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Real Men Burp Babies and Real Women Deliver Dough: The Advantages of Nontraditional Parental Roles

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Abstract

Stay-at-home fathers and working mothers continue to defy gender expectations despite traditional societal beliefs pertaining to gender roles. These nontraditional couples model a contemporary and egalitarian lifestyle for their children in a world that is increasingly advocating for more gender equality within and outside of the home. Children within these households exhibit positive cognitive traits, enhanced behavioral developments, and enriched familial relationships (Brown, Mangelsdorf, & Neff, 2012; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Dunn, Rochlen, & O'Brien, 2013; Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Flaskerud, 2012; Lucas-Thompson, Goldberg, & Prause, 2010; Rushing & Powell, 2015; Williams & Radin, 1999; Wills & Brauer, 2012). Despite the positive implications of nontraditional dynamics, these families continue to be misunderstood and are often isolated due to social stigma associated with gender stereotypes (Dunn et al., 2013; Rushing & Powell, 2015; Sinno & Killen, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). In order to better support these families, society ought to acknowledge the decisions that all families make in regards to work and domestic roles and educate children about all future and career opportunities, regardless of gender. With increased understanding and acknowledgment of the developmental benefits that come to children within these dynamics, nontraditional families can pave the way for a less-gendered, more egalitarian world.

Keywords: Stay-at-home fathers, egalitarianism, nontraditional families, gender roles

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In an interview pertaining to the dynamics of her family, my mother, a working mother, proudly recollected the unique relationship my sisters and I have with our father, a stay-at-home dad:

My children aren't going to remember whether the kitchen floor was clean or if dinner was on time. What they will remember is that they had a loving home and an amazing father who adored them. He devoted all of his time to their activities and needs. Yeah, maybe I wasn't there all the time, but as a result of our non-traditional choices, my girls have formed a really close, loving relationship with their father. (C. Christensen, personal communication, October 9, 2016)

Growing up in a nontraditional family, I was curious to discover any benefits inherent in adopting this unique family dynamic as well as to better understand any implications that may arise for my siblings and myself. Indeed, stay-at-home fathers are becoming the new standard in society (Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Kramer, Kelly, & McCulloch, 2015). With more fathers staying at home and more mothers providing for the family's financial needs, traditional gender expectations are being reevaluated and even altogether rejected (Kramer et al., 2015). Although couples may choose from a variety of work arrangements to best serve their specific circumstances, an evaluation of the effects of these contemporary roles, especially on child development, is needed in order to understand and better support nontraditional families within present-day culture. Perhaps an increased understanding of the developmental benefits that come from adopting nontraditional parental roles for children may serve to better garner societal support for these families.

Traditionally, women have shouldered the responsibilities of caring for children and performing household chores. Women's roles have been represented by various female stereotypes including the domestic housewife, the primary caretaker, and the perfect hostess. However, recent studies have cited the increasing prevalence of domestic fathers, as more women begin to enter the workforce (Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Kramer et al., 2015; Rushing & Powell, 2015). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), women

constituted over half of the total labor force in 2013. In addition, the percentage of women graduating with college degrees has more than tripled when compared to 1970 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). As more women enter the workforce, there is a greater need for fathers to assume the primary caretaker role.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), the number of stay-at-home fathers has more than tripled in just a little more than a decade (as cited in Dunn, Rochlen, & O'Brien, 2013). Not only are the numbers of stay-at-home fathers increasing, but the reasons behind their choice to become the primary caregiver are dramatically changing (Kramer et al., 2015). In a study evaluating the various characteristics of stay-at-home father households, Kramer et al. (2015) revealed that present-day stay-at-home fathers are increasingly choosing the caregiving role as opposed to performing domestic duties out of necessity or inability to work. Despite this increase, few studies have examined the direct effect that increased paternal participation can have on children. Furthermore, many of these studies are outdated, and an updated examination of these societal developments is needed.

