The mother worked either not at all or only part time as a volunteer outside of the home. All mothers were previously employed outside of the home but chose to remain at home at the time of research to care for the children. All parents were in their first marriage. Family A consists of a mother age 36, father age 38, and four children ages 3, 4, 8, and 10. The genders are female, female, male, and female, respectively. The parents of Family B (father age 38 and mother age 36) have three children: female age 2, male age 3, and male age 8. The third family, family C, has two children, a boy 2 years old and a girl who is 4, both parents being 33 years old. Each family lives in the immediate college community.

Procedure

It should also be stated that all families enrolling their children in the Virginia Tech lab school have signed a form giving consent for their children and themselves to be involved in research projects. Lab school families that met the requirements of having two parents in the home were asked directly by the researcher to volunteer for participation. The researcher talked with each family individually, answered any questions and addressed any concerns about the research, and then set up a date for the first mealtime during which data were collected.

Each family was involved in three data collection periods of approximately 1 hour per observation. During these time periods I

participated in a meal with the family in its home with both parents and all children present. I was looking for behaviors that can be considered caregiving by each parent, as well as general interactions during the meal. Meals took place during the week as well as the weekend and on different days of the week. The family was allowed to set the date for the observation but they were informed not to make any special allowances because of having a guest. All subjects stated following the research that meals served, as well as interactions during the meal, were typical of their daily mealtime experience.

I spent the first few minutes I was at the house playing with the children. We would look at books, play outdoors if it was nice, or just sit and talk. It was helpful that the children in the families that I oberved were also students at the prescool where I was teaching. This familiarity made my time with the children, as well as the families, very comfortable and relaxed. When dinner was on the table we would go and eat. I would stay at the table until everyone was finished. This usually meant that I had a few minutes alone with the parents to ask any questions I might have, or just carry on a conversation, after the children left the table. After dinner I would spend a few more minutes playing with the children to keep the rapport that I had established with them. I would talk with the parents for a few minutes before I left as well. These times before and after dinner were valuable times of data

collection. Interactions were often more playful than during the meal and discussion was more free as well.

I set aside 2 hours following each observation to type notes about the mealtime experience, although more time was taken as needed. As much could be remembered about what was done and said during the meal was recorded in the computer immediately following the observation. Families were assigned a letter by me so that they will be referred to by letter rather than by name in any writings or field notes so that confidentiality that was promised can be carried through. I am the only one who knows this identifying information.

Once all the data were collected, they were studied together in order to facilitate the drawing of conclusions about each parent's behavior in each setting with the different types of family groupings. Coding was done of all data grouping together similar behaviors seen during observations as well as differences between the participants. Coding categories refer to behaviors such as helping cut meat, passing food, leading discussion, and giving permission to leave the table. Once all the data was coded, comparisons were made among the different families. Family composition was taken into consideration during this process as family size and age and gender of children were discussed in the analysis.

CHAPTER IV

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Each family was visited three times and field notes were taken from each visit. The field notes were read through numerous times in order to develop categories of topics of discussion or types of behavior would be most beneficial in reaching some conclusions from these data. These pieces of information were listed and numbered, giving the researcher 26 categories to use when coding the data (Appendix A). All field notes were reread and where any of these behaviors or topics were mentioned, the number of that category was placed in the margin of the text. Once all the data were coded in this manner, the researcher cut the data sheets, placing all examples of each category into separate envelopes marked according to the number of the behavior. Once this process was completed, each category was analyzed separately to discover what it revealed about the data from this observational study.

Data are discussed by subject as well as with reference to each individual family. This detailing allows for a better understanding of the summary and conclusions as specifics about each family will be detailed here. For the purposes of this discussion, data are discussed according to four groupings. The general topics to be discussed are: primary care, secondary care (LaRossa, 1988), discipline policies, and general information that adds to the depth of

the research. Data were gathered from 3 intact families across 3 mealtimes each involving both parents and children.

