

YOUNG CHILDREN'S CONCEPTS OF PARENTAL ROLES

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

This study was concerned with obtaining information concerning young children's concepts of parental roles. Barba, Kehm, and Ojemann (1962, p. 28) reported that the White House Conference on Children and Youth (1960) indicated that "the development of the child's potential is vitally affected by the nature and quality of family relationships" and the "family . . . has primary responsibility for developing values, freedom, initiative, and self-discipline in children." Lee and Pimental (1969) note that over the past 30 years, many studies have indicated that children's development of personal concepts (for example, self, mother, father) are related to their future adjustment, social interaction, mental health, and school success.

According to Finch (1955, p. 99)

. . . in the past, traditional roles of father and mother were established by the existing environment and by the conventions and mores of the times. Consequently, parental roles were well defined. Today these roles are not so clearly set by society; therefore, the parent has greater freedom in defining and enacting his own role as changing situations require. As a result, children's concepts of parental roles may conceivably have undergone similar changes.

Finch (1955) concludes that more definite knowledge of the child's understanding of parent roles should bring about more effective guidance from adults, namely parents and teachers, with whom he has contact during the early childhood years of growth and development.

## The Purposes of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine young children's concepts of parental roles. The specific purposes of this study were to answer the following questions:

1. Is the gainful employment of the mother significantly related to the child's concept of parental roles?
2. Does age of the child influence his concept of parental roles?
3. Does sex of the child influence his concept of parental roles?

## Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested were:

1. Children's concepts of parental roles are independent of the gainful employment of their mothers.
2. Children's concepts of parental roles are independent of their age.
3. Children's concepts of parental roles are independent of their sex.

## CHAPTER II

### RELATED LITERATURE

This review includes the following sections: (1) Development of Concepts; (2) Young Children's Concepts of Parental Roles; (3) Adults' Concepts of Parents; (4) Summary of Findings.

#### Development of Concepts

According to Darrow (1964, p. 247). "the child's concepts are his world of thought." The child's concepts are awarenesses abstracted from experiences, exposures, and happenings in his life. The child interprets these abstractions and attaches personal, internal meaning to them. In the process of conceptualization, the child gradually learns to order experiences and to link together common features of objects or things, and soon he learns the task of discrimination. Darrow goes on to say that experience is the single most important factor in children's conceptual development. However, concept development may come about through many channels other than direct experience, but direct experience produces clearer and more certain conceptions. He concluded that as the child grows and develops so will his understandings grow and develop, thus causing revision of his concepts and shifting in his conceptual thinking.

James (1967) reported that the daily role performance of the parents generally influences the child's perception of the parents' roles.

The child observes the behavior of the father (or mother) and generalizes from this observation the role of the father (or mother) as the child sees it. As the child learns to discriminate among behavior cues his perceptions become clearer and more refined.

#### Young Children's Concepts of Parental Roles

In recent years there has been a lack of research in this area. However, during the fifties and the sixties some reports were done which gave evidence of having examined young children's concepts of the parental roles. A study by Mott (1954) revealed that 83 out of 90 four- and five-year-olds saw mother as an active person within the home, who performs such tasks as cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking, washing dishes, sewing, and cleaning the yard.

Finch (1955) found that in interviews with three- to seven-year-olds, 50 per cent of the responses to the question "What is mother?" fell into the category of household duties. Caring for children was the category of response for 25 per cent of the children. In answer to the question "What is daddy?" approximately 75 per cent of the responses indicated the category of economic provider. In doll play situations conducted by Finch in the same study, responses revealed that the children considered the role of mother to be concerned with housekeeping and care of the children, while the role of the father was seen as economic provider. However, there was evidence of roles shared by both parents.

A study by Kagan (1956, p. 258) found that children aged six to ten perceived fathers to be "less friendly and more dominant, punitive, and threatening than mothers." Another finding was that the older children more often than the younger children viewed the parent of the

same sex to be more dominant and punitive.

Auleta (1957) found that 36 per cent of the kindergarten-aged children interviewed had a specific degree of knowledge of their father's occupation as compared to 78 per cent of third-graders who had a specific degree of knowledge of their father's occupation. Furthermore, factory work and truck driving were the two types of work that received the most vague responses from the children. Children from the higher socio-economic homes had more specific knowledge of the father's work.

In a study of young children's discriminations of parent and child roles, Emmerich (1959) found that facilitating behavior is attributed more to the mother's role and interfering behavior is attributed more to the father's role. Kagan and Lemkin (1960, p. 446) revealed in a study of the child's differential perception of parental attributes that children three to eight years of age saw fathers as being "more fear arousing, more competent, and more punitive than mothers." Mothers were seen as "nicer" and "more likely to give presents."

Burshtein's (1961) examination of concepts of young school children in the Soviet Union concerning the work of their parents revealed that most first-graders can readily name the place of work of their parents and half of them know their parents' occupations. However, only 10.7 per cent were able to verbalize the usefulness of their parents' work to society.

