

Father Involvement in Childcare and Household Work
in Common-Law Dual-Earner and Single-Earner Jamaican Families

Jaipaul L. Roopnarine

Syracuse University

Janet Brown

Priscilla Snell White

University of West Indies

Devon Crossley

Fathers Incorporated

Kingston, Jamaica

Ziarat Hossain

University of Miami Medical School

Wayne Webb

University of the West Indies

Running Head: Jamaican Fathers

Abstract

The division of childcare and household labor and beliefs about the roles of mothers and fathers were examined in 86 low-income dual-earner and single-earner Jamaican couples in common-law unions. Analysis revealed that there was a markedly gender-differentiated pattern of involvement in childcare and household tasks by parents, and that they held very traditional conceptions of the roles of mothers and fathers. Both mothers and fathers were more likely to spend time in playing than in feeding or cleaning babies. Involvement in childcare did not differ as a function of the gender of the infant, but involvement in childcare and household work did vary by mother's employment status. Jamaican men's participation in childcare and household activities was quite similar to those reported for men in other cultural groups. The data are discussed in terms of the commonly accepted notion of the "marginal" role of Jamaican men in the family and in the context of gender roles.

Father Involvement in Childcare and Household Work in Common-Law Dual-earner and Single-earner Jamaican Families

It is estimated that over half of all Caribbean children are born in non-legal unions (Powell, 1986). In most of these cases the offspring is the result of a "friending/visiting" or common-law relationship. With the exception of Barbados, there is little legal recognition of common-law unions throughout the English-speaking Caribbean. Needless to say, common-law unions have been criticized by some on moral grounds, while others have questioned the welfare of women in these unions, the economic contribution of men to the family and their involvement in childcare and household work (Powell, 1986; Roberts & Sinclair, 1978; Senior, 1991). In fact, novelists (e.g., Lamming, 1970) and social scientists (e.g., Clarke, 1957; Miller, 1992) have lamented the marginal role Caribbean men assume in the socialization of young children and their generally meager economic contributions for the upkeep of family members. In this report, we examine the division of childcare and household labor and perceptions of parental roles among dual-earner and single-earner Jamaican men and women in common-law unions.

Family Configurations in the Caribbean

Despite socio-political and economic changes, Jamaican family structural arrangements have remained relatively unchanged over the last 150 years (Roberts & Sinclair, 1978). As of 1975, 70-75% of Jamaican children were born in non-marital unions (Roberts, 1975) and this figure has not changed much (Powell, 1986; Senior, 1991). When marriage does occur, it

usually comes later in life following childbearing after progressive visiting and common-law relationships (Senior, 1991).

Four basic types of family forms or unions have been identified in the Caribbean and are discussed in some detail by Senior (1991). The visiting or friending relationship constitutes about 25% of mating relationships in the Caribbean. This type of union is more prevalent among younger women and serves as a meeting ground for sexual relationships and social interactions. Social contacts may occur at either the man's or woman's place or at some pre-arranged location (Rodman, 1971). These unions are tenuous at best since there is little legal protection for women and men's roles are not clearly articulated. Moreover, women may find themselves raising their children alone as single parents or engaging in the practice of "child-shifting," where their children are raised by grandparents or other relatives at different times (Brodber, 1974).

In common-law unions, by contrast, women tend to be older and may have given birth to several offspring. These relationships are seen as more binding since couples cohabit and women assume the domestic role of tending to the home and family, while men are expected to provide economic support (Senior, 1991). Hence, the relationship resembles that of a legal marriage without the legal standing. Because these unions are not legally recognized, women may be shortchanged if the relationship dissolves. Typically, property and household possessions are under the legal ownership of men though some women do inherit land and property. Figures gathered from the women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) revealed that just under 20% of Caribbean unions are common-law (Powell, 1986).

The final two family configurations, married and single-parent are not independent of the family forms discussed earlier. In general, quite a few women who are married report being in common-law unions previously. Most married women are in the 35-54 age range. On the other hand, single women are in no present relationship, may be abandoning or be abandoned in a relationship, divorced, or widowed. In this latter group, the women are generally older; more than 50% of women between 56 and 64 are single. They comprise about 23% of those surveyed in the WICP study (Powell, 1986).

In short, family relationships in the Caribbean are quite varied and do not strictly adhere to the ideals of the much discussed nuclear unit. Although marriage may be more prevalent among East Indians and Chinese in Trinidad and Guyana, the family relationships of African-Caribbean men and women can best be described in terms of a "shifting" pattern (Rodman, 1971; Senior, 1991). Most men and women move through several unions, often producing children before marriage.