In contrast, an abundant number of studies have been devoted to examining the effects that maternal employment has on children (Flaskerud, 2012; Lucas-Thompson, Goldberg, & Prause, 2010; Ruhm, 2008; Wills & Brauer, 2012). Results from these studies have been mixed. While some studies have argued that maternal employment harms children's well-being and leads to poorer developmental outcomes, other literature has found the effects of maternal employment to be inconsequential and even positive to the overall well-being of the child (Flaskerud, 2012; Ruhm, 2008; Wills & Brauer, 2012). For example, in a study comparing differing household arrangements among groups of married couples with children, Hill et al. (2006) found support for professional women to continue working within their careers instead of opting out after having a child. Additionally, in a review on the health of working mothers and their children, Flaskerud (2012) found that children of working mothers had less behavioral problems and a stronger desire for academic achievement than their peers from traditional households. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the effects of both the mother's employment coupled with the father's role as the caretaker to obtain a holistic and more complete perspective regarding children's well-being.

Another dynamic examined in various studies pertaining to nontraditional families has been the effect that these reverse gender roles has on the couple's relationship (Dunn et al., 2013; Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). Nontraditional couples enjoy enhanced marital equality, marital satisfaction, and parenting cohesion (Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). In a study conducted by Rushing and Powell (2015), nontraditional couples were found to be more supportive of one another's roles within the home. As a result, these couples exhibited a high level of satisfaction and happiness within their marriage, translating into a happier and healthier home (Rushing & Powell, 2015). Nevertheless, although nontraditional families are on the rise, these families are still misunderstood and are often negatively perceived within society (Dunn et al., 2013; Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). Prevailing gender stereotypes can create unmerited stress and strain within familial relationships; thus, it is important to understand the roles that nontraditional families have within society.

Nontraditional families ought to be better understood so that stay-at-home fathers and working mothers can feel supported instead of isolated, particularly within social contexts. Especially important within this dynamic are the effects that reverse gender roles have on children. Although there has been a wealth of literature pertaining to the benefits of the traditional family for future outcomes for children, parents who exhibit nontraditional gender roles also have a positive impact on children's development. This could be because they model a less-gendered perspective within a changing society in which nontraditional families are increasingly accepted. Children within these families exhibit positive cognitive traits, enhanced behavioral developments, and enriched familial relationships, preparing them for an egalitarian future in which gender lines are increasingly blurred. The present literature review attempts to explore the inherent benefits of adopting a nontraditional family dynamic for children by addressing (a) the positive cognitive traits, (b) the enhanced behavioral developments, and (c) the enriched familial relationships that are observed within children of these families.

Positive Cognitive Traits in Children of Nontraditional Families

Recognizing the ways in which children reason about and understand gender roles in present-day society has important implications for both families who exhibit nontraditional roles and those who exhibit traditional roles. Because parents are important contributors to their children's own understanding of gender roles within society, family dynamics prove to be highly influential in the early formation of gender stereotypes (Sinno & Killen, 2009). Important cognitive differences have been found between children coming from traditional circumstances and those coming from nontraditional dynamics (Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Dunn et al., 2013; Williams & Radin, 1999). Indeed, children from nontraditional families hold a less gendered view of society, have higher self-esteem, and exhibit career or future aspirations that are not limited by gender confinements.

Less Gendered View of Society

Children from nontraditional families are less likely to endorse or adhere to gender stereotypes regarding roles within and outside of the home, demonstrating an important cognitive distinction between both groups of children (Sinno & Killen, 2009). In a study conducted by Fagot and Leinbach (1974), the concept of gender developed within the first two years of a child's life, with gender roles forming soon thereafter (as cited in Williams & Radin, 1999). Since gender and its respective roles are crucial building blocks to understanding one's role within society, the formation of these beliefs has important implications for children. In conjunction with these findings, Sinno and Killen (2009) demonstrated that children's family dynamics affect their beliefs about gender roles within society. When justifying parental domestic competence, children from nontraditional households consistently relied less on gender stereotypes and more on reasons pertaining to personal effort as compared to children from traditional families (see Table 1). Thus, those growing up with nontraditional roles within the home have diminished stereotypical beliefs about gender expectations.

Moreover, Williams, Radin, and Allegro (1992) demonstrated that children who grew up with an increased level of paternal involvement were more likely to endorse nontraditional family and work roles

(as cited in Deutsch et al., 2001). Deutsch et al. (2001) further supported this finding, indicating that children who were exposed to an egalitarian lifestyle grew up to endorse equal opportunities for both men and women inside and outside of the home. As children from nontraditional households grow up within these unique family dynamics, they will be prepared to face the atypical trends and ever-changing beliefs of a society that demonstrates increased flexibility in regards to gender expectations.