In a study of social class in relation to the child's perception of the parent, Rosen (1964) found that boys, aged 9-11, from the middle class saw their parents as more accepting, competent and emotionally stable than did boys from the lower class. In the boys' perception of the parent, social class differences were much greater with respect to

the father than the mother. In a review of studies concerning children's perception of parents, Walters and Stinnett (1971, p. 96) reported that the studies "converge in indicating that children perceive fathers as being more fear arousing, more punitive, more restrictive, colder, and less understanding than mothers."

#### Adults' Concepts of Parents

Kagan (1956) reported that Harvard students indicated fathers to be the chief source of authority and mothers to be the chief source of affection. Mussen and Kagan (1958, p. 59) also studied college students' perceptions of parents and found that "a significantly greater proportion of extreme conformists than of independents perceived their parents as harsh, punitive, restrictive, and rejecting." Luckey (1960) studied marital satisfaction in relation to parental concepts and found that women who were unsatisfactorily married viewed themselves as less responsible and cooperative than their mothers; unsatisfactorily married men viewed their fathers as less loving and more dominant than themselves.

#### Summary of Findings

Briefly summarizing the literature, fathers are seen to be the authority figure (Kagan, 1956) and the economic provider (Finch, 1955) while mothers are viewed as more nurturant (Emmerich, 1959) and as in charge of the care of children and household duties (Finch, 1955). Those factors found to make a difference in children's concepts of parental roles were: age (Kagan, 1956); social class (Rosen, 1964); and father's occupation (Auleta, 1957).

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Subjects

The subjects for this research were boys and girls aged 3 years and 2 months to 5 years and 2 months who were enrolled in the Child Development Laboratories at Oklahoma State University during the fall semester, 1972. The subjects were divided into a younger and older group by grouping children from an age range of 3 years 2 months to 4 years 3 months and an older group whose age ranged from 4 years 5 months to 5 years 2 months. There were 24 children in the younger group and 25 in the older. The mean age for the younger group was 3 years and 8 months and the mean age for the older group was 4 years 6 months.

#### Instruments

A face sheet for parents was used to obtain necessary information from parents such as name, education, and occupation. An interview-questionnaire was developed to determine the children's concepts of parental roles. Sample questions are: "What does your mommie do at her job? What does your daddy do at his job? Who do you think should help children find a toy that is lost, the mommie or the daddy?"

### Administration of Instruments

The children were interviewed individually in a private session in the laboratory. The face sheets were given to the parents to fill out when they came to pick up their children.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether young children's concepts of parents' roles were related to gainful employment of their mothers, their age, and sex.

Hypothesis 1. Children's concepts of parental roles are independent of the gainful employment of their mothers. Data in Table I indicates no significant relationship between the responses of the children concerning leisure-recreational responsibilities of parents and the gainful employment of their mothers. Table II, concerned with the nurturing responsibilities of parents, indicates only one significant difference: when children of gainfully employed mothers are ill they want the mother to care for them more than do children of full-time homemakers. Table III, concerned with the service responsibilities of parents, indicates no difference between the two groups. Since only one significant difference was found for this specific hypothesis, it is generally accepted.

Hypothesis 2. Children's concepts of parental roles are independent of their age. Tables IV, V, and VI reflect only one significant difference: in terms of children's preference of parent to repair a toy, both the younger and the older children preferred their fathers more often. In light of the fact that only one significant difference was observed, the hypothesis is accepted.

TABLE I

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS AS RELATED TO LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 25)		Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 24)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
17. Who would you want to take you to the circus?	16	9	11	13	.98	N.S.
18. Who would you want to play with you?	10	15	8	16	.04	N.S.
19. Who do you have more fun playing with?	10	15	7	17	.25	N.S.
20. Who would you want to read to you?	17	8	12	12	.98	N.S.

TABLE II

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS AS RELATED TO NURTURING RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 25)		Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 24)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
21. Who should help you to get new clothes?	21	4	19	5	.00	N.S.
22. Who should doctor chil- dren when they get hurt?	12	13	10	14	.03	N.S.
23. Who should get you some food when you are hungry?	22	3	20	4	.00	N.S.
24. Who should help you when you are sick in the night?	23	2	14	10	5.80	.05
25. Who should help you when you are scared?	10	15	10	14	.03	N.S.
26. Who would you want to read you a storybook?	18	7	10	14	3.45	N.S.

TABLE II (Continued)

Responsibility	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 25)		Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 24)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
27. Who should punish children?	10	15	11	13	.02	N.S.
28. Who should fix the meals in a home?	22	3	19	5	.20	N.S.
29. Who should be the boss in a home?	10	15	6	18	.66	N.S.

TABLE III

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS AS RELATED TO SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 25)		Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 24)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
30. Who would you want to help you find a lost toy?	14	11	11	13	.18	N.S.
31. Who would you want to fix a broken toy?	7	18	5	19	.06	N.S.
32. Who should wash the dishes?	21	4	21	3	.00	N.S.
33. Who should take out the garbage?	11	14	11	13	.03	N.S.
34. Who should clean the house?	20	5	18	6	.01	N.S.
35. Who should mow the grass?	4	21	0	24	2.32	N.S.
36. Who should do the laundry?	19	6	22	2	1.20	N.S.
37. Who should wash the car?	4	21	2	22	.15	N.S.
38. Who should buy the groceries?	22	3	21	3	.15	N.S.

