

# Parents' Involvement in Childcare: Do Parental and Work Identities Matter?

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## Abstract

The current study draws on identity theory to explore mothers' and fathers' involvement in childcare. It examined the relationships between the salience and centrality of individuals' parental and work-related identities and the extent to which they are involved in various forms of childcare. A sample of 148 couples with at least one child aged 6 years old or younger completed extensive questionnaires. As hypothesized, the salience and centrality of parental identities were positively related to mothers' and fathers' involvement in childcare. Moreover, maternal identity salience was negatively related to fathers' hours of childcare and share of childcare tasks. Finally, work hours mediated the negative relationships between the centrality of work identities and time invested in childcare, and gender moderated this mediation effect. That is, the more central a mother's work identity, the more hours she worked for pay and the fewer hours she invested in childcare. These findings shed light on the role of parental identities in guiding behavioral choices and attest to the importance of distinguishing between identity salience and centrality as two components of self-structure.

## Keywords

child care, identity, parental involvement, self-concept

Ample research has attested to the important implications of parents' involvement in childcare for their own well-being and marital satisfaction (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Offer & Schneider, 2011; Schindler, 2010; Schober, 2012), as well as for their children's development and well-being (Aldous & Mulligan, 2002; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Milkie, Kendig, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2010; Nomaguchi, 2006). Despite the gradual increase in fathers' time with children in the last three decades (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Hook & Wolfe, 2012), mothers' time with children remains considerably higher and fathers' work hours are still considerably longer (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Craig, 2006; Craig & Mullan, 2010).

Therefore, the persisting question is what determines the ways in which partners divide childcare and breadwinning responsibilities between them? This question continues to fuel scholars' interest in the division of family work in general (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Coltrane, 2000; Scott, Dex, & Plagnol, 2012; Sullivan, 2006) and in the determinants of involvement in childcare in particular (Carlson, Pilkauskas, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2011; Hook & Wolfe, 2012; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Drawing on identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker, 1980, 2008) in the current study, we explore the social-psychological mechanisms underlying fathers' and mothers' involvement in childcare. Specifically, we posit that parents' involvement in childcare is determined, in part, by the salience and centrality of their maternal and

paternal identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). We further suggest that mothers' maternal identities influence not only their own level of involvement but also that of fathers. Finally, we argue that the salience and centrality of work identities are negatively related to involvement in childcare and that these relationships are mediated by work hours and moderated by gender.

Previous attempts to explore the effects of identity hierarchies on married parents' involvement in childcare have yielded weak and inconsistent results (Goldberg, 2014; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Maurer, Pleck, & Rane, 2001; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000). These attempts have focused almost exclusively on fathers' involvement, whereas little is known about the ways in which maternal identities guide mothers' involvement. Moreover, most earlier studies have centered on the role of fathers' identities in guiding their involvement and have thus overlooked the putative role of mothers' identities in shaping fathers' involvement (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Goldberg, 2014; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Pasley, Furtis, & Skinner, 2002). Finally,

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inconsistencies in the findings may stem from the absence of a clear conceptual and empirical distinction between identity salience and psychological centrality as two independent components of self-structure (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Maintaining this distinction may prove useful in clarifying the complex relationships between identity hierarchies and behaviors.

### *Determinants of Parental Involvement in Childcare*

Much of the research on the determinants of involvement in childcare has focused on parents' socioeconomic and labor-force characteristics, including their time availability, income, and education (Aldous, Mulligan, Bjarnason, 1998; Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993; Goodman, Crouter, Lanza, & Cox, 2008; Yeung et al., 2001). Studies have shown that the father's involvement in childcare decreases the more hours he works and the higher his income, as well as increases the more hours the mother works for pay (Deutsch et al., 1993; Gaunt, 2005, 2006; Hook & Wolfe, 2012; Yeung et al., 2001). Recent studies have drawn attention to the impact of family structures (Carlson et al., 2011; Hohmann-Marriott, 2011; Kendig & Bianchi, 2008) and cultural and institutional contexts (Craig & Mullan, 2010; Hook & Wolf, 2012; Kan, Sullivan, & Gershuny, 2011) on parents' time with children.