Higher Self-Esteem

Another compelling cognitive distinction of nontraditional children is the high level of self-esteem they often exhibit, due in part to the development of healthy relationships with both their mother and their father. In a study conducted by Deutsch et al. (2001), children whose fathers were actively involved in their emotional well-being and who showed concern for their welfare had higher levels of self-esteem than their peers from traditional backgrounds. Deutsch et al. (2001) found that levels of paternal emotional involvement ($r = .58, p \leq .01$), discipline ($r = .62, p \leq .01$), and attention ($r = .30, p \leq .10$) were all significantly correlated with children's self-esteem levels. Furthermore, the working mothers within these households were not less involved; rather, both parents contributed equally to their children's well-being, resulting in higher levels of self-worth (Deutsch et al., 2001). Because these children had parents who were both actively engaged in their lives, in effect, they had twice the amount of emotional support. As a result, children's self-esteem was positively affected. With higher self-esteem, children from nontraditional families can have greater confidence, higher self-assurance, and more resilience when overcoming the inevitable obstacles of growing up and facing the world.

Unconventional Career and Future Aspirations

Future ambitions and career objectives are markedly different between children from nontraditional families and their more traditional counterparts. In a study conducted by Whiston and Keller (2004), children with working mothers were more likely to choose nontraditional occupations as opposed to children coming from traditional families (as cited in Dunn et al., 2013). Clearly, the choices that children and adolescents make in regard to career development

are largely linked with family experience. Children with working mothers are exposed to more progressive and unconventional values, causing them to be more likely to endorse gender-role free work environments and occupations (Dunn et al., 2013). Likewise, Sinno and Killen (2009) found that although children from traditional families are aware of the changing norms in the working world, they are less likely to endorse these new trends in home and work situations. Even though children from traditional upbringings have an awareness of this increasing equality, they are more likely to maintain traditional expectations and stereotypes, because they are not exposed to untraditional roles (Sinno & Killen, 2009). However, children raised nontraditionally will be more likely to interpret the unconventional roles that they witness within the home as viable options for themselves. The observance of these roles will not only have a positive effect on their future, but it can benefit their current lives, giving them a unique vantage point and perspective of the world. Indeed, multiple studies have shown that nontraditional children have high levels of academic ambition along with enhanced cognitive development, due to their exposure to nontraditional roles within the home (Flaskerud, 2012; Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010; Williams & Radin, 1999; Wills & Brauer, 2012). Less constrained by gender expectations, nontraditionally-raised children grow up embodying more of the roles that they truly desire and less of the roles which are prescribed to them by society. As such, they can be prepared to enter the workforce with drive and determination while also breaking down traditional expectations and beliefs.

Enhanced Behavioral Developments within Children of Nontraditional Families

An expansion of the father's role, involvement, and interaction with his children directly affects the child's well-being in both traditional homes and untraditional homes. Many studies have shown that fathers are becoming more involved in the lives of their children (Deutsch et al., 2001; Dunn et al., 2013; Flaskerud, 2012). Today, more than ever before, men are increasingly choosing the role of stay-at-home father as opposed to staying at home due to inability to work (see Figure 1 & Figure 2). Instead of altogether replacing the mother's role within the home, a nontraditional father manifests

support through the encouragement of his spouse's career and the shared responsibility of childcare (Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zuo & Tang, 2000). Indeed, some of the behavioral benefits of a more engaged father are that children exhibit enhanced control over their behavior, higher levels of secure attachment to their parents, and an increased ability to express their emotions and exhibit femininity.

Enhanced Emotional and Behavioral Regulation

Various studies have demonstrated the benefits of having an engaged and active father within the home. Indeed, some of the most notable behavioral developments of children from nontraditional homes include exhibiting fewer internalizing behaviors, such as anxiety or stress; displaying fewer externalizing behaviors, such as aggression; and demonstrating a more internal locus of control (Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010; Williams & Radin, 1999). Children from nontraditional backgrounds are able to successfully regulate their feelings and manifest behavioral control from within, instead of externally acting out in aggression or anger. Indeed, these traits demonstrate that children from nontraditional families have more authority over their behavior.