TABLE IV

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF YOUNGER CHILDREN AND OLDER CHILDREN\* AS RELATED TO LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Younger Children (N = 24)		Responses of Older Children (N = 25)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
17. Who would you want to take you to the circus?	16	8	11	14	1.71	N.S.
18. Who would you want to play with you?	10	14	8	17	.16	N.S.
19. Who do you have more fun playing with?	8	16	9	16	.01	N.S.
20. Who would you want to read to you?	12	12	16	9	.49	N.S.

\* Younger children are aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 3 months. Older children are aged 4 years 4 months to 5 years 2 months.

TABLE V

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF YOUNGER CHILDREN AND OLDER CHILDREN\* AS RELATED TO NURTURING RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Younger Children (N = 24)		Responses of Older Children (N = 25)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
21. Who should help you to get new clothes?	21	3	20	5	.10	N.S.
22. Who should doctor children when they get hurt?	12	12	10	15	.17	N.S.
23. Who should get you some food when you are hungry?	19	5	23	2	.77	N.S.
24. Who should help you when you are sick in the night?	19	5	18	7	.06	N.S.
25. Who should help you when you are scared?	11	13	9	16	.17	N.S.
26. Who would you want to read you a storybook?	12	12	16	9	.49	N.S.
27. Who should punish children?	8	16	13	12	1.06	N.S.

TABLE V (Continued)

Responsibility	Responses of Younger Children (N = 24)		Responses of Older Children (N = 25)		$\chi^2$	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
28. Who should fix the meals in a home?	19	5	22	3	.20	N.S.
29. Who should be the boss in a home?	10	14	6	19	1.03	N.S.

\* Younger children are aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 3 months. Older children are aged 4 years 4 months to 5 years 2 months.



TABLE VI

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF YOUNGER CHILDREN AND  
 OLDER CHILDREN\* AS RELATED TO SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
 (N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Younger Children (N = 24)		Responses of Older Children (N = 25)		$\chi^2$	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
30. Who would you want to help you find a lost toy?	12	12	13	12	.02	N.S.
31. Who would you want to fix a broken toy?	10	14	2	23	5.80	.05
32. Who should wash the dishes?	21	3	21	4	.00	N.S.
33. Who should take out the garbage?	12	12	10	15	.17	N.S.
34. Who should clean the house?	18	6	20	5	.01	N.S.
35. Who should mow the grass?	2	22	2	23	.23	N.S.
36. Who should do the laundry?	22	2	19	6	1.20	N.S.

TABLE VI (Continued)

Responsibility	Responses of Younger Children (N = 24)		Responses of Older Children (N = 25)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
37. Who should wash the car?	2	22	4	21	.15	N.S.
38. Who should buy the groceries?	22	2	21	4	.15	N.S.

\* Younger children are aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 3 months. Older children are aged 4 years 4 months to 5 years 2 months.

Hypothesis 3. Children's concepts of parental roles are independent of their sex. An examination of Tables VII, VIII, and IX indicates one significant difference between responses of boys and girls to the question: "Who should help you get new clothes?" Girls without exception preferred their mothers. On the basis of only one observed difference, this hypothesis was accepted.

In Tables X and XI data are presented by frequency and percentage to reflect responses of the children according to the specific sections of the Questionnaire-Interview. Utilizing the parents' responses as the criterion against which to evaluate the responses of the children, percentages of agreement are presented to reflect the awareness of the children's understanding of their parents' employment.

Table X data indicates that less than half of the children of full-time homemakers were unaware of whether their mothers worked outside the home; however, almost all of the children were aware that their father left home to go to a job. Seventy percent were aware where their fathers worked and almost half were aware of what their fathers did.

Table XI reflects that 80 percent of the children of gainfully employed mothers in this study were aware that their mothers worked. A slightly higher percentage were aware that their fathers worked. More than half of these children were aware of where their mothers and fathers worked and slightly less than half were aware of what their mothers and fathers did.

Table XII shows that 18 out of 25 children of gainfully employed mothers have visited both their father and their mother at work. Table XIII shows that 20 out of 24 children of full-time homemakers have visited their fathers at work, and that nine children said they had visited

TABLE VII

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF BOYS AND GIRLS AS  
RELATED TO LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Boys (N = 22)		Responses of Girls (N = 27)		$\chi^2$	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
17. Who would you want to take you to the circus?	9	13	18	9	2.29	N.S.
18. Who would you want to play with you?	9	13	9	18	.06	N.S.
19. Who do you have more fun playing with?	7	15	10	17	.01	N.S.
20. Who would you want to read to you?	12	10	16	11	.00	N.S.