<center>Primary Care</center>

There were 10 categories of behavior that were analyzed which evidenced signs of primary care. The first of these, and the most basic to the meal, are those of fixing the children's plates and cutting their food. In all cases but one the mother fixed the childrens' plates for each family. In two of the families, the children were allowed to help themselves to those things that were on the table such as fruit, chips, or bread. As far as cutting the meat is concerned, it was done the majority of the time by the mother as well, or the child requested that the mother do it for him/her. In several cases the father did help with this when there was more than one child involved. However, in both of these cases, the father did so only when the mother was assisting a younger child with his/her meat.

Other behaviors in this group dealt with specific things that were done either to get dinner ready, during the course of the meal, or at clean up time. In Family A the father did almost all of the setting of the table and getting needed resources such as napkins, ketchup, or extra chips. In families B and C it was the mother who did most of these activities, although the father did help with some of this when requested. The father left the table in order to answer the phone or solve a problem for the children in Family's A and C, while the mother in Family B did those tasks. The third behavior in

<center>30</center>

this grouping, helping with the dishes, was done primarily by the mothers, except in family A.

Other types of primary care included attention to the children with regards to sharing time with them, seeking out information about the child's needs, and sharing information about the general habits or normal behavior of their children. Examples of spending time with the children were seen in each family by each spouse. In family A, it seemed that both parents participated in quiet and active activities with each of the four children. Family B seemed to have a mother who is more interactional, although there was reference to activities the father had participated in with the boys during the meals. The father was seen to have shared time with both of his children in Family C as I saw him outside with each of them and reference was made to planting flowers with the older girl at one point.

There was only one specific example of a father seeking information about a child's needs and this was from Family A. Sharing information about the children's norms and habits is another behavior that shows knowledge of the children and this was seen in each family. In fact, the distribution between parents was very even in each family. These behaviors help to show that fathers are active in the care of their children since they know about their children's typical behavior.

The final type of primary care that had to be done was listed under the category of general maintenance. It was this category, as

well as the coding of changing diapers/clothes, that brought out more detail on the division of labor within the homes. For example, in Family A the mother did all of the meal preparation which would be considered traditional. However, the father helped put the plates on the table and get things on the table and ready for dinner when he got home. During one visit to Family A I was playing with the children downstairs while the mother was in the kitchen upstairs finishing dinner. The girls were asked if we should go and help mother finish up and they said, "daddy will help her- he always does."

Family B is more typically traditional in that mother does all of the cooking while father does things around the house such as cleaning the garage, changing light bulbs, and yard work. It should also be noted, however, that during the week the mother of this family often goes to aerobics during mealtime so that the father is responsible for the care of the children during this time. Family C was similar to Family B, but the father did help out on several occasions by taking the youngest boy to wash his hands, calling children up for dessert, and helping out when asked to by the mother. As far as the dishes are concerned, Family A is the only one in which, during my observations, the father helped to clean the dishes after dinner was over.

Secondary Care

Secondary care, as previously defined, is being with the child, even interacting with the child, but not assisting in any type of task-oriented or maintenance behavior. There were three main groups of behavior that were found during this study which can be considered secondary care. The first of these was labeled teasing behavior. This included play which was verbal and was meant to make the child or other spouse laugh. This was evident in each of the families at some point during my observations. This behavior was fairly evenly divided between the parents in Family A as both are very fun-loving. In Family B, the mother was quick to tease her children but this behavior was not readily seen in the father. The father exhibited this behavior the most in family C, although I did see a little of this in the mother as well.

Socializing was the second group of behaviors classified as secondary care. This includes those behaviors which involve others in the conversation, be it the children or the other adults. Each of the parents in all three families were good at this. Conversation was kept going during the entire meal and parents directed discussion to each other, each of the children, and to me. The children were allowed to open discussion as well and each parent was good at allowing the child to carry this discussion.

The final category in this group of behaviors is that of rough and tumble play. Reference was made to this numerous times in Family A. I saw the father running with the oldest son, jumping rope with

the oldest daughter, and flipping the younger girls into the air. The mother was more of a teaser than a physical playmate although she does jump rope and do active types of play with them. In Family B there was really no mention of any type of rough and tumble play and I did not see any while I was there. The mom did do outdoor activities with us such as play at the swing set and play baseball. Finally, most of the more physical types of play with the children in Family C was done by the father. This behavior was exhibited outside on the swingset, as he was flipping them in the air in the living room, and reference was made to active play with the father several times during my visits. Part of this could be due to the fact that the mother is expecting another baby in July and is always tired.