While maternal employment has traditionally been believed to negatively impact children, various studies have demonstrated that enhanced behavioral regulation is related to having a more engaged and active father within the home (Flaskerud, 2012; Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010). Indeed, nontraditional children still receive the benefits of a caretaking mother, but acquire enhanced skills demonstrating control and discipline over their behavior, indicating that children's behavioral development is largely related to other environmental and biological variables, such as social-economic status, family structure, or ethnicity, and not to maternal employment.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Sayer et al. (2004), present-day mothers, regardless of their working status, participated more in their children's lives today as compared to the 1960s, when less women were working (as cited in Wills & Brauer, 2012). In conjunction with these findings, a working mother continues to embody the caretaking role within the home, whether she has the traditional role of caretaker or the untraditional role of breadwinner (Deutsch et al., 2001; Dunn et al., 2013). In essence, the role of mother is not being replaced or lost due to mothers' work schedules, nor are stay-at-

home fathers replacing mothers' role within the home. Children from nontraditional homes are not disadvantaged by their mother's career choice but instead develop positive behavioral traits that distinguish them from traditionally-raised children. These positive traits may be largely connected to their nontraditional upbringing with a stay-at-home father and working mother and to the subsequent dynamics experienced within these homes.

Secure Attachment to Parents

Another beneficial behavioral difference observed in children from nontraditional families is the extent to which the child is securely attached to his or her parents. Secure attachment can be defined as the degree to which a child feels secure with his or her caregiver, promoting healthy emotional and behavioral development (Brown Mangelsdorf, & Neff, 2012). Because a mother is the primary source of food and comfort for her child beginning at birth, children are more likely to develop a secure attachment to their mother regardless of whether or not she works. In contrast, due to the nature of an infant's needs, the father is not as likely to naturally form a secure attachment with his child immediately following birth.

Moreover, in traditional families, the mother spends the majority of her time caring for and interacting with her children, while the father is often at work and is much less involved at home (Deutsch et al., 2001). Because of this lack of involvement, children may be less likely to exhibit secure attachments to their fathers. They may even lack the additional social, behavioral, and emotional benefits that come from a secure paternal attachment (Brown et al., 2012). While it is possible for children in traditional homes to have a secure paternal attachment, these circumstances make it harder for a secure bond to form between the father and the child. Indeed, increased paternal involvement often facilitates and is more likely to result in more secure paternal attachment (Deutsch et al., 2001). Deutsch et al. (2001) demonstrated that a secure attachment to one's father fosters various enhanced developmental traits including empathetic concern, competency, and well-developed social, academic, and emotional lives. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Brown et al. (2012), children who were securely attached to their fathers exhibited greater levels of trust, emotional awareness, and sensitivity, demonstrating the many positive outcomes of devoted paternal parenting. Because

nontraditional families often have highly involved and invested fathers, children from nontraditional backgrounds may enjoy unique benefits from having secure attachments to both parents and may be more likely to exhibit positive behavioral traits associated with these bonds.

Greater Disposition to Feminine Activities

Having increased paternal involvement within the home increases the likelihood that children from nontraditional homes are exposed to counter-sex typed activities. Because of the responsibilities of childcare, stay-at-home fathers often engage in many domestic activities traditionally associated with motherhood, including feeding, nurturing, and comforting children. Indeed, Rushing and Powell (2015) found that stay-at-home fathers not only had a heightened ability to express their emotions, they also gained a wide range of parenting skills not typically associated with the role of father. They further found that nontraditional fathers exhibited these nurturing traits, all while maintaining the traditional masculine values of independence and strength (Rushing & Powell). Similarly, Fischer and Anderson (2012) found that masculinity and femininity of stay-at-home fathers and working fathers were not significantly different (see Table 2). Both studies illustrate that fathers gain benefits in parenting their children without actually being more feminine themselves. As nontraditional children observe their fathers doing more traditionally feminine activities, they are less likely to categorize one activity over another as appropriate for or expected of a certain sex.

Additionally, various studies have found that children with stay-at-home fathers and working mothers are more likely to engage in feminine activities and pursuits regardless of their sex (Deutsch et al., 2001; Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Rushing & Powell, 2015). Deutsch et al. (2001) found that male children from nontraditional homes were more likely to endorse and accept femininity when they had fathers who comforted them, participated actively in their upbringing, and valued the expression of their emotions. While traditional children have the emotional support and comfort from their mothers, these children may not as often have the benefit of observing activities that cross gender lines. The unique environment of the nontraditional home provides a setting in which children can explore various activities regardless of their gender. As societal beliefs pertaining to

gender roles decrease in prevalence, nontraditional children may be more able to accept and cross over these lines in the future when they have families of their own.