TABLE VIII

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF BOYS AND GIRLS  
AS RELATED TO NURTURING RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Boys (N = 22)		Responses of Girls (N = 27)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
21. Who should help you to get new clothes?	14	8	27	0	9.22	.01
22. Who should doctor children when they get hurt?	7	15	15	12	1.88	N.S.
23. Who should get you some food when you are hungry?	18	4	24	3	.09	N.S.
24. Who should help you when you are sick in the night?	15	7	22	5	.55	N.S.
25. Who should help you when you are scared?	8	14	12	15	.08	N.S.
26. Who would you want to read you a storybook?	11	11	17	10	.39	N.S.
27. Who should punish children?	8	14	13	14	.29	N.S.

TABLE VIII (Continued)

Responsibility	Responses of Boys (N = 22)		Responses of Girls (N = 27)		$\chi^2$	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
28. Who should fix the meals in a home?	17	5	24	3	.50	N.S.
29. Who should be the boss in a home?	6	16	10	17	.18	N.S.

TABLE IX

CHI SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF BOYS AND GIRLS  
AS RELATED TO SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS  
(N = 49)

Responsibility	Responses of Boys (N = 22)		Responses of Girls (N = 27)		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.
	M	F	M	F		
30. Who would you want to help you find a lost toy?	8	14	17	10	2.45	N.S.
31. Who would you want to fix a broken toy?	6	16	6	21	.01	N.S.
32. Who should wash the dishes?	17	5	25	2	1.24	N.S.
33. Who should take out the garbage?	10	12	12	15	.05	N.S.
34. Who should clean the house?	14	8	24	3	3.11	N.S.
35. Who should mow the grass?	2	20	2	25	.10	N.S.
36. Who should do the laundry?	17	5	24	3	.50	N.S.
37. Who should wash the car?	4	18	2	25	.50	N.S.
38. Who should buy the groceries?	17	5	26	1	2.50	N.S.

TABLE X  
 AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS  
 CONCERNING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS OF MOTHER'S  
 AND FATHER'S WORK ARRANGEMENT  
 (N = 24)

Question	Number of Children Aware of Parents' Work Arrangements	Percentage of Agreement With Parents' Responses
1. Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?	11	46
*2. Where does your mommy work at her job?	Not Applicable	
*3. What does your mommy do at her job?	Not Applicable	
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?	22	92
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?	17	70
8. What does your daddy do at his job?	11	46

\*Questions 2 and 3 were not asked if child responded "no" to Question 1.



TABLE XI

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILDREN OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS  
 CONCERNING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS OF MOTHER'S  
 AND FATHER'S WORK ARRANGEMENT  
 (N = 25)

Question	Number of Children Aware of Parents' Work Arrangements	Percentage of Agreement With Parents' Responses
1. Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?	20	80
2. Where does your mommy work at her job?	14	56
3. What does your mommy do at her job?	11	44
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?	22	88
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?	15	60
8. What does your daddy do at his job?	12	48

TABLE XII

RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS CONCERNING  
VISITATION TO FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' PLACES OF WORK  
(N = 25)

Question	Yes	No	No Response
5. Have you visited her at work?	18	4	3
10. Have you visited him at work?	18	6	1

TABLE XIII

RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS CONCERNING  
VISITATION TO FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' PLACES OF WORK  
(N = 24)

Question	Yes	No	No Response
*5. Have you visited her at work?	9	3	1
10. Have you visited him at work?	20	2	2

\*Question 5 was asked of only those children who responded incorrectly to Question 1, "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

their mothers at work although they are children of full-time homemakers.

In answer to Question 4, "How do you know?" (what the mother does at her job), the majority of responses from children of gainfully employed mothers supported their statements with "been there," "seen her," and "cause." In answer to "How do you know?" (what the father does at his job), the majority of responses from children of gainfully employed mothers fell into the like categories of "because," "don't know," and "been there."

Question 4 was asked only of those children of full-time homemakers who responded "yes" to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?" ("Yes" would be an incorrect response to the question since the group is children of full-time homemakers.) Responses to this question fell into the categories of "cause" and "see her." In answer to Question 9, "How do you know?" (what the father does at his job), the majority of responses from children of full-time homemakers fell into the categories of "been there," "cause," and "he tells me."

Table XIV reflects that children of gainfully employed mothers indicated that mothers help more people at home while fathers help more people at work. Table XV reflects that children of full-time homemakers indicated that mothers help more people at home. Fathers were shown to help others equally as much at home as at work.

Tables XVI and XVII indicate that regardless of sex, both younger and older children were more aware of their fathers' work arrangements than of their mothers'.

Tables XVIII and XIX indicate more than three fourths of both groups had visited the father at work.