Discipline Policies

Two categories that were used as a general source of information with regards to this type of behavior were power/control and typical discipline practices. Generally speaking, Family A seemed to be the only one in which the father seemed to have the ultimate or final decision on matters and, thus, it was concluded that he was the one with the most control. The components of power/control will be covered in more detail below. Overall discipline practices seem to be more strictly done by the father in family A as well. However, he was always loving and showed a great deal of warmth as he disciplined when observed. In Family B the mother is the one with

the most control and the one who takes action most of the time when discipline is needed. This is also true of Family C as the mother set the rules for the family and was more insistent that they be followed.

There are several behaviors that were coded which support these conclusions. The first set refers to who gives permission to the children, who reminds them to use their manners, and who is the one to stop bad behavior when need be. Although the mother did have some control over family A in that the children respect her and would follow her requests, it was the father who had the final decision. Examples of the father's inputinclude choosing which child was going to say the blessing, giving permission to leave the table, and, in one instance, giving the oldest daughter permission to spend the night at a friend's house. The mother seemed not to mind his role as decision maker as the children showed equal respect for each parent.

Family B seemed to be quite the opposite. Mother was the one who gave the children permission to leave the table, leave the house to go to the neighbor's house, and met requests to rearrange the seating so that the child taught by the researcher could sit next to the guest. No cases were observed during which the children asked the father for permission to do something. Family C was similar to this. The mother was almost always the one who gave permission to do things such as leave the table, play somewhere else in the house, or get more food.

Reminding children to use their manners was another topic of consideration. Once again, in Family A this was almost always done by the father. He reminded the children to share, only take what you are going to eat, and, when we were in a restaurant, "we don't run around like that when we are somewhere else to eat." Families B and C were primarily reminded by the mother. Mother C, for example, reminded her daughter that "we need to wait until after the blessing to eat our food."

Stopping inappropriate behavior once it started is another example of behaviors that show some sort of discipline policy. During the time of observation, it was the father in Family A who interrupted incorrect behavior and requested that something more appropriate be done. In one instance, the youngest daughter was teasing me at the table and calling me silly names such as, "you're a monster, you're an elephant, you're a monkey." The father responded to her playing instead of eating by saying," you're a little girl who needs to stop playing so much and eat more of her dinner."

In Family B terminating inappropriate behavior was done mostly by the mother, although there were cases of the father doing this , especially while at the table. Since a lot of my time with the family was spent with the children prior to and following the meal, data were collected during play as well as during the actual mealtime. In this family, the mother was more involved during the play period while the father did more disciplining during the actual meal.

Family C was similar to Family B in that the mother was more consistently the one who was disciplining the children by stopping behavior that was unacceptable. A prime example of this was seen during two visits. The mother had a rule that the children were not allowed to play rough on the furniture in the living room. She asked them to stop this behavior numerous times during several of my visits. On one occasion the children had left the table after dessert and were being rowdy in the living room. The mother asked her husband to look in there and see what the children were doing. He said that they were just wrestling on the couch. She asked him to stop them because they had been told not to do that. He said, "is that one of your rules for them?" He went in to the den but the noise continued. When she went in there and asked her husband why they were still on the couch he threw up his hands as if in despair and said, "I told them to get off and they didn't so I stayed here to watch and make sure they don't get hurt." The mother said one word to the children and they went right to the floor.

While it is necessary to teach children some guidelines, it is also important that parents show an understanding of children and their needs. This was observed during data collection and was generally coded as "shows an understanding of children" as well as "praising children." Family A and C seemed to have a deep understanding of children and were careful to follow discipline with developmentally appropriate responses. Things that were said to the children were considered as showing warmth and support by the researcher. This

was also true for Family B, although the father did have both positive and negative examples of this behavior. For example, in one conversation he seemed fully aware of their needs and was careful that everyone came out of the discussion feeling fine about the situation. However, he told me on my first visit there that, "he has trouble communicating with anyone who has less than a graduate education." There were situations in which communication was not always developmentally appropriate for the ages of his children, but he did seem to have an understanding of their needs and feelings.

