



# Exploration of the relationship between father role salience and levels of involvement with their preschool children

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**Abstract:** Social expectations of the father's role in the family have changed considerably in the past four decades. The purpose of this study was to examine the various factors that influence both father role salience and father involvement with their preschool age children based upon a model set forth by Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson (1998). Data was collected from seventy-four fathers regarding factors that affected their involvement level with their children. Five primary variables were assessed: Father Role Salience, Father Employment, Mother Employment, Encouragement from Partner, and Child Gender. Based upon multiple regression analysis and path analysis it was found that of the five original variables, only three significantly affected father involvement: father role salience, father employment, and mother employment. Father role salience was also found to be a mediating variable between father employment and father involvement. Recommendations and implications for future research and practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** Fathers, Preschool children, Role Salience, Involvement



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## 1. Introduction

Social expectations of the father's role in the family have changed considerably in the past four decades. Although in earlier times men were expected to be mainly an economic provider, the "new father" now is expected to also provide day-to-day physical and emotional care to children as an equal partner to the mother (Banchevsky & Park, 2016). Public conceptions of the role of fathers in the family have shifted from breadwinner to active and nurturing participants of all aspects of childrearing (Lamb, 2012). In recent years, child development research has given significant consideration to the exploration of father involvement and provides substantiation of the positive contributions of father involvement towards enhancing children's family and peer relations, cognitive, behavioral and emotional development, educational attainment, and socio-economic status (Cabrera et al., 2000; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002; Lamb, 2012).

Research is also finding that a significant number of fathers are spending more time with their pre-school children (e.g., Lamb, 2012). Some of this increase in involvement may be the result of the increase in dual-earner families. For example, it was recently estimated that the labor participation rate for women with children under age 6 is around 68 percent (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). It would seem likely that men in these dual-earner relationships may be expected to

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be more active in their co-parenting of their pre-school children responsibilities (Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009) as they could be placed in a caretaker role to supplement mother involvement. However, the issue of father involvement seems more complex than a mere function of increased opportunity for contact.

Some researchers have suggested that the concept of "role salience" may also be a key factor in understanding why some fathers are more involved than others (e.g., Maurer, Pleck, & Rane, 2001). The term role salience refers to the placement of a given role within the hierarchy of all roles that a person enacts. This type of prioritizing of roles could suggest that role salience may be a mediating role with other variables relating to father involvement (Stone & McKenry, 1998). Thus, in the current study, role salience will be explored within an analysis to permit an evaluation of its mediating effects on father involvement.

While the evidence is mounting that many fathers are spending more time with their pre-school children and that this involvement can have a positive influence on child development, there is scant research that attempts to understand involvement through application of a comprehensive theoretical approach (Jacobs, & Kelley, 2006). One theoretical model that has gained significant support was put forth by Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson (1998). This model provides an understanding of factors that influence father involvement and subsequently how men prioritize their time. In the next section we shall explore the various components of this model and how they apply to understanding how father involvement is affected by various issues as it is the purpose of the current study to explore father involvement through this theoretical model.

### **Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson Model of Father Involvement**

This Doherty et al. (1998) model has been used in exploring areas such as non-resident fathers' relationships with their secondary school age children (Flouri, 2006), generative fathering (Brotherson, & Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005), incarcerated fathers (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005) and changes in father involvement over time (Wood & Repetti, 2004). This model has been used with populations similar to the current study based upon age, SES, and race/ethnicity (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Leite, & McKenry 2002; Wood & Repetti, 2004). The model uses an ecological perspective which provides a useful framework from within which scholars can examine the various individual and contextual factors that influence fathers' involvement with their children. These various factors can be found in Figure 1. Each of these areas will now be discussed.