Jamaican Men's Involvement in Childcare and Household Work

Perhaps nowhere else are the stereotyped roles of Caribbean men in the family better epitomized than in the Calypsos, the popular media, and literature of the region. The noted Barbadian writer, George Lamming, in his novel In the Castle of My Skin made specific reference to his father who left him in the care of his mother who then "fathered" him (Lamming, 1970). This theme appeared quite often in earlier anthropological and sociological analysis of family life in Jamaica. For example, one of the first qualitative accounts of family life in Jamaica is titled My Mother Who Fathered Me (Clarke, 1957). Basically, Clarke (1957) observed that the most intimate

relationships were between women and children, while fathers were perceived to be "strict and exacting." The same sentiment was echoed by Henriques (1953) who suggested that the Jamaican father played a minor role in the family and in many cases was absent.

Studies conducted over the last three decades paint a very different picture of Jamaican men, however. Proceeding chronologically, Blake (1961) in her work on mating and family dynamics noted that the Jamaican father assumed a complimentary role in childrearing with women. In their fieldwork, Stycos and Back (1964) also found that even in visiting relationships men assumed a good deal of responsibility for their children, in many cases providing economic support for them; and Roberts and Sinclair (1978) estimated that in visiting relationships Jamaican fathers spent about 14.5 hours per week with their children. In the same vein, a recent large-scale study (Brown, Anderson, & Chevannes, 1992) of father involvement among Jamaican families revealed that fathers played with their children regularly and showed reasonably frequent involvement in tidying children, helping them with their homework and being available to them daily. Fathers were quite concerned about the moral socialization of their children. A majority were quite satisfied with the way their children were developing, and overall, close to 50% of fathers felt they were doing a good job or "the best they could" with children.

When we turn to household work, the data are sparse. The common assumption is that, regardless of the union, Jamaican women assume primary responsibility for household labor (Senior, 1991). Two studies on Jamaican families (Chevannes, 1985; Brown et al, 1992) confirm this.

Chevannes (1985) reported that less than a third of the men in his sample cooked at least twice a week and Brown et al (1992) also showed that men were reluctant to cook, clean and tidy the home, and wash clothes. Beyond these studies, however, there remains a lot of conjecture about Jamaican men and housework. Theoretically, a number of scholars have argued that women who work outside the home differ from those who stay home both in terms of daily experiences and accessibility to resources (Klatch, 1987), and despite the greater acceptance of the wife's employment outside the home, the gender gap in domestic work is still pronounced (England & Farkas, 1986). To date, no assessment has been made on whether Jamaican men's participation in housework varies by their partner's employment status.

Beliefs About Motherhood and Fatherhood

In all societies, beliefs about motherhood and fatherhood are intimately tied to perceptions of women's and men's roles. As in some other societies (see Lamb, 1987; Roopnarine & Carter, 1992) the Jamaican mother is still prescriptively synonymous with the caregiving role and the father with the provider or breadwinning role (Senior, 1991). The extent to which this may be changing is unclear. Powell (1986) found that for most Caribbean women she interviewed, motherhood--not wifehood--was accorded high value and status, and women themselves opted for having children. Thus for women, childbearing is a cultural expectation that is principally interwoven into primary caregiving and domestic work (Senior, 1991). By comparison, fatherhood may be a more complex issue since biological fatherhood alone carries social pride and the determination to support an offspring depends on many factors (see Rodman, 1971 for an account of this

issue among Trinidadians). Among Jamaican men the concept of fatherhood is seen as "the fruit of love, a way to cement their relationship with the woman, part of the natural order of life, and a declaration of their own manhood and their movement into maturity" (p. 132, Brown et al, 1992). Although Jamaican men in common-law unions provide varying degrees of economic support to their families, it is not certain to what extent these men believe the role of the father extends beyond the provision of economic support.

The Division of Childcare and Household Work: The Present Study

In this paper, we take a closer look at the division of childcare and household labor between low-income Jamaican men and women in common-law unions and their perceptions of the role(s) of the mother and father. Our study targeted families with infants because the early childhood period is a demanding one when women need a good deal of assistance with childcare and household work and Jamaican mothers have expressed disappointment with father involvement during this period (Brodber, 1974). Besides, the handful of studies on Jamaican fathers has focused on older children with little attention given to specific tasks or time investment in these activities as a function of whether the mother/partner is employed outside of the home or not. Since the 1960s, there has been a steady shift away from traditional toward more egalitarian roles among men and women in many societies around the world. Studies conducted in North America suggest that the equitable distribution of household labor has implications for the mental health of family members. Perceptions of fairness in the division of household work and childcare are linked to the personal well-being of

women (Yogev & Brett, 1985) and low levels of assistance in household work by husbands is correlated with higher levels of depression in wives (Ross, Mirowsky, & Huber, 1983). We are not certain whether gender role ideologies have changed that much in Jamaica but such changes, if any, may be reflected in whether gender-differentiation in men's and women's participation in household labor remains firm or not (Senior, 1991).