The Conduct of Fatherhood

This section includes those pieces of information that can shed some light on the topic of fatherhood, even though they may not be specific examples of behaviors related to care. The first of these is the physical table arrangement, or who sat where at the table. In each of these families the mother typically sits closer to the two youngest children while the father sits next to the older children. In the case with three children, the youngest sits next to the mother and the 4 year old boy sits next to his father. This is important in that is shows that the mother is the one who is more accessible to the children and, thus, the one most likely to attend to their needs.

Age and gender specific observations are also included in this category. Behaviors which show a preference by the parent for one child because of age or gender are considered relevant here. For example, in Family A one dinner conversation centered around a tennis match the parents were playing that night. The mother asked

the kids whose side they were on to win. The two youngest daughters immediately said that they wanted the mother to win while the son immediately said that he wanted the father to win. The oldest daughter, after first deciding on the mother as the winner, asked for information on who had won last time. This daughter is the only one who ever changed her initial response and she based this on additional information which made her decision seem the most rational.

Examples of gender specific tasks within Family B include a camping/fishing trip that the father attended with the oldest son. It was held at a Scout camp and was attended by several fathers and sons. In Family C the father attended to more of the needs of the son than the daughter. This could be due to both the age and the gender of the child. His son is the youngest of the children and so required more care. He did things such as pushing him on the swing and changing his clothes, both of which the daughter is capable of doing for herself. However, he was also more visually attentive to his son during mealtimes and was aware of his son's behavior more so than his daughters, even though she was sitting right across from him.

Finally, the topic of the amount of sacrifice necessary to raise children and the effect this has on the parental relationship are the last categories discovered in the data. Both parents in each family made reference in some way to the financial strain that children can have on a family. Parents said that they had to give up things, such as traveling, to have children. "It also makes it difficult to spend

time alone with just each other " was said by each of the parents. However, all parents stated that the sacrifices were worth the price. Each of the mothers talked about personal sacrifice as well. They had given up jobs, which they enjoyed, so that they could stay home to raise the children. They felt it was too expensive to pay for child care so that the financial benefits of their working were minimal. They also missed a good deal of work when the children got sick.

While describing the data with specific detail and reference to each individual family for all of the categories may seem tedious, specific information such as this is important when drawing conclusions from qualitative data such as that obtained in this participant observational study. Every piece of data gleaned from each observation is an important part of the interpretations made from the data gathered. Generalizations about each of the families, as well as the population as a whole, can now be drawn based on the specifics just presented.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As has been shown by the data analysis, the three families that participated were both similar and different. The main similarities were based on the fact that in each family the father was the breadwinner and that each father holds a position at a university. The mother is the one considered to be the primary caretaker of the children as each of these mothers,who had previously been employed employed outside of the home, stays at home to be with the children. While this work arrangement is typical of the family studies literature to date, there are also things about these families and the roles the fathers share that separate them from the traditional family roles, e. g. , there appeared to be a slight shift toward a bit more paternal involvement.

An example of deviation from traditional roles is the participation of each of these fathers in the preparation of the table for mealtime. Each father, during at least one of the observations, was seen setting the table, taking the children's plates to the table, or getting things needed but not yet on the table. Another example of primary care provided by fathers was attending to the children's needs during the meal by cutting meat when necessary. Although this was done only occasionally, and when the mother was helping another child, this is a task done which provides some type of care.

Primary care, although largely done by the mothers, was also provided by fathers as well in most cases. Fathers were involved in activities such as changing diapers, helping children cut their meat, and helping the kids get ready for dinner by washing hands and getting resources for them. The division of labor was seen to be unequal, but less one-sided than the historical literature seems to be.