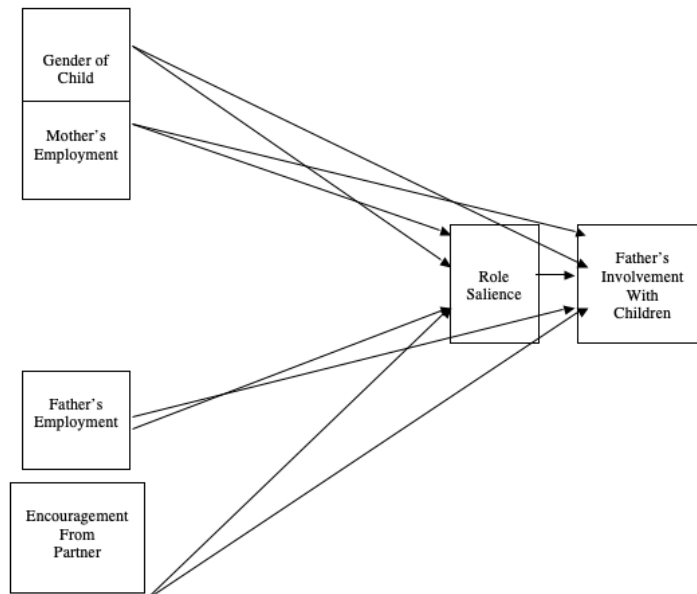


Figure 1:  
Initial model explaining factors influencing father involvement with their preschool children

### Father Involvement

There is a wide range of ideas about what constitutes “father involvement.” Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley and Buehler (1993) provide a holistic conception of father involvement. They define father involvement as “behaviors that promote interaction with and reflect a commitment to a child” (p. 551). This definition includes everyday tasks such as helping with homework or meal preparation as well as engaging in play activity with the child. It could also include efforts at providing “nurturing” such as expressing verbal or nonverbal affection.

### Father Factors

Doherty et al. (1998) state that “fathers’ role identification, skills, and commitment are important influences on fathering” (p.285). As noted earlier, an important indicator variable within this area is “role saliency.” The term role saliency refers to the placement of a given role within the hierarchy of all roles that a person enacts. For example, a father might need to balance fathering with being a husband or employee (Maurer, et al., 2001). It is possible to gain an understanding of how important fathering is by looking at a man’s hierarchical prioritization of his many roles. In a study by Stone & McKenry (1998), a connection between father role hierarchy and father involvement was found for fathers following divorce.

Another important variable to be considered is “father employment.” Research shows that a work-to-family and family-to-work “spillover” exists for many fathers (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999). Work-family spillover, defined as the transfer of feelings, attitudes, and behaviors between work and home (Almeida, Wethington, & Chandler, 1999), is a problem of importance for researchers studying fathering behaviors. Examples of outcomes associated with negative work-to-family spillover include withdrawal from family interaction and less knowledge of children’s experiences (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999; Crouter, Helms-Erikson, Updegraff, & McHale, 1999). American workers appear to be expending more hours in paid labor than in previous years. According to Mishel, Bivens, Gould, & Shierholz (2012), the average American employee worked 1,868 hours in 2007, an increase of 181 hours from the 1979 work year of 1,687 hours. This represents an increase of

10.7 percent. This large amount of time at the workplace can have a significant impact on how fathers prioritize their time and ultimately on father-child involvement. It has been found that fathers' wages and work hours have a negative impact upon the amount of time they spend with their child (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). In addition, fathers who have more stressful jobs tend to spend more hours at work and are less involved with their children (Hofferth, & Goldscheider, 2010).

### **Mother Factors**

According to Doherty et al. (1998), the mother is an important factor to consider because oftentimes she serves as the "gatekeeper" for the father-child relationship. Researchers have explored the influence that a mother's work schedule has on the amount of time a father will spend taking care of his children. Presser (2000) found that a mother's employment schedule increases the likelihood of fathers taking care of their youngest child when the mother is not available. Other researchers have found that fathers are more likely to be responsible for childcare when their wives are employed part-time rather than full-time (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Presser, 1988) and when their wives work non-day shifts (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Barnett, Gareis, & Brennan, 2008).