Other lines of research have examined the psychological characteristics of parents (Barry, Smith, Deutsch, & Perry-Jenkins, 2011; Frech & Kimbro, 2011; McGill, 2014) and their relationship dynamics (Carlson et al., 2011; Hohmann-Marriott, 2011; Malinen et al., 2010; Schober, 2012; Volling & Belsky, 1991). Findings indicate, for example, that better relationship quality predicts greater involvement in childcare for both mothers and fathers (Carlson et al., 2011; Schober, 2012). Closer to the current theoretical approach, several studies have centered on the role of parents' social-psychological characteristics in their involvement in childcare, such as their gender ideologies (Beitel & Parke, 1998; Gaunt, 2006; Greenstein, 1996), child-rearing attitudes (Barry et al., 2011; Gaertner, Spinrad, Eisenberg, & Gareving, 2007; McGill, 2014), and value priorities (Gaunt, 2005). Studies further demonstrated the central role played by the mother's attitudes in facilitating or inhibiting the father's involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Gaunt, 2008; McBride et al., 2005). The present study extends this line of research by exploring how individuals' parental and work-related identities guide their involvement in childcare. Similarly stressing choices made by parents regarding paid and unpaid work, it draws on identity theory to examine the complex relationships between identities and behaviors. Although recognizing the bidirectional nature of these relationships, our study focuses on the role of identities in shaping involvement in childcare and on the mediating and moderating mechanisms underlying this process.

### *Identity Theory*

Identity theory (Stryker, 1980, 2008) suggests that the self is multifaceted and made up of mutually reinforcing and conflicting parts which are called "role-identities." Whereas roles are external and refer to social positions and relationships, identities are internal and refer to individuals' internalized meanings and expectations attached to a social role (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identities are thus the meanings individuals apply to the self in a role (Stryker, 1980).

According to this approach, the many identities individuals possess are organized in a hierarchy reflecting their salience (Stryker, 1980) and psychological centrality (Rosenberg, 1979). Identity salience refers to the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations (Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). The psychological centrality of an identity refers to the importance individuals attach to this identity (Rosenberg, 1979; see also identity prominence, McCall & Simmons, 1978). Whereas identity salience does not require self-conscious or self-aware actors, psychological centrality assumes a level of self-awareness because it refers to individuals' own subjective judgments of the importance of each of their identities (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Although previous research has often treated these concepts as synonymous, studies that maintain the distinction showed that they are relatively independent and therefore both should be incorporated as hierarchical components of self-structure (Stets & Biga, 2003; Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

An important premise of identity theory is that the self is a primary motivator of behavior (Hogg et al., 1995; Stryker, 2008), with more salient and central identities guiding behavior to a greater extent than less salient and central identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999). Higher salience and centrality of an identity are therefore associated with greater investment of time and effort in its enactment, increased attempts to perform well, and greater dependency of one's self-esteem on that identity. Indeed, many studies have documented the identity → behavior link in various domains such as religious identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1982), environmental identity (Stets & Biga, 2003; Terry et al., 1999), and student identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

### *Parental Identities and Involvement in Childcare*

Applying identity theory to involvement in childcare, the importance of individuals' parental identities relative to other identities may account for their parenting behavior. In particular, identity theory suggests that the salience and centrality of parental identities may guide parents' choices regarding time investment and performance of childcare. Previous attempts to test these predictions on samples of married parents have nevertheless yielded weak and inconsistent results. A few studies have reported the hypothesized link between a

father's identity salience or centrality and involvement with his children (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Goldberg, 2014; Pasley et al., 2002), whereas others have failed to do so (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Maurer et al., 2001; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000). The findings regarding mothers' identities and involvement in childcare are even scarcer (Nuttbrock & Freudiger, 1991).

Several characteristics of these earlier lines of research call, however, for a more complete exploration of the associations between parents' identities and their involvement in childcare. First, almost all of the existing quantitative studies within the framework of identity theory have focused exclusively on fathers' involvement in childcare. Nuttbrock and Freudiger's (1991) thorough investigation of the role of mothers' identities centered on their associations with mothers' behavioral intentions and role attitudes rather than the measurement of actual behaviors.