Secondary care was found in this body of data to be carried out primarily by the fathers. This includes more social behavior such as teasing, socialization, and rough and tumble play. Each family, except one, had both visual and verbal signs of physical play between the fathers and the children, regardless of the age or gender of the children. The mothers in each case were shown to display more verbal types of social behaviors in the form of teasing or socialization. However, the primary behaviors shown by the mothers during observations were task oriented.

With regards to the discipline policies of the families, this is where the greatest amount of discrepancies were found. One family seemed to be very patriarchal while the other two where more matriarchal. The conclusion of which parent had the most control was based on behaviors such as stopping unwanted behaviors, enforcing manners and reference to discipline practices. Each family was unique in its decisions of how to discipline children and this could have been expected. The historical literature reviewed showed the father as the one with ultimate control prior to the

industrial revolution while the mother gained some of this control as the fathers work took him away from the home. Based on the data found in this study, it appears that this is an issue which is based more on personal preference, or family tradition, than a decision grounded solely in historical trends as stated in the review of literature.

It is also interesting to note those things observed which added to the depth of the research although they are not specific behaviors which are performed by the parents on a regular basis. The seating arrangement at the table is an example of this in that, when analyzed, it was apparent that each family had the mother placed closer to the youngest children while the father was closest to the older children, those requiring less primary care. Discussion also uncovered behaviors which can show support for the importance of gender and age on the participation level of the fathers. Fathers were shown to participate in more activities with their son's, be this interaction task oriented such as shopping for shoes or changing diapers, or social in orientation such as going on a Scout camping and fishing trip. These are things that could not be observed but provided insight to the topic of study based on what was learned from the dinner discussion.

The question of whether men attend more to secondary care while women attend more to primary care of children is supported on numerous occasions throughout the data analysis. The key word to concentrate on here is **more** in that fathers were shown to

participate in many task oriented behaviors, but mothers did show substantially more of these behaviors than did the fathers. This is not to discredit the care that fathers provided, but, rather, to show that the primary responsibility of caring for and meeting the needs of the children was carried by the mothers. Those behaviors done by the fathers were considered "helping" behaviors by the mothers in that the fathers were "helping" them complete tasks for which they usually carry the full responsibility.

Age and gender of the children was also shown to effect the level of interaction of the father, although this was much more difficult to conclude with this type of methodology. It was hard to establish a motive for behavior such as changing diapers or taking children shopping. However, data recorded did show more instances of interactions with children who are toddlers, regardless of gender. The older the child, the more likely the effect of gender. Thus, age seemed to be a factor up until the school age, and then gender seemed to be the most important factor with reference to interaction.

The merits of this study are numerous. The researcher was able to observe families already known through the university system. Having the children, as well as the adults, familiar with the observer helped minimize the effects of having an observer present. Each family stated during at least one visit that behavior seen during that time period was very typical of average mealtimes in their home. The only effect referred to by the parents was the

increased activity of the child taught by the observer. Not all meals went well, some only lasted 10 minutes with all the children at the table, but the data seems to be as naturalistic as possible in qualitative research.

A great deal of information was also obtained during these observations. Not only could actual behavior be recorded, conversations were coded as well. The ability to ask questions helped to alleviate some of the mystery often surrounding research, although not all motives could be established. It was also easy to discuss normal interactions with these families and a strong rapport was built with each subject unit.

Having only one researcher also helped with the reliability of the coding of materials as there was no question as to exactly what was intended by each category. The field notes provided a wide variety of behaviors not previously considered that added to the strength of the research. It was also important to establish the researchers own biases prior to data analysis, although it is impossible not to have this reflected in the data to some degree (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Of course, there were flaws in this data, as in any body of research. It is difficult to establish the true effect the researcher's participation had on the observations, even though families stated this was minimal. It is something that should always be taken into consideration. The number of subjects and times of observation were also minimal, but the fact that each set of field notes was

similar to the others within each family adds support to the strength of the research. It is not the quantity of the data that counts, but the quality.

It would be ideal to conduct a participant observational study such as this in a longitudinal manner. A study of substantial length would allow for the analysis of change in fathers and mothers behavior as the children develop and age. This would allow for more detailed understanding of the role of age, as well as gender, on the interactions of fathers. It would also help to trace the gradual change taking place in the conduct of fathers so that a comparison can be made with the culture of fatherhood.