Another important "mother factor" is the level of encouragement and support the mother offers the father to engage in active parenting. The importance of understanding maternal attitudes is underscored by research that has indicated that mothers can play a significant gatekeeper role towards the father in such a way to discourage involvement (Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008). If a mother rejects help from the father in raising the children by discouraging hands-on contact with his children, a father can become discouraged and feel he is failing as a parent. Many fathers report frustration because they feel inadequate as a parent as a result of nonsupport from their partners. This nonsupport comes either directly by being told they don't know how to do something or indirectly such as when a mother automatically assumes duties associated with the children. In addition, research indicates that receiving support from a spouse has a positive influence on a couple's appraisals of their parenting skills, as well as their level of emotional involvement with their children (Cowan & Cowan, 2000).

### **Child Factors**

Doherty et al. (1998) state that "individual child factors are included in the model for completeness, but the child factors studied in the research literature do not appear to be as important as the other dimensions in influencing fathering" (p.284). Research is inconclusive on whether fathers spend more time or spend time differently with their sons than with their daughters. Byrd-Craven, Auer, Granger, & Massey (2012) reported no difference in the hours spent or in the types of interaction with sons and daughters. In contrast, Lundberg (2005) found that fathers prefer to interact with sons while Lamb & Lewis (2004) report that fathers are more involved with daughters. Despite the lack of agreement, gender will be included in the current study as a means to further explore this possible connection.

In summary, research seems to indicate that father involvement with their children is a complex issue influenced by a myriad of variables. The present research examined the aforementioned variables as related to father involvement theorized by Doherty et. al., (1998 – father factors, mother factors, and child factors).

It was hypothesized that father's involvement (behaviors that promote interaction with and reflect a commitment to a child) would be associated with (1) greater levels "role salience" (father factor); (2) lower number of work hours by the father (father factor); (3) greater number of work hours by the mother (mother factor); (3) greater levels of encouragement from the mother to the father to engage in parenting (mother factor); and (4) the gender of the child, with fathers electing to spend more time with sons versus daughters (child factor). In addition, it is hypothesized that "role salience" will play a mediating effect of predictor variables upon father involvement. This will be tested through a path analysis verification.

## 2. Methodology

### Research Design & Procedure

The methodology for this quantitative study was a cross sectional survey-based approach in which information was gathered through mailed questionnaires. Research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the primary investigator. Participants were mailed a packet consisting of informed consent and confidentiality forms, instructions for completing the survey, the actual survey measures, and a self-addressed return envelope. The entire packet was mailed to the home address of 202 fathers of children attending a preschool in a Midwestern city with a population of approximately 60,000.

### Sample

A convenience sample was used for this study. The participants were biological or adoptive fathers of children attending a preschool in a Midwestern city. All 202 fathers of enrolled students were asked to participate in the study. A total of 74 fathers responded to the survey, representing a response rate of nearly 37 percent. All participants were Caucasian and were predominantly middle class. Fathers in this sample ranged in age from 26 to 56, with an average age of 36.56. They had been married an average of 10.27 years. Their reported annual income averaged \$62,746. See Table 1 for complete demographic information.

Table 1

*Family Demographic Characteristics*

	n	Range	Mean	S.D.
Age	74	26-56 years	36.57 yrs.	5.33
Marital Duration	73	2-25 years	10.27 yrs.	4.48
Father Income	65	\$2,000-180,000	\$62,746	31,819
Partner Income	41	\$1,000-68,000	\$30,170	18,196
Age of Child	74	3-6 years	4.48 yrs	.7401

In order to control for extraneous variables, the criteria to participate in the study included the following: (a) participant must be a biological or adoptive father of at least one child enrolled at the preschool, (b) participant must be married to the biological/adoptive mother, (c) participant must be living full-time with the child enrolled at the preschool (if the participant had more than one

child enrolled, he was asked to think of the oldest child when answering questions on the questionnaire and were screened accordingly), and (d) participant must be willing to participate.

### **Measures**

The study used both standardized and unstandardized measures as well as a demographic face sheet to obtain relevant demographic information about participants.