TABLE XIV

RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS CONCERNING  
 THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER THEIR MOTHER AND FATHER  
 HELPED OTHERS AT WORK AND AT HOME  
 (N = 25)

Question	Yes	No	No Response
11. Does your mommy do things to help other people at work?	14	7	4
12. Does your mommy do things to help other people at home?	21	4	--
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?	21	5	--
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?	17	7	1

TABLE XV

RESPONSES OF CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS CONCERNING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF  
WHETHER THEIR MOTHER AND FATHER HELPED OTHERS AT WORK AND AT HOME  
(N = 24)

Question	Group A *			Group B **		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
11. Does your mommy do things to help other people at work?	11	2	--	Not Asked		
12. Does your mommy do things to help other people at home?	13	--	--	9	2	--
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?	13	--	--	8	3	--
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?	12	--	1	9	--	2

\* Group A are those children of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Group B are those children of full-time homemakers who answered correctly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

TABLE XVI

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENT AND YOUNGER CHILDREN CONCERNING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS  
OF THEIR MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S WORK ARRANGEMENT  
(N = 24)

Question	Number of Children Aware of Parents' Work Arrangements	Responses of Parents	Percentage of Agreement With Parents' Responses
1. Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?	13	24	54
2. Where does your mommy work at her job?	7	10*	70
3. What does your mommy do at her job?	5	10*	50
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?	20	24	83
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?	15	24	62
8. What does your daddy do at his job?	9	24	37

\* Asked only of those children of gainfully employed mothers

TABLE XVII

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENT AND OLDER CHILDREN CONCERNING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS  
OF THEIR MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S WORK ARRANGEMENT  
(N = 25)

Question	Number of Children Aware of Parents' Work Arrangements	Responses of Parents	Percentage of Agreement With Parents' Responses
1. Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?	18	25	72
2. Where does your mommy work at her job?	7	15*	47
3. What does your mommy do at her job?	6	15*	40
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?	24	25	96
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?	17	25	68
8. What does your daddy do at his job?	14	25	56

\* Asked only of those children of gainfully employed mothers

TABLE XVIII

RESPONSES OF YOUNGER CHILDREN CONCERNING VISITATION TO THEIR  
FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' PLACES OF WORK

Question	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 10)			Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 14**)		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
5. Have you visited her at work?	7	2	1	7*	0	1
			Yes	No	No Response	
10. Have you visited him at work?			19	2	3	

\* Question 5 was asked to those children of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question, "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Six of the 14 indicated that their mothers did not go to work.



TABLE XIX

RESPONSES OF OLDER CHILDREN CONCERNING VISITATION TO THEIR  
FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' PLACES OF WORK  
(N = 24)

Question	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 15)			Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 9**)		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
5. Have you visited her at work?	11	2	2	1*	3	1
10. Have you visited him at work?			19		6	0

\* Question 5 was asked to those children of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question, "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Four of the nine indicated that their mothers did not go to work.

In answer to the question "How do you know?" (what the mother does at her job?), the majority of responses of the younger children of gainfully employed mothers indicated they did not know where they got the information. They most often responded "I don't know" and "cause." The older group of children of gainfully employed mothers had very similar answers, indicating the children in this study did not know how they knew what their mothers did on the job.

The question "How do you know?" was asked only of those children of full-time homemakers who responded incorrectly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?" Responses of the younger children of full-time homemakers were mainly "cause." Responses of the older children of full-time homemakers were similar.

In answer to the question, "How do you know?" (what the father does at his job), the majority of responses of both the younger and older groups of children indicated they were unsure, however, some children did indicate they had been to their father's place of work.

Tables XX and XXI reflect that both the younger and older groups of children indicated that mothers helped more people at home; however, the younger group indicated that fathers helped more people at work, while the older group indicated that fathers helped more people at home.

Tables XXII and XXIII indicate that regardless of sex, children were more aware of their father's work arrangements than they were of their mother's work arrangements.

In Tables XXIV and XXV, both boys and girls indicated they visited the father at work more often than they visited the mother.

In answer to Question 4 "How do you know?" (what the mother does at her job), the majority of responses from girls of gainfully employed

TABLE XX

RESPONSES OF YOUNGER CHILDREN CONCERNING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER  
THEIR MOTHER AND FATHER HELPED OTHERS AT WORK AND AT HOME  
(N = 24)

Question	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 10)			Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 14)					
	Yes	No	No Response	Group A *			Group B **		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
11. Does your mommy do things to help other people at work?	7	2	1	8	--	--	Not Asked		
12. Does your mommy do things to help other people at home?	8	2	--	8	--	--	5	1	--
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?	9	1	--	8	--	--	6	--	--
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?	6	4	--	7	--	1	5	--	1

\* Group A are those younger children of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Group B are those younger children of full-time homemakers who answered correctly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

TABLE XXI

RESPONSES OF OLDER CHILDREN CONCERNING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER  
THEIR MOTHER AND FATHER HELPED OTHERS AT WORK AND AT HOME  
(N = 25)

Question	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 15)			Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 10)					
				Group A *			Group B **		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
11. Does your mommy do things to help other people at work?	7	5	3	2	2	1	Not Asked		
12. Does your mommy do things to help other people at home?	12	2	1	5	--	--	4	1	--
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?	11	4	--	5	--	--	2	3	--
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?	11	3	1	5	--	--	4	--	1

\* Group A are those older children of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Group B are those older children of full-time homemakers who answered correctly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

TABLE XXII

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENT AND BOYS CONCERNING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS  
OF THEIR MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S WORK ARRANGEMENT  
(N = 22)