Based on symbolic interactionism, the data provides a strong basis for supporting the claim that the culture of fatherhood is changing more rapidly than the conduct of fatherhood. Fathers were shown to exhibit child care behaviors which would allow for the conclusion that society is placing more value on the role of fathers in the lives of children. The level of participation shown here would not be as likely if the norms of society still adhered to the traditional roles assigned within the family.

The concept of salience is important here as well. It was easy to conclude from this data analysis that each parent felt the role of being a parent was important. While mothers are shown to have their responsibilities to the children and the home as primary, fathers also show behaviors that would lead one to conclude that the role of parenting is also of great importance to them. Fathers seem

motivated to spend time with their children when they are at home, before, during and after the meal. Based on the meaning of role salience, one can conclude that this motivation towards interacting with their children is important not only during the times during which observations are made, but throughout their lives.

To simply base all conclusions on this theoretical framework would delete an important part of the family system, the uniqueness of the family structure as well as the emotional context as interpreted through my understanding of a feminist perspective. Each family unit can be totally different from the next and still be considered a family. A prime example from the data is the discipline practices. To try and make judgments about which family is correct in its practices would take away an important element of the family. Parents work together to devise the most appropriate guidelines for their family's mixture of personalities and backgrounds. To deny the individuality of each family unit is to deny the essence of their foundations.

It is also important to note that this research does not have as its purpose to belittle the work that fathers do within their families. It takes a mixture of both primary and secondary care for a child to completely develop. Rather, the purpose is to show that the division of these tasks does exists within families, but that the gap between them is perhaps narrowing. Each parent plays an important role in the life of the child, and the fact that participation is taking place by each parent is of utmost importance.

47

The researcher concludes from the division of primary and secondary care that while both needs are being met, the demands placed on each parent for child care responsibilities are not as equal as much of society seems to believe at this time in history.

Why so much concern about who provides primary and secondary tasks? Based on the feminist perspective, women have been oppressed by the family system itself for many years as their role has been restricted to mother and housemaker (Thorne, 1982). It is the concern of the researcher that oppression, in any form, be brought to an end. Putting an end to oppression requires a gradual change, however, and is not something that can be accomplished over night. What the data presented here shows, though, is that a change is taking place in our society now with regards to roles within the family and the equal division of responsibility for child care and housework. While society has not shown drastic changes within the family system, based on this research, it is true that the conduct of fathers does seem to be shifting slightly towards the perceived culture of fatherhood.

REFERENCES

Aberg, M., Small, P., & Watson, J. A. (1977). Males, fathers and husbands: Changing roles and reciprocal legal rights. <u>The Family Coordinator, 26,</u> 327-332.

Barnett, R. C. , & Baruch, G. K. (1987). Determinants of fathers participation in family work. <u>Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49,</u> 29-40.

Baruch, G. K., & Barnett, R. C. (1981). Fathers' participation in the care of their preschool children. <u>Sex Roles, 7</u> (10), 1043-1055.

Berger, M. (1979). Men's new family roles- Some implications for therapists. <u>The Family Coordinator, 28,</u> 638-647.

Bernard, J. (1981). The good-provider role: It's rise and fall. <u>American Psychologist, 36</u> (1), 1-12.

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1982). <u>Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods</u>. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Boss, P. , & Thorne, B. (1989). Family sociology and family therapy: A feminist linkage. In M. McGoldrick, C. Anderson, and F. Walsh (Eds.), <u>Women in Families</u> (pp. 78-96). New York: Norton.

Bozett, F. W. & Hanson, S. M. H. (Eds.) (1991). <u>Fatherhood and families in cultural context</u>. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Cath, S. (1986). fathering from infancy to old age: A selective overview of recent psychoanalytic contributions. <u>The Psychoanalytic Review, 73</u> (4), 469-479.

Coverman, S. , & Sheley, J. F. (1986). Change in men's housework and child-care time, 1965-1975. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48. 413-422.

Davis, D. B. (1986). From homicide to slavery. New York: Oxford University Press.