Second, some of the studies were conducted on samples of fathers and thus did not include the mothers' characteristics in their analysis (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Pasley et al., 2002). Others incorporated couple-level analyses that documented the important effects of the mother's attitudes towards the father's role (Rane & McBride, 2000), her perceptions of his psychological investment (McBride et al., 2005), or his perceptions of her evaluations (Maurer et al., 2001). Nevertheless, the direct effect of the mother's own identities on the father's involvement has not been examined to date.

Finally, the conceptual and empirical distinction between identity salience and psychological centrality has not been maintained in most of the research applying identity theory to involvement in childcare. Studies have either examined the concept of psychological centrality (Goldberg, 2014; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Pasley et al., 2002; Rane & McBride, 2000) or identity salience (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Henley & Pasley, 2005), sometimes exhibiting inconsistencies between the concepts and their operationalization. Given that motherhood and fatherhood are socially loaded terms, it is possible, for example, that parents' conscious reports on the centrality of their parental identity will be less accurate and predictive of their behavior than their identity's implicit mental availability.

In the current study, we explore the role of parents' identities in involvement in childcare more fully by examining the involvement of mothers, as well as that of fathers, and by considering the effects of both fathers' and mothers' identities. Our first hypothesis is derived directly from identity theory's premise regarding the role of identity hierarchies in guiding behavioral choices. Thus, we hypothesize that the salience and centrality of paternal and maternal identities will be positively related to involvement in childcare. Specifically, the more salient and central is a parent's maternal or paternal identity, the greater will be this parent's time investment in childcare and share of childcare tasks (Hypothesis 1).

### *Mothers' Identities and Fathers' Involvement*

Because childcare is still regarded as women's domain and authority (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Craig, 2006), mothers often act as managers who take overall responsibility for organizing and supervising childcare (Allan & Hawkins, 1999). Accordingly, several studies have found that mothers' views and ideologies are as important as fathers' in determining fathers' involvement (Gaertner et al., 2007; Gaunt, 2005, 2006; Greenstein, 1996; Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). Studies on maternal gatekeeping have specifically examined the role played by mothers' attitudes and beliefs in promoting or inhibiting fathers' involvement in childcare (Allan & Hawkins, 1999; Barry et al., 2011; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Gaunt, 2008). These studies found that fathers' involvement increased with mothers' encouragement (Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008) and decreased with mothers' criticism (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008), maintained responsibility, and maternal identity confirmation (Gaunt, 2008).

Importantly, an examination of the psychological antecedents of such gatekeeping tendencies showed that the salience of maternal identity was a significant factor (Gaunt, 2008). Mothers with more salient maternal identities exhibited stronger gatekeeping beliefs and behaviors (Gaunt, 2008), presumably because these enabled them to validate their maternal identity (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Nuttbrock & Freudiger, 1991). This evidence suggests that higher salience and centrality of maternal identities may be associated with lower involvement of fathers in childcare. Our second hypothesis draws on this rationale by predicting that the salience and centrality of mothers' maternal identity will be negatively related to fathers' time investment in childcare and share of childcare tasks (Hypothesis 2).

### *Work Identities and Involvement in Childcare*

Individuals typically occupy multiple roles and hold multiple identities that may compete or conflict (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Paid work often constitutes a major competing role in the lives of parents, and ample research demonstrates the conflicting demands and resulting strains of work and parenting roles (Craig & Mullan, 2009; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Milkie et al., 2010; Nomaguchi, 2009; Scott & Plagnol, 2012). According to identity theory, when two or more role-identities compete, the relative salience and centrality of these identities account for the selection of one behavioral option over another (Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Applying this reasoning to involvement in childcare, the theory suggests that the relative salience and centrality of work-related identities are likely to be positively associated with time invested in paid work and therefore negatively associated with time invested in childcare.

Evidence from earlier studies supports the positive association between work identities and time invested in paid work.