To examine the degree to which low-income Jamaican men are involved in these two domains, we made explicit attempts to separate primary caregiving responsibilities from play because fathers seem to show more interest in direct interaction than basic caregiving activities such as cleaning or feeding the baby (Lamb, 1987). With respect to the division of household labor, we were particularly interested in men's involvement in tasks traditionally considered female labor (cooking, washing dishes, laundry, and cleaning the house) and in which the greatest segregation in domestic work has been found (Blair & Lichter, 1988), and in neutral tasks (shopping and paying the bills) which may invite joint participation given tight economic conditions among the families studied.

Our interviews permitted us to address paternal involvement in terms of the degree to which men were involved in caregiving and household activities and time spent in these activities per day in both dual-earner and single-earner families. It has been shown elsewhere that the disparity in household labor is greater in couples in which the woman is not employed than in couples in which she is employed (Blair & Johnson, 1992) but that the wife's employment status has a less noticeable impact on men's participation in household labor (Hossain, 1992) and childcare (Lamb, 1987). Not having

any direct basis for judging whether the men in our sample are more involved in childcare and household activities than their predecessors, due to the absence of systematic data in this area, we rely on comparisons of men's involvement in these activities relative to that of their partners to further help us address the notion of Jamaican men's "marginality" to family life. (cf. Senior, 1991). The comparison with mothers' investment in household activities, rather than those of other cultural groups, was undertaken following the tenets of the cultural ecology model that emphasizes focusing on within culture attributes of families (Ogbu, 1981) and because of the nature of couple relationships in Jamaica.

Finally, perceptions of the role of the mother and father and who should care for babies may shed light on some underlying cultural beliefs about parenting in Jamaica. More flexible conceptions of the mother's and father's role would reflect a greater range of socialization possibilities for children (see Sameroff & Karrer, 1988), and have implications for the perceptions of fairness and respect for the distribution of household and childcare labor (Thompson, 1989). Given that labor force participation does affect gender ideologies (Tallichet & Willits, 1986), it might be expected that there would be less disparity between men's and women's beliefs about the roles of mothers and fathers in dual-earner than in single-earner families. Arguably, in arrangements where the husband is the chief breadwinner, women may be less willing to supplant traditional gender role ideologies for "quasi-egalitarian" or egalitarian roles since they may perceive that they still need to derive economic status through their partners. In view of the importance of cultural beliefs about the role(s) of parents for childrearing

(Goodnow & Collins, 1991), we examined whether beliefs about the role(s) of mothers and fathers were less gender-typed in families in which both parents worked outside of the home than in families in which the mother stayed home.

Method

Subject

The participants for this study were drawn from Whitfield Town and its neighboring communities. Whitfield Town is an economically depressed community in the heart of Kingston, the capital city of Jamaica. Most of its residents live in small, one-room houses with an outside kitchen; there are often 3-4 houses within a "yard" originally designated for one dwelling. Most of the houses seem to be in disrepair, and are generally crowded. The area is marked by poor economic conditions and the low educational attainment of its residents. Its corner markets/shops and the streets and yards provide opportunities for social activities; men play dominos or cards and adults and children gather to engage in conversations and sit and visit with each other. The rum bars in the area become very active in the evenings and on weekends after paydays.

The 86 couples who agreed to be interviewed were all in common-law unions. The families were chosen if they had an infant below 24 months of age ($M = 10.96$ months; $S. D. = 4.59$) and the baby was from the current union. In all cases, the family's annual income was below 30,000 Jamaican dollars (\$1,364 U.S.) which places them in the low-income group among Jamaicans. In no family did the mother's or father's educational level exceed graduation from secondary school. In fact, in most cases mothers and fathers dropped

out of school a little beyond elementary school. All of the families spoke patois, a dialect variant of English. The mean age of fathers was 29.16 (S.D. = 5.02) while the mean age of mothers was 26.29 (S.D. = 4.23). The mean number of children the men and women had, but not necessarily from the current union, was 2.08 (Range 1-6). In 42 families the infant was a girl. The birth order of infants was as follows: 40 first-borns, 32 second-borns, and 19 third-borns. Occupations of fathers employed full-time included day laborer, tailor, factory worker, shoemaker, janitor, baker, driver, mason, chef, guard, garbage collector, packer, fisherman, bicycle repairman, welder, and higgler (small tradesman), and some were farmers. The 37 women who were employed outside of the home worked as domestic servant, factory worker, bartender, dressmaker, store clerk, or farmer. Over 90% of these 37 worked 40 hours per week (Range 25-40). Fourteen infants were enrolled in daycare and the rest were cared for by relatives (aunts, cousins, grandparents, and sisters).