Question	Number of Children Aware of Parents' Work Arrangements	Responses of Parents	Percentage of Agreement With Parents' Responses
1. Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?	15	22	68
2. Where does your mommy work at her job?	5	11*	45
3. What does your mommy do at her job?	4	11*	36
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?	17	22	77
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?	13	22	59
8. What does your daddy do at his job?	7	22	32

\* Asked only of those boys of gainfully employed mothers

TABLE XXIII

AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENT AND GIRLS CONCERNING THE CHILD'S AWARENESS  
OF THEIR MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S WORK ARRANGEMENT  
(N = 27)

Question	Number of Children Aware of Parents' Work Arrangements	Responses of Parents	Percentage of Agreement With Parents' Responses
1. Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?	16	27	59
2. Where does your mommy work at her job?	9	14*	64
3. What does your mommy do at her job?	7	14*	50
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?	27	27	100
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?	19	27	70
8. What does your daddy do at his job?	16	27	59

\* Asked only of girls of gainfully employed mothers

TABLE XXIV  
 RESPONSES OF GIRLS CONCERNING VISITATION TO THEIR  
 FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' PLACES OF WORK  
 (N = 27)

Question	Responses of Girls of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 14)			Responses of Girls of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 13**)		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
5. Have you visited her at work?	12	1	1	5*	2	1
			Yes	No	No Response	
10. Have you visited him at work?			22	5	--	

\* Question 5 asked only of those girls of full-time homemakers who answered Question 1 incorrectly

\*\* Five of the 13 indicated that their mothers did not go to work.

TABLE XXV

RESPONSES OF BOYS CONCERNING VISITATION TO THEIR  
FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' PLACES OF WORK  
(N = 22)

Question	Responses of Boys of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 11)			Responses of Boys of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 11)		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
5. Have you visited her at work?	6	3	2	3*	1	1
			Yes	No	No Response	
10. Have you visited him at work?			16	3	3	

\* Question 5 asked only of those boys of full-time homemakers who answered Question 1 incorrectly

\*\* Six of the 11 indicated that their mothers did not go to work.



mothers fell into the categories of "seen her" or "been there." In response to Question 4, the majority of responses from boys of gainfully employed mothers fell into the category of "just because."

Question 4 was asked only of those boys and girls of full-time homemakers who responded "yes" to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?" Girls of full-time homemakers supported their answers mainly by responses such as, "saw her" or "cause"; boys of full-time homemakers often gave a "no response."

In answer to Question 9, "How do you know?" (what the father does at his job), the majority of responses from girls fell into the categories of "been there" and "because"; with the majority of responses from boys being a "no response" or "cause."

Tables XXVI and XXVII reflect that both the boys and girls indicated that their mothers helped more people at home and their fathers helped more people at work.

The responses to Questions 13, 16, 39, and 40 fell into six categories. The categories and their abbreviations for use in the tables are:

Housekeeping tasks	- H
Mothering tasks	- M
Fathering tasks	- F
Works outside of home	- W
Social tasks	- S
Personal tasks	- P
Unclassified responses	- U

The classification for housekeeping tasks includes things done inside and outside the home e.g., mops floors, makes beds, plants flowers, mows yard. The mothering tasks (or fathering tasks, depending on whether the question refers to the mother or the father) includes such things as ties my shoes, plays house with me, chases dogs away, makes

TABLE XXVI

RESPONSES OF BOYS CONCERNING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER THEIR  
MOTHER AND FATHER HELPED OTHERS AT WORK AND AT HOME  
(N = 22)

Question	Responses of Boys of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 11)			Responses of Boys of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 11)					
				Group A *			Group B **		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
11. Does your mommy do things to help other people at work?	6	4	1	5	--	--	Not Asked		
12. Does your mommy do things to help other people at home?	9	2	--	5	--	--	6	--	--
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?	9	2	--	5	--	--	4	2	--
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?	8	3	--	4	--	1	5	--	1

\* Group A are those boys of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Group B are those boys of full-time homemakers who answered correctly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

TABLE XXVII

RESPONSES OF GIRLS CONCERNING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WHETHER THEIR  
MOTHER AND FATHER HELPED OTHERS AT WORK AND AT HOME  
(N = 27)

Question	Responses of Girls of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 14)			Responses of Girls of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 13)					
				Group A *			Group B **		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
11. Does your mommy do things to help other people at work?	8	3	3	5	2	1	Not Asked		
12. Does your mommy do things to help other people at home?	11	2	1	8	--	--	3	2	--
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?	11	3	--	8	--	--	4	1	--
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?	9	4	1	8	--	--	4	--	1

\* Group A are those girls of full-time homemakers who answered incorrectly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

\*\* Group B are those girls of full-time homemakers who answered correctly to the question "Does your mommy leave the house to go to a job?"

people feel well. The classification of works outside of home includes such responses as just works, goes to work, they do something at their work, goes to school. The social tasks classification includes such things as goes to parties, plays cards, plays with people, helps someone to the hospital when they are sick. The personal tasks classification includes things such as wears a watch, smokes cigarettes, drinks beer, answers telephone, cleans out purses. The unclassified responses classification contains miscellaneous responses such as don't know, lots of jobs, do everything they can do, he does all sorts of things, and no response.