**Demographic measures.** A demographic measure was used to assess the ages of participants as well as their children. Gender of children was also collected. It is important to note that only the first child that met the criteria was analyzed. In addition, information regarding mother's employment status was measured on the basis of whether the mother was gainfully employed and if so, did she work full or part-time. Father's employment was measured in the same manner. An estimate of father's and mother's annual income was collected. In addition, information on the ethnicity and current marital status was collected. Information was also gathered on the length of time fathers had been married and/or divorced.

**Father involvement.** Father involvement level was measured through the use of the Frequency of Participation scale (Klein, 1983). Klein's Frequency of Participation Scale (KFPS) consists of 22 items that measure involvement in basic care giving, recreation, emotional support, religion or ethics, and school-related activities. Fathers were instructed to indicate the frequency of their participation in activities with their child. Sample items included attending school-related functions, dressing and grooming the child, arranging child care, and shopping for needed items. Responses can range from 1 (not at all) to 6 (daily). The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .91 in the current study.

**Encouragement from partner.** Encouragement from partner was measured using a one-item measure on the "Encouragement from Others Measure" (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993). Fathers were asked to rate partners' level of support for their involvement with their child from "very discouraging" to "very encouraging."

**Father role salience.** The "Father Role Salience Scale" developed by Bruce and Fox (1999) was used to measure father role salience. This scale is a 10-item measure (five reversed items) with a reported internal reliability of  $\alpha = .61$ . It consists of 10 statements about the paternal role. Examples of the statements are "Being a father has changed me a lot"; "I would rather work overtime than watch my kids for the evening" (reversed); "I like being known as a father." The five scale points are range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and a "neutral" mid-point rating. This scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .71 in this study.

### **3. Analysis of Data**

The hypotheses were tested using correlational procedures and stepwise multiple regression analysis in combination with path analysis. Standardized multiple regression with the use of relevant variables that were identified in the literature as important were used. Although there could be a number of other possible influences, for the purpose of this study, the core theoretical variables included employment status of both mother and father, gender of child, encouragement from partner and role salience. A series of stepwise regression procedures were used.

A path analysis procedure was also used. This method is based on identifying all possible effects that are contained in a correlation and then estimating the amount of correlation attributed

to each effect. This allows for “an estimation of the true causal relationship between two variables/constructs in a system of structural equations” (Hair et al., 1992, p.430).

Data from this study were analyzed through bivariate correlations and multivariate statistics. The results of these analyses are presented in the following sections. (1) greater levels “role salience” (father factor); (2) lower number of work hours by the father (father factor); (3) greater number of work hours by the mother (mother factor); (3) greater levels of encouragement from the mother to the father to engage in parenting (mother factor); and (4) the gender of the child, with fathers electing to spend more time with sons versus daughters (child factor).

### Bivariate Analysis

The correlation matrix for the variables included in the regression analysis is presented in Table 2. These relate to the hypotheses discussed earlier and will now be presented:

*Hypotheses # 1.* Data supported the proposition that higher levels of role salience would be associated with more father involvement. Salience was positively related to father involvement with a correlation of .430 ( $p < .01$ ).

*Hypotheses # 2.* Data supported the hypothesis that the less a father works outside the home more time he is involved with his children. The data from the study supports this hypothesis. Father’s employment was negatively related to father involvement with a correlation of  $-.398$  ( $p < .01$ ).

*Hypotheses # 3.* Data supported the idea that the more a mother works outside the home, the more involved fathers will be with their children. The data from the study supports this hypothesis. Mothers’ employment was positively related to father involvement with a correlation of .322 ( $p < .01$ ).

*Hypotheses # 4.* Data did not support the notion that the more encouragement a father receives from his partner regarding parenting, the more involved he will be with his children. There was no statistical evidence to support this hypothesis.