The families were identified by canvassing Whitfield and its neighboring communities. Families were contacted in person and the general purpose of the study explained to them. Although the sample was not randomly selected, the families were drawn from diverse areas of the township and from diverse occupational backgrounds. The sample characteristics are similar to those of families in other depressed areas of Kingston (see Brown, et al, 1992, for a description of four other townships in Kingston). Thus, it is our belief that the sample represents the spectrum of low-income common law families in Kingston. Of the fathers contacted, over 90% agreed to be interviewed. Six families were dropped from the study because the men were unemployed or worked less than 25 hours per week.

Procedure

Mothers and fathers were interviewed separately regarding their involvement in childcare and household tasks and their beliefs regarding the roles of mothers and fathers. Some of the times, mothers were interviewed first. The families were interviewed in their homes or their yards if the homes were too small. The interviews were conducted in the evenings and on weekends.

Involvement in Childcare. Following Lamb (1987), Nugent (1987), and Pleck (1985), we assessed mothers' and fathers' relative involvement in seven areas: bedtime routine (involved putting the baby to bed, and getting the baby up in the morning); physical care (involved changing the baby's nappy, bathing the baby, and dressing the baby); feeding the baby; singing to the baby; talking/playing with the baby, being affectionate to the baby (hugging and kissing the baby); and soothing the baby (at night and during the day when it cries). These items were placed on a Likert-type scale and parents were asked to rank them from "never" = 1 to "always" = 5.

In the second part of the interview regarding childcare, mothers and fathers were asked to estimate the amount of time each spent per day in feeding the baby, cleaning/washing the baby, and playing with the baby. This approach has been used by other researchers (e.g., Pleck, 1985) to arrive at estimates of paternal and maternal investment in the family.

Household Work. To assess the division of household labor between mothers and fathers we selected to use a modified version of an established interview schedule developed by Hwang (1987) and Standqvist (1987). It basically asks mothers and fathers to rate their degree of involvement in four

areas of household labor: work related to cleaning (sweeping/dusting, washing floors, picking up after people, washing clothes and ironing); food-related work (cooking, washing dishes, shopping for food); child-related work (shopping for children's clothes, taking baby to clinic/doctor, taking baby to events in the neighborhood and the city); and keeping track of money and bills. We were unable to assess involvement in maintenance activities because most families had little yard space, and generally could not afford to carry out routine maintenance in the homes they rented or owned. The entire scale showed good internal consistency (Spearman-Brown = .71).

Because one of our interests was in men's participation in what has been traditionally designated "female labor", mothers and fathers were asked to estimate how much time they spent each day in meal preparation, washing dishes, cleaning house, and ironing and washing clothes.

Maternal/Paternal Roles. The final segment of the interview focused on parental beliefs about the role(s) of mothers and fathers. They were asked three open-ended questions: "Who do you think should care for babies"? "What do you think the role of the father is"? and "What do you think the role of the mother is"?

The interviews were conducted by a Jamaican research assistant who speaks patois and had assisted on some aspects of a recent large scale study on fathers. The assistant was trained by the first author, who also speaks patois, prior to this study and some interviews were conducted when both were present. The inter-recorder agreement was high (greater than .95 in all cases)

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Noting that previous research has documented the differential treatment of infants by mothers and fathers (see Lamb, 1987), we determined whether these couples showed different levels of involvement with boys and girls. We ran a series of 2 (Gender-of-Parent) X 2 (Gender-of-Infant) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVAS) on the childcare data. There were no significant gender-of-parent by gender-of-infant interaction effects on any of the measures. Thus, gender-of-infant was disregarded in all subsequent analysis.

Parental Beliefs About Maternal and Paternal Roles

The first set of descriptive analyses was geared toward assessing parental beliefs about where childcare responsibilities reside and the predominant role(s) of mothers and fathers. Eighty-nine percent of mothers and 76% of fathers in dual-earner families and 69% of mothers and 59% of fathers in single-earner families believed that both parents should care for babies jointly. Nonetheless, 94% of women and 91% of men in single-earner families believed that mothers should be primary caregivers and perform most of the household labor, 68% of women and 73% of men in dual-earner families believed that women should assume these roles. There was more rigidity in beliefs about what the father's role should be; no parent mentioned that fathers should be primary caregivers and only 14% of women and 8% of men in dual-earner households believed that fathers should combine their breadwinning role with performing household work. Fully 94% of mothers and 96% of fathers in single-earner families and 72% of mothers and 74% of

fathers in dual-earner families believed that fathers should be breadwinners and the head of the household.