Tables XXVIII, XXIX, and XXX indicate that in all groups, the most frequent responses to questions concerning things mothers and fathers do to help others were "mothering" or "fathering" tasks. Household tasks were the most frequent responses from all groups in relation to jobs that mothers should do and jobs that fathers should do. However, the older group, i.e., 4 years 4 months to 5 years 2 months, also reflected a high number of responses in the category of "work outside the home" in relation to the jobs they believed their fathers should do.

TABLE XXVIII

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHILDREN  
OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF FULL-TIME HOMEMAKERS  
(N = 49)\*

Question	Responses of Children of Gainfully Employed Mothers (N = 25)						Responses of Children of Full-Time Homemakers (N = 24)					
	H	M(F)	W	S	P	U	H	M(F)	W	S	P	U
13. What are some things she does to help others?	8	21	3	3	0	4	5	22	1	5	0	5
16. What are some things he does to help others?	3	14	3	1	2	7	1	14	2	4	4	3
39. What jobs do you think mommies should do?	32	14	8	0	4	5	40	8	2	3	2	3
40. What jobs do you think daddies should do?	13	8	9	0	8	8	16	9	9	1	8	1

H: housekeeping tasks; M: mothering tasks; F: fathering tasks; W: work outside the home; S: social tasks; P: personal tasks; U: unclassified responses

\* Because some children gave more than one response to a question, the total number of responses will be greater than the N given for the group.

TABLE XXIX

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN AGE  
(N = 49)\*

Question	Responses of Children Ages 3 Years 2 Months to 4 Years 3 Months (N = 24)						Responses of Children Ages 4 Years 4 Months to 5 Years 2 Months (N = 25)					
	H	M(F)	W	S	P	U	H	M(F)	W	S	P	U
13. What are some things she does to help others?	9	20	4	7	2	6	9	19	1	3	1	3
16. What are some things he does to help others?	5	15	3	4	3	5	2	18	4	3	0	7
39. What jobs do you think mommies should do?	31	13	3	1	3	5	33	10	9	0	5	6
40. What jobs do you think daddies should do?	17	6	6	1	5	8	14	13	14	0	6	2

H: housekeeping tasks; M: mothering tasks; F: fathering tasks; W: work outside the home; S: social tasks; P: personal tasks; U: unclassified responses

\* Because some children gave more than one response to a question, the total number of responses will be greater than the N given for the group.

TABLE XXX

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REFLECTING  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS  
(N = 49)\*

Question	Responses of Boys (N = 22)						Responses of Girls (N = 27)					
	H	M(F)	W	S	P	U	H	M(F)	W	S	P	U
13. What are some things she does to help others?	6	15	1	4	0	5	8	23	2	4	0	6
16. What are some things he does to help others?	2	10	3	4	1	5	3	19	1	1	3	10
39. What jobs do you think mommies should do?	23	8	5	0	0	5	44	15	5	1	6	5
40. What jobs do you think daddies should do?	11	8	8	0	4	5	19	12	10	1	9	8

H: housekeeping tasks; M: mothering tasks; F: fathering tasks; W: work outside the home; S: social tasks; P: personal tasks; U: unclassified responses

\*Because some children gave more than one response to a question, the total number of responses will be greater than the N given for the group.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was concerned with young children's concepts of parental roles. The specific purposes of this study were to answer the following questions: (1) Is the gainful employment of the mother significantly related to the child's concept of parental roles? (2) Does age of the child influence his concept of parental roles? (3) Does sex of the child influence his concept of parental roles?

The subjects were 49 boys and girls ages 3 years 2 months to 5 years 2 months who were enrolled in the Child Development Laboratories at Oklahoma State University during the fall semester, 1972. Data were compared on the following: children of full-time homemakers and children of gainfully employed mothers; younger preschool children and older preschool children; boys and girls.

A Chi Square analysis was utilized to determine if significant differences existed in their concepts of parental roles, and data were reported by frequency and percentage to reflect responses of both parents and children according to the specific sections of a Questionnaire-Interview.

### Findings

The Chi Square analysis provided little support for rejection of the hypotheses. Generally, no significant differences were found,



however the Chi Square analysis did show significant differences for the following:

1. Children of gainfully employed mothers, more often than children of full-time homemakers, preferred that their mothers care for them when they were sick.

2. Older children, more often than younger children, preferred their fathers to repair a broken toy.

3. Girls, more often than boys, preferred their mothers to help them get new clothes.

Data reported by frequency and percentage showed that

1. All groups of children were more aware of their father's work arrangements than of their mother's.

2. Generally, all groups of children said they had visited the father at work more often than the mother.

3. Generally, children of all groups believed that mothers helped more people at home, while fathers helped more people at work.

4. The category "household tasks" was the main one for response in relation to the child's belief about what jobs mothers and fathers should do.

#### Implications

The following statements are made on the basis of the findings of this investigation:

1. Gainfully employed mothers would be helped if they understood that children wish their mothers to be at home with them when they are ill. One interpretation of this could be that the children of the full-time homemakers know that their mothers are always at home to take care

of them when they are sick. Children of gainfully employed mothers do not have their mothers at home with them all day, so when they are ill they want them to be with them.