Maurer, Pleck, and Rane's (2001) study of 64 married couples found, for example, that wives' work-related identities predicted their work hours, and husbands' work-related identities predicted theirs. Many studies have also reported negative associations between parents' work hours and their involvement in childcare, confirming the general conception of these roles as competing for time and resources (Gaunt, 2005, 2006; Roeters, van der Lippe, Kluwer, & Raub, 2012; Yeung et al., 2001). It is therefore plausible that more salient work identities lead to greater time investment in paid work, which in turn leaves less time for childcare. This theorized flow leading from salient work identities to more work hours and fewer hours of childcare forms the basis for our third hypothesis regarding the mediating role of work hours in the negative association between work identities and involvement in childcare. Thus, we propose that the salience and centrality of parents' work-related identities will be positively related to time investment in paid work (Hypothesis 3a) and negatively related to hours of childcare (Hypothesis 3b). Furthermore, time investment in paid work will mediate the hypothesized negative relationships between work identities and hours of childcare (Hypothesis 3c).

In examining these hypotheses regarding the associations between work-related identities and time invested in childcare, the gendered structure of paid and unpaid work must be considered. Despite the dramatic changes in women's work patterns over the last few decades and the increased rejection of traditional gender attitudes (Bianchi et al., 2006; Scott, Dex, & Joshi, 2008), women and men still assume main responsibilities for their traditional roles as caregivers and breadwinners, respectively (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Craig, 2006; Kan et al., 2011; Offer & Schneider, 2011). Parenthood tends to intensify this gendered division of roles (Baxter, Hewitt, & Haynes, 2008), wherein women are more likely to take time off from paid work to care for young children, and men are more likely to continue working full time to support the family (Bianchi et al., 2006; Katz-Wise, Priess, & Hyde, 2010).

Women's decisions regarding paid work are embedded in an array of cultural, institutional, and interactional contexts (Himmelweit & Sigala, 2004; McRae, 2003). Whereas good fathering is perceived as consistent with being a good worker and breadwinner, good mothering is perceived as inconsistent with being a good worker if this comes at the expense of providing care to young children (Wall, 2013). Such perceptions of mothers as irreplaceable main caretakers result in considerable societal ambivalence towards new mothers' employment and relatively large variability in the ways mothers distribute time between paid work and childcare (Hoffnung & Williams, 2013; McRae, 2003; Sayer & Gornick, 2012). Mothers' various decisions are therefore likely to be guided in part by the role-related expectations they have internalized—namely, their parental and work-related identities (Himmelweit & Sigala, 2004; Stryker & Burke, 2000). In

contrast, because of the persisting view of good fathering in terms of good breadwinning, there is little to no societal ambivalence towards new fathers' employment. This is reflected in the relatively small variability in fathers' working patterns (Sayer & Gornick, 2012), which leaves less room for fathers' identities in guiding their behaviors.

The hypothesis we derived from this logic concerns the moderating role of gender in the mediated relationships between work identities and time invested in childcare. Compared to fathers, we expect mothers' work identities to play a greater role in their work hours and consequently have a stronger effect on their hours of childcare. Therefore, we hypothesize that gender will moderate the hypothesized negative relationships between work identities and hours of care. Specifically, the negative association between work identities and hours of care, mediated by work hours, will be attenuated or eliminated in men (Hypothesis 3d).

### *Work and Childcare in the United Kingdom*

Our hypotheses regarding the relationships between identities and involvement in childcare were tested on a sample of married British couples with young children. As in many countries, women's employment rates in the United Kingdom have risen dramatically in recent decades. The United Kingdom is characterized, however, by a dominant male-breadwinner/part-time female-caregiver ideological model, and the significant increase in mothers' employment has been largely concentrated in part-time jobs (Kanji, 2011). As a result, the United Kingdom has both one of the highest employment rates in Europe for mothers of preschool children and one of the lowest rates of maternal full-time employment (Kanji, 2011). Whereas 38% of married couples with young children fit the male full-time/female part-time work pattern, only 20% hold two full-time jobs (Harkness, 2008). These patterns can partly be explained by the lack of state provision of childcare for small children and social disapproval of full-time employment for mothers (Himmelweit & Sigala, 2004). Adding the short- and long-term costs of reduced work hours into the equation, U.K. parents' decisions about work and childcare are made within a complex array of internal and external forces (Himmelweit & Sigala, 2004).