Childcare Responsibility

Table 1 displays the mean ratings for mothers and fathers on the seven dimensions of childcare responsibility assessed. A 2 (Gender-of-Parent) X 2 (Mother's Employment Status) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) using Wilks's Lambda criterion performed on these means revealed a significant multivariate main effect for gender-of-parent ($F[7,132] = 124.51$, $p=.0001$; Wilks's Lambda = .13). The significant gender-of-parent univariate effects suggest that mothers were significantly more likely to be involved in bedtime routines, the physical care of babies, feeding babies, soothing them when they cried, singing to them, and holding/playing, and hugging/kissing them than were fathers (see Table 1).

The multivariate main effect for mother's employment status was significant ($F[7,132] = 3.68$, $p=.001$; Wilks's Lambda .84)). The significant univariate effects for this factor showed that parents in single-wage families were more likely to be involved in the physical care of babies, to sing, and to soothe them when they cried than parents in dual-earner families (see Table 1).

There was also a significant gender-of-parent x mother's employment status multivariate interaction effect ($F[1,132] = 8.25$, $p=.0001$; Wilks's Lambda =.70). Post-hoc tests showed that mothers in single-wage families were more likely to engage in the physical care of, feeding, and soothing babies than fathers or mothers in dual-wage families (see Table 1).

Identical analysis conducted on the means listed in Table 2 indicated that the multivariate main effect for gender-of-parent was significant ($F[3,165] = 26.51, p = .0001$; Wilks's Lambda = .67). Mothers reported spending more time in feeding ($F[1,167] = 66.98, p = .0001$), washing/cleaning ($F[1,167] = 17.91, p = .001$), and playing ($F[1,167] = 76.25, p = .0001$) with babies than fathers. Most fathers (98% in single-earner and 84% in dual-earner families) spent less than an hour per day in feeding babies but considerably more time in playing with them ($p < .0001$). Mothers also spent more time in playing than cleaning or feeding babies ($p < .0001$).

The multivariate main effect for the mother's employment status was not significant, nor was the gender-of-parent x mother's employment status multivariate interaction effect.

Insert Table 1 about here

Household Labor

Table 2 displays the means for mothers' and fathers' evaluations of their degree of involvement in four areas of housework. A 2 (Gender-of-Parent) X 2 (Mother's Employment Status) multivariate analysis of variance using Wilk's Lambda criterion computed on these means showed a significant gender-of-parent multivariate main effect ($F[4,99] = 37.04, p = .001$, Wilks's Lambda = .40). The significant gender-of-parent univariate effects indicated that mothers were more likely to be involved in cleaning work,

food work, and child-related work, and keeping track of money/paying the bills than fathers (see Table 2).

The multivariate main effect for mother's employment status was not significant.

However, there was a significant gender-of-parent x mother's employment status multivariate interaction effect ($F[4,99] = 3.91, p = .005$, Wilks's Lambda = .86). Post-hoc analysis showed that women in single-earner families reported that they engaged in cleaning and child-related work more often than men or women in dual-earner families (see Table 3).

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

Mothers and fathers spent different amounts of total time in cooking, cleaning, sweeping/washing floors, doing laundry and ironing ($F[1,161] = 52.75, p = .0001$). In households in which the mother was employed, women spent 2.83 hours and men 1.31 hours per day in these tasks. The disparity was almost identical for single-earner families; in this latter group women spent 2.73 hours and men 1.13 hours per day in housework. A majority of fathers (86% in single-earner and 79% in dual-earner families) spent less than an hour per day in these activities, suggesting that they maintain some distance from household work.

Discussion

By examining beliefs about parental roles and the division of childcare and household labor in a Caribbean society, we hoped to address the overall view that Caribbean men are marginally involved in family activities, and to look especially at their involvement during their children's infancy. This assertion has been strongly reinforced by professionals and is discussed widely in the literature of the region; its impact on the men themselves vis-a-vis their involvement in household labor and their polarization from women has remained obscure. The cultural context for the socialization of children and the formation of couple relationships in the Caribbean remain markedly different from those in North America and Europe, with common-law unions a stable feature. Our data will hopefully aid in a better understanding of the roles of men and women in this type of family configuration.