2. There are many things that children look to their fathers to do for them. Fathers can strengthen their relationships with their children by being aware of and helping their children in these things. Children in this study preferred fathers to repair broken toys.

3. Girls, more often than boys, preferred their mothers to help them get new clothes. This activity provides opportunity for strengthening of relationships between mothers and their daughters.

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**APPENDIX A**

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER**

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74074

Dear Parent,

We are conducting a study concerning young children's concepts of parental roles. We will be interviewing the children at school to obtain the data. The questionnaire-interview will cover areas such as leisure, recreational, service, and nurturing responsibilities of parents.

Would you be willing for your child to participate in this study? If so, please circle YES below, fill out attached face sheet for parents, and return both this letter and face sheet to your child's teacher.

If your child cannot participate in the study, please circle NO, disregard attached sheet, and return this letter to your child's teacher.

YES

NO

We will share with you the results of the study, which should be completed during the spring semester, 1973.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Griffin".

Judy Griffin, Graduate Assistant

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Josephine Hoffer".

Josephine Hoffer, Associate Professor  
Acting Head, Family Relations and  
Child Development

**APPENDIX B**

## FACE SHEET FOR PARENTS

Name of child:

Age:

Birthdate:

Father's name:

Occupation:

(if student, state major and desired position)

Level of education attained: (check one)

 grammar school some high school completed high school some college completed four years' college some graduate study completed advanced degree

Mother's name:

Occupation:

Level of education attained: (check one)

 grammar school some high school completed high school some college completed four years' college some graduate study completed advanced degree

Give name and age of all other children in family.

Name and state relationship of any other persons living in household.



**APPENDIX C**

## QUESTIONNAIRE-INTERVIEW

Child's name:

Age:

Parent's Occupation

1. Does your mommie leave the house to go to a job?
2. Where does your mommie work at her job?
3. What does your mommie do at her job?
4. How do you know?
5. Have you visited her at work?
6. Does your daddy leave the house to go to a job?
7. Where does your daddy work at his job?
8. What does your daddy do at his job?
9. How do you know?
10. Have you visited him at work?

Parent's Contribution to Others and the Community

11. Does your mommie do things to help other people at work?
12. Does your mommie do things to help other people at home?
13. What are some things that she does to help others?
14. Does your daddy do things to help other people at work?
15. Does your daddy do things to help other people at home?
16. What are some things that he does to help others?

Leisure and Recreation Responsibilities of Parents

17. \_\_\_\_\_ If both mommie and daddy could not take you to the circus, who do you think should take you, mommie or daddy?  
Why do you think (he, she) should take you?
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should play with you the most, mommie or daddy?  
Why do you think (he, she) should play with you the most?
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you have more fun playing with, your mommie or your daddy?

20. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should read to you the most, your  
mommie or your daddy?

Nurturing Responsibilities of Parents

21. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should help children get new clothes  
when they need them, the mommie or the daddy?
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should doctor children when they skin  
their knee, the mommie or the daddy?
23. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should help children get something to  
eat when they are hungry, the mommie or the daddy?
24. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should come to help children when they  
wake up in the middle of the night with a stomach-ache, the mommie  
or the daddy?
25. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should help children feel better when  
they are scared, the mommie or the daddy?
26. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should read a new storybook to chil-  
dren, the mommie or the daddy?
27. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should punish children when they have  
been naughty, the mommie or the daddy?
28. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should fix the breakfasts, lunches,  
and dinners in a home, the mommie or the daddy?
29. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should be the boss in a home, the mom-  
mie or the daddy?

Service Responsibilities of Parents

30. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should help children find a toy that is lost, the mommie or the daddy?
31. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should help children fix a broken toy, the mommie or the daddy?
32. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should wash the dishes at home, the mommie or the daddy?
33. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should take out the garbage at home, the mommie or the daddy?
34. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should clean the house, the mommie or the daddy?
35. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should mow the grass at home, the mommie or the daddy?
36. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should do the laundry at home, the mommie or the daddy?
37. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should wash the car, the mommie or the daddy?
38. \_\_\_\_\_ Who do you think should buy the groceries, the mommie or the daddy?
39. What jobs do you think mommies should do?
40. What jobs do you think daddies should do?

✓

VITA

Judith Ann Winchester Griffin

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: YOUNG CHILDREN'S CONCEPTS OF PARENTAL ROLES

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Okemah, Oklahoma, September 26, 1949, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Winchester.

Education: Graduated from Weleetka High School, Weleetka, Oklahoma, in May, 1967; attended Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma, 1967-1969; received Bachelor of Science in Home Economics Education from Oklahoma State University in January, 1972; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree in May, 1974.

Professional Experience: Graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Family Relations and Child Development, 1972 to 1974.

Professional Organizations: Phi Upsilon Omicron, Omicron Nu, Phi Kappa Phi, Kappa Delta Pi, Southern Association on Children Under Six, and Oklahoma Association on Children Under Six.