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## **Parental Involvement: Perceptions of Stay-at-Home Fathers**

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## Parental Involvement: Perceptions of Stay-at-Home Fathers

### Abstract

The purpose 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. There were a total of 442 undergraduate students who completed an online survey. Results indicated that there was a significant gender difference regarding perceptions of stay-at-home fathers' masculinity,  $t(433) = 5.68$ ,  $p = .000$ , with men perceiving stay-at-home fathers as more feminine ( $M = 3.12$ ) than women ( $M = 2.51$ ). Also a significant difference was found between men and women concerning gender ideologies,  $t(435) = 5.53$ ,  $p = .000$  with men reporting more traditional gender ideologies ( $M = 2.45$ ) than women perceived stay-at-home fathers to be ( $M = 2.11$ ). There was also a significant negative correlation found between the belief in traditional gender roles and father involvement,  $r(436) = -.10$ ,  $p = 0.34$ . As the belief in traditional gender roles increases father involvement decreases. With regards to essentialist perceptions there was no significant gender difference found. These findings illustrate that many factors can influence ones attitudes and perceptions of father involvement and stay-at-home fathers. However, addressing common gender role stereotypes may help increase father involvement in childcare.

### Keywords

fathers, traditional gender roles, gender stereotypes

### Disciplines

Personality and Social Contexts



# Father Involvement: Perceptions of Stay-at-Home Fathers

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## ABSTRACT

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.

## BACKGROUND

- Negative attitudes directed at men that step out of gender role stereotypes plays a major role concerning father involvement. Women are more supported than men to cross the line that divides typical gender role beliefs (Heppner & Heppner, 2009).
- Father involvement can have positive influences on the lives of children. Research indicates that father involvement may lead to greater success in school for children (Newland, Chen & Cayl-Sheperd, 2013)

## Methods

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

- Questionnaires**
- **Demographics** (gender)
  - **Essentialist Perceptions:** A survey was used to measure the essentialist perceptions of men and women.
  - **Gender Ideologies:** A survey designed to measure traditional and nontraditional gender ideologies of men and women was used.
  - **Attitudes Toward Father Roles:** Selected items from a survey was used to measure attitudes toward father involvement.
  - **Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ):** The social roles questionnaire was used to assess attitudes toward gender roles.
  - **Stay-at-home fathers evaluation of masculinity:** Two items were used to evaluate perceptions of stay-at-home fathers.

## 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*

Variable	N	%	M (SD)
Gender			
Male	166	37.6%	
Female	276	62.4%	
Essentialist Perceptions			2.94(.55)
Gender Ideologies			2.23 (.64)
Father Role attitudes			2.97(.32)
Social Role Questionnaire			3.05 (.35)

## 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.