The interviews revealed that parents' perceptions of who the primary caregiver to infants should be are somewhat different from their perspectives on maternal and paternal roles. While a majority of the couples reported that both parents should share the responsibility for early caregiving, they held firm gender-differentiated views of the role(s) of parents, and this tendency appears more pronounced in single-earner than in dual-earner families. We found no woman or man who believed that men should be primary caregivers to infants and women chief breadwinners. It is possible that the strong prevailing social-cultural beliefs about men's responsibility to provide for their biological children may prevent men and women from reshaping their traditional views about men. In common-law unions there is a strong emphasis placed on fathers to "mind" or provide economic support for their

offspring and because of difficult economic conditions, many women feel forced to accept the dictates of men (Rodman, 1971). At the same time, there is some evidence that not all women may share the male dominance perspective since gender role ideology seems a little more flexible in dual-earner than in single-earner families. Perhaps Jamaican women who work outside of the home wield more social and economic control over their lives than women who are not employed. It is difficult to say, however, whether this is signaling any significant shift in role ideology in Jamaican society given the cultural consensus among men about the social roles and obligations of women (Brown, et al, 1992), and considering that our other findings reveal that mothers' and fathers' roles were quite gender-differentiated.

The aforementioned sex-typed beliefs about parental roles are also evident in maternal and paternal involvement with infants. Mothers were far more involved with infants than fathers. Like their kindred in numerous other cultures (Roopnarine & Carter, 1992), women were the primary caregivers to infants. The salience of these women as play partners to infants is contrary to the findings of other studies that indicate that men engage in more playful interactions with babies than women (e.g. Lamb, 1977). Because these Jamaican women were so heavily invested in their role as primary caregivers, the greater engagement in playful interactions may be an offshoot of other activities and the fact that they are around the baby more than fathers. The greater involvement with babies by mothers in single-earner families is in line with findings on women who are not employed outside of the home (see Lamb, 1987). Unemployed women expend more labor in

childcare because there may be more symbolic significance placed on childcare for them than women in dual-earner families (see Thompson, 1989). Also, men whose partners are unemployed may show less interest in embracing childcare activities since they may perceive that this function should be carried out solely by their partners. Indeed, the data on the beliefs about the mother's role largely bear this out.

Turning to time invested by mothers and fathers in caregiving activities and in play, there was also significant gender differentiation. These Jamaican fathers appear no different from their counterparts in other cultures. Most of them spend between a half-of-an-hour to an hour each day in cleaning/washing and feeding the baby. In both observational and survey research, it was found that fathers in other cultures spend anywhere between 1.6 and 14 hours per week in childcare tasks (Hossain, 1992; Russell & Radin, 1983; Standqvist, 1987), and that women do about 94% of the diapering (Berk, 1985). If we estimate the amount of time per week these Jamaican fathers may spend in childcare, we see that they do participate in childcare as much as their counterparts in Europe or North America (see Hwang, 1987; Hossain, 1992). The lack of significant differences in time spent in caregiving and play by fathers in the two sets of families provides further support for the argument that women's participation in the labor force has a negligible impact on men's investment in childcare (Lamb, 1987). It should also be pointed out that the variability in men's performance in these activities was quite similar in both groups, negating arguments that there is much more variance in participation in household activities among men in dual-earner than in single-earner families (Ferree, 1990).

It has been reported in a number of studies conducted in North America that women perform twice as much housework as men (Berk, 1985; Blair & Lichter, 1991; Blair & Johnson, 1992; Coleman, 1988) -roughly about 33 hours per week to men's 14 hours per week (Blair & Johnson, 1992). The Jamaican fathers in our sample confirm a similar pattern of investment. Regardless of the mother's employment status, the mean ratings for the degree of involvement in housework were lower for men in all areas assessed when compared with those of their partners, and they spent slightly less than half the time that their partners spent in household work. Again, if we compute a weekly rate for time men may spend on household tasks, the low-income men in this study do not appear very different from North American men of different ethnic groups on this count (see Hossain, 1992). They, too, approach traditional "female labor" with a good deal of skepticism and remain reluctant to embrace it.

Two other sets of findings warrant some discussion. The lack of differential parental involvement with boys and girls is contrary to the findings of research on some ethnic groups (Lamb, 1987) but similar to those reported by Hossain (1992) on African-American fathers and Roopnarine, Talukder, Jain, Joshi, and Srivastav (1991) on Indian families. Even though Caribbean men and women indicate no preference for sons over daughters (WICP), there is evidence of the preferential treatment of older boys over girls (Justus, 1981). It is plausible that the preference for sons over daughters is less marked during the infancy period and become more exaggerated as Caribbean children get older and girls are immersed in household work. On the other hand, the finding on time invested in play with infants by fathers is in

concert with those of other work in the area (Lamb, 1977; Hossain, 1992) and suggests that play, rather than feeding or cleaning/washing babies, is more characteristic of father-child relationships across cultures. Fathers and infants find play stimulating and pleasurable (Lamb, 1977).