Enriched Relationships between Members of Nontraditional Families

Because nontraditional families exhibit a unique dynamic in which the father stays at home while the mother works, relationships within these families often differ from those of traditional families. As fathers stay at home with their children, they are often more involved in their children's everyday lives, comforting them, caring for them, and nurturing them (Deutsch et al., 2001; Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Rushing & Powell, 2015). Although one might think working mothers are not as involved in traditional female roles, multiple studies have found that working mothers are not only as involved in their children's lives as stay-at-home mothers, but their children also derive benefits from these nontraditional dynamics (Deutsch et al., 2001; Dunn et al., 2013; Flaskerud, 2012; Kramer et al., 2015; Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010; Williams & Radin, 1999; Wills & Brauer, 2012). Familial relationships between nontraditional family members are enhanced as parental cohesion is increased, quality time is enriched, and duties within the home are mutually shared, exposing children to a more cohesive, integrated, and egalitarian approach to family life.

Increased Parental Cohesion

Although research evaluating the differences in parental cohesion between traditional and nontraditional families is lacking, multiple studies have found that children within nontraditional families are exposed to high levels of parental cohesion between mothers and fathers (Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). This cohesion is manifested through the shared values of egalitarianism and equality, marital unity, and relationship satisfaction (Rushing & Powell, 2015). In a study conducted by Rushing and Powell (2015), 90% of working mothers reported feelings of trust and support from their spouses, resulting in greater feelings of cohesion. Indeed, fathers and mothers of nontraditional families supported one another through their efforts to remain consistent to their values and were unified within their relationship (Rushing & Powell, 2015). Accordingly, when both parties feel that they are appreciated, supported, and acknowledged in their

efforts to raise children and provide for the home, couples experience more unity. This unity is further demonstrated through adherence and loyalty to one's values despite societal backlash or misunderstanding.

In addition, Zimmerman (2000) found that strong communication skills and a cooperative spirit contributed to higher levels of marital satisfaction. Higher marital satisfaction results in happier couples, and happier couples result in happier families. Parenting cohesion is important in providing a healthy, reliable environment for children. Dunn et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of raising children within a harmonious, values-based home environment, especially without gender-related stereotypes. When egalitarianism and equality are modeled within the home, children will likely follow in their parents' footsteps and adopt these beliefs and practices in the future (Deutsch et al., 2001; Dunn et al., 2013). Egalitarian couples may be able to provide consistent parenting to their children who, in turn, benefit from a more stable environment within the home.

Quality Time Enhanced

Because nontraditional families are based less on societal expectations, and more on the practicality of increased earnings and partner suitability for domestic or work-related activities, family time is greatly improved within the home, as both partners are fulfilling the roles that they desire to fulfill. Dunn et al. (2013) found that nontraditional families exhibited an improved home environment, which, in turn, resulted in increased levels of quality time between parents and children. When the parents work together in a unified partnership to create a loving home environment, higher-quality family time results. Accordingly, when partners choose roles based on skills and preferences and not on societal expectations, both parents may feel that they are successfully providing for their children and may put in heightened effort to be a united family. For example, Rushing and Powell (2015) found that, within nontraditional homes, a balanced, consistent routine helped to enhance quality time when the family was all together, such as in the morning before the mother left for work or at night after the mother returned home. Because both the mother and the father consciously put effort into creating opportunities for quality time for the whole family, time together was maximized (Rushing & Powell, 2015). Indeed, working mothers retain their innate desire to be involved in their children's lives as

mothers and caretakers and find ways to be involved in spite of their work schedule. Although working fathers in traditional families may wish to be more involved in their children's lives, this desire is often unfulfilled (Fischer & Anderson, 2012). Societal norms do not require that fathers be overly involved, yet the opposite is true for women (Fischer & Anderson, 2012). Through the conscious effort of both parents, children of nontraditional homes receive the benefits of a unified, consistent home in which quality time is maximized and parents' roles in child-rearing are respected.

