Parental Involvement: Perceptions of Stay-at-Home Fathers

Lauren Moore

College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, Boise State University
The aim of this study was to explore how men and women differ in essentialist perceptions of gender roles and gender ideologies as they relate to attitudes about father involvement and stay-at-home fathers. Increased father involvement and more positive attitudes toward stay-at-home fathers was related to being female and holding more egalitarian views regarding gender roles and gender stereotypes. Also analyzed was the correlation between the belief in traditional gender roles and father involvement.

**Methods**

Sample:
- 442 students from an undergraduate psychology course completed an online self report survey.

**Hypotheses**

1. Participants’ gender will be associated with their belief in essentialist perceptions with male students endorsing more essentialist perceptions than female students.
2. Participants’ gender will be associated with their endorsement of traditional gender roles with male students endorsing more traditional gender roles than female students.
3. Participants’ gender will be associated with their evaluation of stay-at-home fathers with men rating stay-at-home fathers as less masculine than their female counterparts.
4. The belief in more traditional gender roles will be negatively correlated with father involvement.

**RESULTS**

- **Essentialist perceptions**: No significant difference was found.
- **Gender Ideologies**: Men reported a belief in more traditional gender roles (M = 2.45) than women (M = 2.11), t(435) = 5.53, p < .001.
- **Masculinity**: Men perceived stay-at-home fathers as more feminine (M = 3.12) than women (M = 2.51), t(433) = 5.58, p < .001.
- **Correlation**: A significant negative correlation was found between the belief in traditional gender roles and father involvement, r(436) = -.10, p = .03.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essentialist Perceptions</td>
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<td>2.94(.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Ideologies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.23 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Role attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.97 (.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Role Questionnaire</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.05 (.35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Findings and Conclusions**

- Men reported a belief in more traditional gender roles than women while also perceiving stay-at-home fathers as more feminine than their female counterparts.
- A significant negative correlation was found between the belief in traditional gender roles and father involvement indicating that as the belief in traditional gender roles increases father involvement decreases.
- Those who hold more egalitarian beliefs are greater supporters of father involvement and stay-at-home fathers. Increasing knowledge as well as addressing common gender role stereotypes may help increase father involvement.