If we consider our data in light of what has been written about Jamaican men's involvement in childcare and household tasks, we must question the notion of men's marginality to family life. Our data on fathers and infants are in general agreement with more recent findings on Jamaican families with older children (Brown et al, 1992; Chevannes, 1986) that also point to men's involvement with children. The men we interviewed are far from being absent or uninvolved with babies despite the fact that they are in non-legal unions and are in the lower socio-economic rung of Jamaican society. Furthermore, the assumption of childcare and household responsibilities by Jamaican fathers has been determined to increase with greater economic security (Brown et al, 1992). Common-law unions are an acceptable part of couple relationship in the Caribbean and men and women have devised varied strategies for functioning in these relationships (Senior, 1991). It is in this context, then, that we view paternal responsibility in Jamaican families. Jamaican social service and policy agencies should embark upon developing creative policies that encourage men's participation in the family and move away from stereotyped views about fathers.

*but this is
only a
subsample*

Casting our results in the framework of gender ideology (Thompson, 1989), the division of childcare and household labor and belief structures regarding them were strongly gender-differentiated despite documentation of the strength and persistence of Caribbean women in providing for their

children economically, and their great sense of commitment in the socialization of them (Hodge, 1974; Senior, 1991). The cultural context for adult male-female relationships and the socialization of young boys and girls remains extremely gender-typed. Children are immersed in household labor early in their lives; young girls are confined to domestic tasks and boys are allowed more freedom to play (Justus, 1981). This state of affairs, coupled with the economic and legal plight of women in common-law unions and the dominant role Caribbean men assume, work against more egalitarian division of childcare and household labor. In future work, it would be interesting to assess Jamaican men's beliefs about fairness in the distribution of household and childcare labor and the factors that influence their participation in them.

Note: This research was supported by a grant from the Faculty Development Fund in the College for Human Development at Syracuse University to the first author. This support is gratefully acknowledged.

References

- Berk, S. F. (1985) The gender factory: The apportionment of work in American households. New York: Plenum.
- Blake, J. (1961). Family Structure in Jamaica: The Social Context of Reproduction. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Blair, S. L., & Johnson, M. P. (1992) Wives' perceptions of the fairness of the division of household labor: The intersection of housework and ideology. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 54, 570-581.
- Blair, S. L., & Lichter, D. T. (1991) Measuring the division of household labor: Gender segregation of housework among American couples. Journal of Family Issues, 12, 91-113.
- Brodber, E. (1974) Abandonment of children in Jamaica. Mona, Jamaica: Institute for Economic and Social Research, University of the West Indies.
- Brown, J., Anderson, P., & Chevannes, B. (1992). The contribution of Caribbean men to the family. Report for the International Development Centre, Canada, The Caribbean Child Development Centre, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.
- Chevannes, B. (1985). Jamaican Men: Sexual Attitudes and Beliefs. Unpublished. Kingston, National Family Planning Board.
- Clarke, E. (1957). My Mother who Fathered Me: A Study of the Family in three Selected Communities in Jamaica. London: George Allen and Unwin.

- Coleman, M. T. (1988) The division of household labor: Suggestions for future empirical consideration and theoretical development. Journal of Family Issues, 9, 132-148.
- England, P., & Farkas, G. (1986). Households, employment, and gender: A social, economic and demographic view. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Ferree, M. M. (1990) Beyond separate spheres: Feminism and family research. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52, 866-884.
- Klatch, R. (1987) Women of the new right. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Goodnow, J., & Collins, A. (1991) Ideas according to parents. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gutierrez, J., Sameroff, A., & Karrer, B. M. (1988). Acculturation and SES effects on Mexican-American parents' concept of development. Child Development, 59, 250-255.
- Henriques, F. (1953). Family and Color in Jamaica. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode.
- Hossain, M. (1992) African-American fathers within dual-earner families: Caregiving, functional style, support, and developmental history. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Syracuse University.
- Hwang, P. (1987). The changing role of Swedish fathers. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), The father 's role: Cross-cultural perspectives (pp. 115-138). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Justus, J. B. (1981) Women's role in West Indian society. In F. Steady (Ed.), The Black woman cross-culturally. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co.