Sharing the Workload within the Home

Consistent with an egalitarian lifestyle, children from nontraditional households are exposed to a more equal division of labor within the home, in which both the mother and the father contribute to household chores and childcare. Equal division of labor is different for every household and circumstance. Traditionally, women have spent a disproportionate amount of time rearing children and attending to their concerns and well-being as compared to men. Nevertheless, multiple studies have demonstrated that adopting a more egalitarian approach to the division of household labor contributes to higher levels of marital satisfaction and happiness (Deutsch et al., 2001; Zimmerman, 2000). For example, Deutsch et al. (2001) found that when fathers contributed more to their child's emotional needs, the child exhibited increased self-esteem and came to endorse a gender-free model of family life within the home. When each parent contributes his or her proportionate share to the household and family life, mothers and fathers work together in an equal partnership that benefits their own relationship; additionally, children witness a healthy, complementary relationship within the home. As nontraditional children come to accept a more egalitarian lifestyle, they may be more likely and willing to perpetuate these dynamics for their own families in the future.

Conclusion

Prepared to face a world in which gender roles and expectations are constantly and quickly changing, children from nontraditional households exhibit positive cognitive traits, enhanced behavioral developments, and enriched familial relationships due to the unconventional dynamics they witness at home. Cognitively,

nontraditional children endorse less-gendered beliefs, exhibit higher self-esteem, and aspire to unconventional careers that are not limited by gender or circumstance (Deutsch et al., 2001; Dunn et al., 2013; Sinno & Killen, 2009). Behaviorally, these children demonstrate secure attachment to both parents, exhibit behavioral control, and present a preference for feminine activities (Brown et al., 2012; Dunn et al., 2013; Lucas-Thompson et al., 2010; Rushing & Powell, 2015). Socially, nontraditional children have positive familial relationships that are enhanced by witnessing increased levels of parenting cohesion, heightened levels of quality family time, and improved proportions of workload sharing within the home (Deutsch et al., 2001; Dunn et al., 2013; Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Rushing & Powell, 2015). With these distinct benefits, nontraditional children enter society with a unique outlook and perspective of gender expectations and stereotypes.

Interestingly, even though more unconventional attitudes and practices within the home are increasing, many families that have adopted nontraditional roles still feel much of the strain and social stigma associated with crossing over these lines (Dunn et al., 2013; Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). Instead of supporting these couples and families, society often isolates and rejects them because they do not comply with traditional expectations (Rushing & Powell, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). By understanding the unique benefits that come to children by adopting nontraditional dynamics within the home, perhaps, many of these negative beliefs and uninformed stereotypes may be challenged and eventually changed.

In order to support nontraditional families, society ought to be more accepting and less critical of nontraditional dynamics. Support ought to be offered for working mothers within the workplace as well as for domestic fathers within the home. Hill, Hawkins, Märtinson, and Ferris (2003) found that companies may facilitate greater feelings of commitment and support from their employees by providing specific work-family programs aimed at mediating the conflict between work and family. For example, work-family programs may offer working mothers flexibility and a greater ability to achieve a balance between the demands of work and home (Hill et al., 2003). However, little research has examined the effectiveness of programs designed to help and support domestic fathers within the home. Thus, instead of evaluating families by their circumstances and decisions

regarding work and childcare, society ought to celebrate these families for their difficult decisions. It is difficult enough to pave new avenues and exhibit nontraditional roles, but it is even harder to do so without the support of others.

Furthermore, it is important to foster understanding pertaining to the benefits of nontraditional familial dynamics. Activities and social roles must be categorized less as appropriate for male or female and more as universally appropriate for either sex. Future research could benefit from examining the longitudinal effects of a nontraditional upbringing on children in order to more fully understand the potential outcomes experienced by children from nontraditional homes. This research could demonstrate and further justify the need for support systems within society for parents exhibiting nontraditional roles and for their children. If society can educate children about all of their options, regardless of gender, celebrate the sacrifices that all parents make in providing for their children, and support all families in their work and household pursuits, then change will likely take place.