Davis, M. R. (1982). Families in a working world: The impact organizations on domestic life. New York: Praeger.

Day, R. D. , & Mackey, W. C. (1986). The role image of the American father: An examination of a media myth. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 17 (3), 371-388.

Demos, J. (1986). Past, present, and personal: The family and the life course in American history. New York: Oxford University Press.

Diamond, M. J. (1986). Becoming a father: A psychoanalytic perspective on the forgotten parent. The Psychoanalytic Review, 73 (4), 445-467.

Ehrenreich, P. M. (1983). The hearts of men: American dreams and the flight from commitment. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Ehrenreich, P. M. (1984, May 20). A feminist's view of the new man. New York Times Sunday Magazine, pp. 36-39.

Enos, C. , & Enos, S. F. (1985, March). The men in your life. Ladies Home Journal, pp. 99-101, 180-183.

Frodi, A. M. , & Lamb, M. E. (1978). Sex differences and responsiveness to infants. Child Development, 49, 1182-1188.

Glenn, E. N. (1987). Gender and the family. In B. B. Hess and M. M. Ferree (Eds.), <u>Analyzing Gender</u> (pp. 348-380). Newberry Park, CA: Sage.

Greven, P. J., Jr. (Ed.) (1973). <u>Childrearing concepts, 1628-1861</u>. Itasca, IL: Peacock Press.

Hanson, S. M. H. , & Bozett, F. W. (1987). Fatherhood and changing family roles. <u>Family and Community Health</u>, <u>9</u> (4), 9-21.

Hanson, S. M. H. , & Bozett, F. W. (1987). Fatherhood: A review and resources. <u>Family Relations, 36</u>, 333-340.

Hunt, J., & Rudden, M. (1986). Gender differences in the psychology of parenting: Psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives. <u>Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis, 14</u> (2), 213-225.

Juster, F. T. (1985). A note on recent changes in time use. In F. T. Juster and F. Stafford (Eds.), <u>Time, goods, and well-being</u> (pp. 313-332). Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.

Lamb, M. (1981). Fathers and child development: An integrated overview. In M. Lamb (Ed.), <u>The role of the father in child development</u> (pp. 1-70). New York: Wiley.

Lamb, M. E. (1987). Introduction: The emergent American father. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), <u>The father's role: Cross-cultural perspectives</u> (pp. 3-25). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lamb, M. E. , Pleck, J. H., Levine, J. A. (1986). Effects of paternal involvement on fathers and mothers. <u>Marriage and Family Review</u>, <u>9</u> (3/4), 67-83.

LaRossa, R. (1988). Fatherhood and social change. Family Relations, 37, 451-457.

LaRossa, R. , & LaRossa, M. M. (1981). Transition to parenthood. How infants change families. Beverly Hills, CA : Sage Publications.

LaRossa, R. & Reitzes, D. C. (in press). Symbolic interactionism and family studies. In P. Boss, W. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. Schumm, and S. Steinmetz (Eds.), Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. New York: Plenum.

Lein, L. (1979). Male participation in home life: Impact of social supports and breadwinner responsibility on the allocation of tasks. The Family Coordinator, 28 (4), 489-495.

Levitan, S. A. & Belous, R. S. (1981). What's happening to the American family ? Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Lewis, R. A. (1986). Men's changing roles in marriage and the family. Marriage and Family Review, 9 (3-4), 1-10.

Mackey, W. C. (1985). A cross-cultural perspective on perceptions of paternalistic deficiencies in the United States: The myth of the derelict daddy. Sex Roles, 12 (5/6), 509-533.

McCall, G. J. , & Simmons, J. L. (1978). Identities and interactions: An examination of human associations in everyday life (Revised Edition). New York: Free Press.

McLaughlin, W. G. (1975). Evangelical childrearing in the age of Jackson. Journal of Social History, 9, 20-39.

Mintz, S. , & Kellogg, S. (1988). <u>Domestic revolutions.</u> New York: Free Press.

Pedersen, F. A. (1980). <u>The father-infant relationship. Observational studies in the family setting.</u> New York: Praeger Publishers.