- Lamb, M.E. (1977). Father-infant and mother-infant interaction in the first year of life. Child Development, 48, 167-181.
- Lamb, M.E. (1987). Introduction: The emergent American fathers. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), The father's role: Cross-cultural perspectives (pp. 3-25). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Lamming, G. (1970). In the castle of my skin. Harlow: Longman.
- Miller, E. (1992). Men at risk. Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House.
- Nugent, K. (1987). The father's role in early Irish socialization: Historical and empirical perspectives. In M. Lamb (Ed.), The father's role cross-cultural perspectives (169-193). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ogbu, J. (1981) Origins of human competence: A cultural ecological perspective. Child Development, 52, 413-429.
- Pleck, J. (1985). Working wives/working husbands. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Powell, D. (1986). Caribbean Women and their Responses to Familial Experience. Social and Economic Studies 35(2):83-130.
- Roberts, G. & Sinclair, S. (1978). Women in Jamaica. New York: KTO Press.
- Rodman, H. (1971). The Culture of Poverty in Negro Trinidad. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Roopnarine, J., & Carter, B. (1992) (Eds.), Family socialization in diverse cultures (pp. 245-251). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Roopnarine, J., Talukder, E., Jain, D., Joshi, P., & Srivastav, P. (1990). Characteristics of holding, patterns of play and social behaviors between parents and infants in New Delhi, India. Developmental Psychology, 26, 867-873.

- Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Huber, J. (1983) Dividing work, sharing work, and in-between: Marriage patterns and depression. American Sociological Review, 48, 809-823.
- Russell, G. & Radin, N. (1983). Increased parental participation: The fathers' perspective. In M.E. Lamb & A. Sagi (Eds.), Fatherhood and family policy (pp.139-166). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Senior, O. (1991). Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean. ISER, UWI, Barbados. London: James Currey, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Standqvist, K. (1987). Fathers and family work in two countries: Antecedents and concomitants of fathers' participation in childcare and household work. Studies in Education and Psychology, Vol. 23. Stockholm Institute of Education.
- Stycoos, J.M. & Back, K.W. (1964). The Control of Human Fertility in Jamaica. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Tallichet, S., & Willits, F. (1986) Gender-role attitude change of young women: Influential factors from a panel study. Social Psychology Quarterly, 49, 219-227.
- Thompson, L. (1989) Family work: women's sense of fairness. Journal of Family Issues, 12, 181-196.
- Yogev, S., & Brett, J. (1985) Perceptions of housework and childcare and marital dissatisfaction. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 47, 609-618.

Table 1: Mean Ratings for Mothers' and Fathers' Participation in Childcare and F values for the Different Effects.

Measures	Single-Earner		Dual-Earner		Gender of Parent F	Partner's Empl. Status F	Gender of Parent X Partner's Emp. Status F
	<u>Mothers</u> M	<u>Fathers</u> M	<u>Mothers</u> M	<u>Fathers</u> M			
Bedtime Routines	5.80	3.39	6.00	3.79	118.41**	1.95	<1
Physical Care	13.31	4.80	11.20	5.44	824.02**	8.71*	30.73*
Feeding Baby	4.47	2.46	4.00	2.86	105.32**	<1	8.12*
Singing to Baby	4.73	4.24	4.36	3.79	10.81*	6.41*	<1
Talking/Playing with Baby	4.95	4.53	4.86	4.37	16.07**	1.16	<1
Hugging/Kissing Baby	4.90	4.78	4.96	4.51	7.41*	<1	2.38
Soothing Baby	8.04	3.56	6.40	4.00	224.57**	6.92*	20.62**

** p<.0001

* p<. 01

df 1, 138

Table 2: Mean Hours Mothers and Fathers Spent in Childcare and Play

Measures	<u>Dual-Earner</u>		<u>Single-Earner</u>	
	<u>Mothers</u>	<u>Fathers</u>	<u>Mothers</u>	<u>Fathers</u>
Holding/Playing	3.53	2.95	3.70	2.60
Feeding	2.00	1.08	2.56	.83
Washing/Cleaning	1.80	.75	1.97	.35

Table 3: Mean Ratings for Mothers' and Fathers' Involvement in Household Labor and F Values for the Different Effects.

Measures	Single-Earner		Dual-Earner		Gender of Parent F	Partner's Empl. Status F	Gender of Parent X Partner's Emp. Status F
	<u>Mother</u> M	<u>Father</u> M	<u>Mother</u> M	<u>Father</u> M			
Cleaning Work	15.03	9.57	13.21	9.63	101.70**	3.86	4.40**
Food Work	6.12	4.22	5.57	4.15	45.24**	1.55	<1
Child-Related Work	10.27	5.31	8.42	6.26	81.44**	1.31	12.61**
Paying Bills/Keeping Track of money	3.69	3.11	3.78	3.47	12.41**	3.14	<1

** p = .0001

* p = .01

df 1, 102