While the rest of the world may judge or criticize them, nontraditional couples are able to demonstrate resilience to their children. Despite hardships in the workplace and in the home, these couples model equality that may have implications for generations far into the future. Nontraditional children will likely be able to further gender equality and support a more egalitarian lifestyle through the choices that they make in their own families. In essence, these children may be more prepared to face a society in which gender lines are reevaluated and changed. Perhaps, in the near future, gender will not determine household suitability or workplace fitness, but instead will reflect the unique desires and aspirations that each person has individually, regardless of his or her sex. Maybe the kitchen floor is often dirty and dinner is regularly late, yet, as affirmed by my mother, C. Christensen (2016), nontraditional families are not based on adhering to societal expectations and beliefs. Instead, they are founded on providing the best lives for their children despite the obstacles that lie ahead of them.

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Table 1

Proportion of Gender Stereotype vs. Personal Effort Justifications

	Traditional	Nontraditional
Mom Cooking Dinner (Personal Effort)	.74 (.44)	.79 (.41)
Father Cooking Dinner (Personal Effort)	.87 (.34)	.90 (.30)
Mom Cooking Dinner (Gender Stereotypes)	.26 (.44)	.20 (.40)
Father Cooking Dinner (Gender Stereotypes)	.10 (.31)	.10 (.30)

Note. Adapted from “Moms at Work and Dads at Home: Children’s Evaluations of Parental Roles,” by S. M. Sinno & M. Killen, 2009, *Applied Developmental Science*, 13, p. 24.

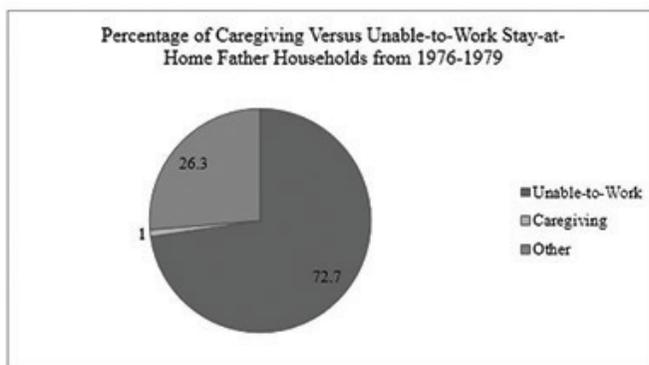


Figure 1. Percentage of caregiving stay-at-home father households versus unable-to-work stay-at-home father households from 1976 to 1979. Adapted

from “Stay-at-Home Fathers: Definition and Characteristics Based on 34 Years of CPS Data,” by K. Z. Kramer, E. L. Kelly, & J. B. McCulloch, 2015, *Journal of Family Issues*, 36, p. 1662.

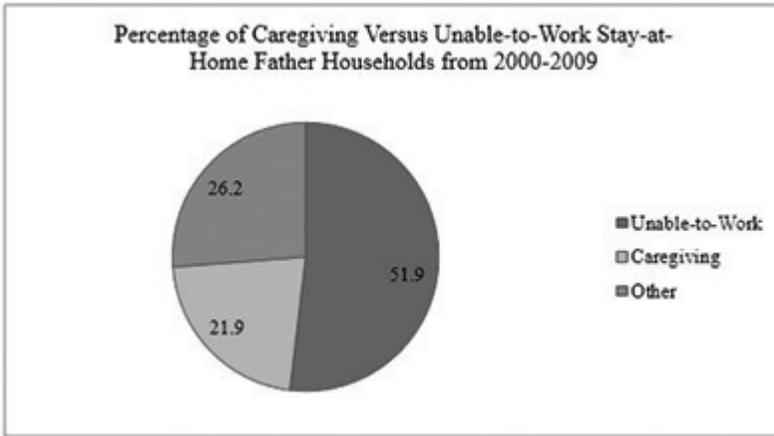


Figure 2. Percentage of caregiving stay-at-home father households versus unable-to-work stay-at-home father households from 2000 to 2009. Adapted from “Stay-at-Home Fathers: Definition and Characteristics Based on 34 Years of CPS Data,” by K. Z. Kramer, E. L. Kelly, & J. B. McCulloch, 2015, *Journal of Family Issues*, 36, p. 1662.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Stay-at-Home and Employed Fathers

	PAQ Masculinity	PAQ Femininity
Stay-at-home fathers	3.7 (.5)	3.9 (.5)
Employed fathers	3.8 (.5)	3.8 (.5)

Adapted from “Gender Role Attitudes and Characteristics of Stay-at-Home and Employed Fathers,” by J. Fischer & V. N. Anderson, 2012, *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 13, p. 22.