Table 2

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Multivariate Analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Father Involvement	1.00	.430**	-.022	-.001	-.386**	.322**	.094
2. Salience		1.00	-.169	.011	-.248*	.083	-.060
3. SES			1.00	.113	.061	.012	.026
4. Child Gender <sup>a</sup>				1.00	.026	.173	.058
5. Father employment status <sup>b</sup>					1.00	-.231*	-.109
6. Spouse employment status <sup>c</sup>						1.00	-.151
7. Encouragement							1.00
Mean	81.37	41.53	82723	-	-	-	4.49
SD	11.87	4.30	26695	-	-	-	.842

\*  $p < .05$  (two tailed)

\*\*  $p < .01$  (two tailed)

<sup>a</sup> This is a dummy variable

<sup>b</sup> This is a dummy variable

<sup>c</sup> This is a dummy variable

### Multivariate Analysis

For this research, the stepwise regression component of SPSS version 24.0 was used in calculating the regression models. The stepwise procedure for SPSS continues to examine and re-examine variables at each step in the entering of new variables for inclusion or removal into the

regression model. Therefore, variables are individually considered in the context with all other variables. This process continues until no additional variables meet the entry or removal criteria: PIN .05; POUT .10 for this study. A .05 level of probability was set to determine the significance of the regression coefficients.

In the next phase of the multivariate analysis, a series of stepwise multiple regression analysis were performed with exclusion of variables that did not meet the .05 level of significance. The remaining variables were entered as a block and constitute the final model of father involvement. The results of these regression analyses can be viewed in Table 3. As can be seen, the final model accounts for approximately 15 percent of the variance in Father Involvement. Saliency was found to be the largest contributor to explaining the variance in father involvement with a beta value of .350 ( $p < .001$ ). Fathers' employment was found to be the second most significant contributor to explaining variance in father involvement with a beta value of  $-.244$  ( $p < .05$ ). The third most significant contributor to explaining father involvement was mother's employment, which has a beta value of  $-.237$  ( $p < .05$ ).

### **Path Analysis**

Path Analysis was next utilized to examine the relationship between the variables in the causal model and to further explore any existence of mediating variables (e.g., role saliency). Path analysis is a data analytic technique using standardized multiple regression equations in examining theoretical models (Bollen, 1998). In path analysis, a number of ordinary least square regression equations are computed to obtain path estimates, which are standardized partial regression coefficients, or betas, which are in turn used to estimate relationships between predictor variables and dependent variables. In this research, Father Involvement was theorized as the primary dependent variable with Saliency as a secondary dependent variable by virtue of its mediating role between assorted other variables and Father Involvement. Path analysis also allows one to calculate both direct and indirect effects of predictor variables on dependent variables.

The first phase involved an evaluation of the dependent variable Father Involvement. The entirety of this process was documented in the section on multivariate analysis. To recapitulate, Father Involvement was regressed on the five constructs of the original model. The results can be viewed in Table 3. The final constructs, which entered in at a significance level of .05 or better, can be seen in Table 3.



Table 3:  
A Decomposition of the Effects on a Model Explaining Father Involvement via Saliency

FATHER INVOLVEMENT	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
SALIENCY	.350 <sup>d</sup> (3.44)	*	<u>.350</u>
WORK STATUS - FATHER	-.244 <sup>c</sup> (-2.34)	-.085	-.329
WORK STATUS - MOTHER	.237 <sup>c</sup> (2.34)	.009	<u>.246</u>
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> .292</b>			
<hr/>			
FATHER ROLE SALIENCY			
WORK STATUS - FATHER	-.248 <sup>c</sup> (-2.18)	*	-.248
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> .049</b>			

<sup>a</sup> Direct effects are indicated by standardized regression coefficients; t ratios are in parentheses under the coefficients.

<sup>b</sup> Variable significant at the .10 level of probability.

<sup>c</sup> Variable significant at the .05 level of probability.

<sup>d</sup> Variable significant at the .001 level of probability.

\* No indirect effect hypothesized.

Next, a regression analysis was performed in which the secondary dependent variable Saliency was regressed. As the data indicates, "role saliency" seems to possess significant mediating effects for these variables in relation to Father Involvement.

A summary of the final, revised path model can be seen in Figure 2. This model contains only 3 of the original 5 constructs hypothesized to affect Father Involvement. The magnitude and level of significance of the paths in the causal model are also included.