Pietropinto, A. (1986). The changing role of fatherhood. <u>Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, 20</u> (2), 41-49.

Pleck, J. H. (1983). Husbands paid work and family roles: Current research issues. In L. Lopata and J. H. Pleck (Eds.), <u>Research in the interweave of social roles: Vol 3. Families and jobs</u>. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Pleck, J. H. (1987a). The contemporary man. In M. Scher, M. Stevens, G Good, and G. Eichenfield (Eds.), <u>Handbook of counseling and psychotherapy with men</u> (pp. 16-27). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Pleck, J. (1987b). American fathering in historical perspective. In M. S. Kimmel (Ed.), <u>Changing men: New directions in research on men and masculinity</u> (pp. 83-97). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Radin, N. & Harold-Goldsmith, R. (1989). The involvement of selected unemployed and employed men with their children. <u>Child Development, 60,</u> 454-459.

Rotundo, E. A. (1985). American fatherhood: A historical perspective. <u>American Behavioral Scientist, 29.</u> 7-25.

Sawin, D. B. & Parke, R. D. (1979). Fathers affectionate stimulation and caregiving behaviors with newborn infants. The Family Coordinator. 28 (4), 509-513.

Smith, D. S. (1985). Child-naming practices, kinship ties, and change in family attitudes in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1641 to 1850. Journal of Social History. 18, 541-566.

Sterns, P. M. (1990). Be a man! Males in modern society. New York: Holmes and Meier.

Stryker, S. (1968). Identity salience and role performance: The relevance of symbolic interaction theory for family research. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 30, 371-388.

Taylor, S. J. & Bogdan, R. (1984). Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings. Toronto: John Wiley & Sons.

Thorne, B. (1982). Feminists rethinking of the family: An overview. In B. Thorne and M. Yalom (Eds.) Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions (pp. 1-24). New York: Longman.

APPENDIX A

Coding Categories

1. Table arrangement

2. Fixing the children's plates

3. Cutting food for the children

4. Changing diapers/changing clothes

5. Giving permission for something

6. Remind the child(ren) of manners

7. Stopping bad behavior

8. Sharing general information

9. Praising children

10. Shows an understanding of children

11. Teasing behavior

12. Socializing

13. Rough and tumble play

14. Talks of sacrifice made for children

15. Age of child attended to by father (when specifically relevant)

16. Gender of child attended to by father (when specifically relevant)

17. Who gets up from the table for phone/ deal with problem

18. Reference to child's norms or habits

19. Helps to set the table/ get resources for the children

20. Seeking information about the child's needs

21. Does dishes

22. Sharing time with the children

23. Shows some form of power/control of the family or situation

24. Discipline practiced or discussed

25. General maintenance tasks done

26. Comment on parent's relationship or some aspect of the marriage

Suzanne   Smith
750 Tall Oaks Drive
Foxridge Apartments #12300-F
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

Education   **Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University**
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
Expected Date of Graduation: May, 1992
Degree: Masters in Family and Child Development

Erskine   College
Due West, South Carolina 29639
Degree: Bachelor of Arts
Major: Behavioral Science

Experience **Summer Intern for Smyrna First United Methodist Church- Youth Ministries**
Aided in programming and counseling of a youth group with an active membership of over 100 for two   summers.

Research   and Teaching Assistantships
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
*Worked on grant proposals for two faculty
including a pilot study interviewing elderly people
*Graded papers for undergraduate courses.
*Head teacher at the lab school on the Virginia
Tech   Campus.   Responsibilities including the
teaching and supervision of a class of 16 children
ages 3 and 4.

Activities   National Council on Family Relations Member
Religion and Family Life Section member
Feminism and Family Studies Section Member
Poster Session NCFR 1991 Conference
Poster Session NCFR 1990 Conference
Southeastern Council on Family Relations Member
Student Paper Award 1990 SCFR Conference

Who's Who Among American Colleges and
Universities
Ruth Kelly Scholarship Award
Phi Lambda Sigma- Vice President 1989-1990
Judicial Council- Vice-Chairperson 1989-1990
Erskine College Tennis Team 1986-1990

Suzanne Renee Smith