Next, the effects of the variables in the model were decomposed into their direct and indirect effects (See Table 3). The direct effect of a variable is that part of its effect that is not mediated, or transmitted by other variables. In practical terms, it is equivalent to the standardized regression (path) coefficient, or beta, for that variable. A variable's indirect effect is that part of its effect on an endogenous variable that is transmitted or mediated by one or more variables. An indirect effect is calculated by multiplying successive path coefficients when two variables are separated by an intervening variable. Total effect of a variable is the sum of the direct and indirect effects a given variable has on the target dependent variable (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

The variable with the highest total effect on father involvement was "role saliency" at .350. Work status of the father was the next largest, with a total effect of -.329 on father involvement, with an indirect effect through Saliency of -.085. Finally, work status of the mother came, which had a total effect of .246 on Father Involvement, with an indirect effect through Saliency of .009. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value was .292, indicating that this model accounts for approximately 30% of the variance in the variable Father Involvement.

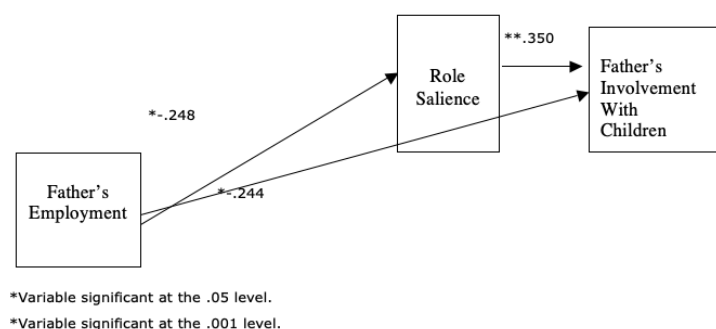


Figure 2:  
Revised Model explaining factors influencing father involvement with their preschool children

Further analysis is provided on the decomposition of the effects on "role salience" as a second dependent variable. As can be seen in Table 3, work status of the father is the only significant variable in regard to "role salience" with a direct effect of  $-.248$ . The adjusted  $R^2$  for this model was  $.049$ , indicating that this model accounts for approximately 5% of the variance in the variable Salience.

#### 4. Discussion

This research attempted to test a multidimensional model that could provide an explanatory framework to gain understanding of the various influences on father involvement with their preschool age children. This framework was based on Doherty's et al. (1998) model of father involvement. Among these influences or factors, were factors about fathers such as role salience and employment status. Factors about mothers included employment status and encouragement given to fathers regarding involvement. Gender of the child was the only factor considered for child factors. Through a multivariate approach, it was possible to indicate which variables explained the most variance in father involvement. In addition, with the use of path analysis, it was possible to examine which variables were significant when "role salience" was used as a second dependent variable. Results revealed that there were three variables that influence father involvement: salience (a factor about fathers), father's employment status (another factor about fathers), and mother's employment status (a factor about mothers). It should be noted that the two remaining factors, "encouragement" and "gender of the child" did not significantly impact father involvement. When "role salience" was analyzed as a second dependent variable, only one variable, "father's employment status," was found to be significant.

It was originally hypothesized that fathers who feel more salient in the role of parent would be more involved with their children, and therefore would make spending time with their children a priority. Stryker (1991) hypothesized that the more salient a given role-identity is, the more likely it is that an individual will actually seek out opportunities to enact that role. Results of this study were consistent with Stryker and show that fathers with higher levels of salience are in fact more involved with their children.

The second variable found to be significant was fathers' employment status. It is not surprising that results of this study are congruent with prior research, which has indicated a negative "work to family spillover" (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 1999). The more hours spent at work by

fathers seems to lead to a withdrawal from family interaction and, subsequently less knowledge of their children's experiences. This study found that fathers who work part-time had higher levels of involvement with their children. This could possibly be because they simply have more time to spend with their children as they have fewer work demands. It is also possible that it is related to the earlier findings on salience. Perhaps fathers who feel high salience in the role of parent want to spend more time with their children, and therefore only work part-time because of the importance they place on fathering in their life. More exploration is needed in this area.

Another notable finding was the influence of the mother's employment status on father involvement. There are conflicting arguments regarding whether a mother's employment status affects a father's time spent with his children. Brayfield (1995) suggests that a mother working exerts pressure on the father to spend more time with his children. However, Allen, & Hawkins (1999) found little or no connection between wives' time in paid employment and fathers' time in family work. The current study found that mothers' full-time employment did significantly impact father involvement. Perhaps additional research in this area with a more diverse sample will help to clarify what connection truly exists between mothers' work and fathers' involvement with their children.

Finally, this study analyzed the potential mediating effects of role salience on father involvement. The path analysis indicated that work status of the father was the only significant variable in regard to "role salience" with a direct effect of  $-.248$ . This would seem to suggest that fathers who worked more hours might identify with their role as employee over the role of father. However, this would need further study to determine the extent of this relationship.

## **5. Limitations of the Study**

There are a number of limitations of this research. Since the study makes use of a convenience sample, the fathers in the sample are not necessarily representative of all fathers. The sample was under-representative of minorities and relatively small in size. It was limited to fathers who were married and living full time with their children, thereby excluding single or divorced fathers. Since it was voluntary, it was also subject to the problem of self-selection bias. The sample included fathers whose children attend a private preschool and therefore economic status was also a limitation. Another issue was the fact that there was no way to gather information about those who did not respond, or to determine if there are any common characteristic-defining nonrespondents. The problem of sample bias certainly places constraints on the external validity of the findings.

Other limitations concern the actual instrumentations used in the study. For example, individual fathers may interpret the questions asked in different ways. In general, there is a limitation when relying on self-reporting. It is highly subjective and calls for the father to disclose personal information, which he may not wish to give. Another limitation is that this sample survey was conducted at only one point in time. Therefore, it only reflects a father's perception at the particular time at which it was completed.

## 6. Practice Implications

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study may have several important implications for practice. Because role salience was found to have a relatively large impact on father involvement, it may be helpful for service providers to make efforts to educate men of the importance of their role as father in a manner that will assist them to place higher salience on that role in comparison to other roles. It would follow that as fathers place a higher value and priority on the role of father they will in turn spend more time with their children.

Barnett & Gareis' (2007) research suggests that fathers who have more stressful jobs spend more time at work and are less involved with their children's lives. The findings of the current study support aspects of their research. Unfortunately, the workplace is often not a father-friendly environment. The conflict between work and family could be improved by educating employers as to the benefits of supporting employed fathers. Several suggestions to make the workplace more supportive to fathers include; encouraging fathers to participate in their children's schools, supporting fathers who need to stay home with a sick child, and allow flex-time and flexible work hours (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997; Stone, 2002).

Researchers have found that married couples who engage in premarital education often experience less marital distress and divorce (Stanley et al., 2001). Therefore, it is possible that intervention programs much like those designed to educate engaged couples, would benefit couples considering parenthood. This type of program could provide couples with opportunities to discuss expectations about their role as a parent. This would be a logical place for both fathers and mothers to gain a better understanding of the important role of fathering in child development. In essence, the saliency of the fathering role could receive support from both parents within this type of educational framework.

Just as direct-service practitioners of marital and family therapy need to be aware of the complex theoretical model of father involvement, so do those who form policy and programs related to fathers as parents. By implementing policies such as family leave for fathers, education programs and legal reforms, father salience may be increased, and as a result, involvement levels with their children may also be increased.

## 7. Conclusion

This study was designed to explore variables that influence fathers' involvement with their children. It is clear that there are many factors that come into play when a father prioritizes his time. It is hoped that service providers, as well as policy makers will utilize this research and its findings to better their understanding of ways to improve the levels of father involvement with their children. Furthermore, this research could help to improve father-child relationships through heightening awareness about the connections between father involvement, father salience and father work status. Perhaps ways could be explored to help fathers balance the multiple demands of being a breadwinner and being an involved father.

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