In the current study, we use this particularly varied context to investigate the role of identities in parents' involvement in childcare. To attempt to account for inconsistencies in previous findings, we maintain the conceptual and empirical distinction between identity salience and psychological centrality. We further extend previous literature by exploring mothers' involvement in childcare and examining the role of maternal identities in both paternal and maternal involvement. Finally, our study investigates the role of parents' work identities and posits that their negative associations with involvement in childcare are mediated by work hours and moderated by gender.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 148 couples ( $N = 296$ ) recruited by research assistants through playgroups, schools, and community centers in Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom. Criteria for inclusion in the study were the following: The couples were married, they had at least one child aged 6 years old or younger, and both parents were the target child's biological parents. The fathers' ages ranged from 22 to 56 ( $M = 38$ , standard deviation [ $SD$ ] = 6.70); the mothers' ages, from 23 to 49 ( $M = 35$ ,  $SD = 5.78$ ). The couples represented a broad range of socioeconomic levels, with an overrepresentation of educated couples: 26 (9%) participants had not finished high school, but 52 (35%) husbands and 68 (46%) wives had some college-level education, compared to 27% in the general population (Department for Education, 2011). Fathers and mothers did not differ significantly in their education levels ( $p > .05$ ). The fathers' work hours ranged from 0 to 85 hours per week ( $M = 44.93$ ,  $SD = 13.56$ ); only 4 (3%) fathers did not work for pay, 10 (7%) worked less than 30 hours per week, and 133 (90%) worked 30 hours or more per week. The mothers' work hours ranged from 0 to 72 hours per week ( $M = 17.88$ ,  $SD = 15.84$ ) and closely reflected those of married mothers with preschool children in the general population ( $M = 17.80$ , Harkness, 2008, p. 244). Similar to the distribution found in the general population (Office for National Statistics, 2008), 46 (31%) mothers in the sample did not work for pay, 59 (40%) worked less than 30 hours per week, and 44 (30%) worked 30 hours or more. Overall, the fathers in the sample worked significantly more hours than the mothers,  $t(1, 144) = 15.53$ ,  $p < .001$ . The number of children per couple ranged from 1 to 5 ( $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = .92$ ); 44 (30%) families had one child, 69 (47%) had two children, 25 (17%) had three children, and 9 (6%) had four or five children. Of the 148 target children, 80 (54%) were boys and 68 (46%) were girls. The target children's age ranged from 1 to 6 years ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ).

### Procedure and Measures

Participants were personally approached by a female research assistant. The study was introduced as a questionnaire survey on work and parenting. Fully 96% of those approached to participate and who were eligible agreed to take part in the study. After receiving both parents' agreement to participate, the research assistant ensured that the couple met the inclusion criteria and obtained written consent from each participant. Fathers and mothers then completed comprehensive self-report questionnaires in the presence of the research assistant. The questionnaires included measures of their identities, routine work schedules, sociodemographic background, and involvement in childcare activities. Parents who had more than one child were instructed to answer the questions with regard to the youngest child in their family. Completion of

the questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes. Parents were not allowed to consult each other when filling out the questionnaires. In two families, the questionnaire was filled out by only one parent, and those families' data were therefore eliminated from the sample. Other missing data were subjected to listwise deletion.

*Time investment in childcare.* To assess involvement in childcare in terms of time investment, each participant indicated (a) the amount of time (hours per week) during which the father was the sole care provider while the mother (or any other care provider) was away and (b) the amount of time (hours per week) that the mother was the sole care provider while the father (or any other care provider) was away. The gap between mothers and fathers in their weekly hours of care was calculated by subtracting the father's weekly hours from those of the mother. Pearson correlations between the fathers' and the mothers' assessments of weekly hours of care were .71 for care by the father, .80 for care by the mother, and .85 for the mother–father gap in hours, suggesting acceptable levels of convergent validity. The final measures of hours of care were obtained by averaging the assessments given by the father and the mother. It should be noted that this measure of involvement was designed to capture the important aspect of the father's time as a solo care provider. Measuring total time spent with the child, in contrast, would include the time when the father takes care of the child while the mother is engaged in other activities, but also (and more probably) the amount of time the father engages in other activities while the mother is taking care of the child.

*Involvement in childcare tasks.* To assess involvement in childcare in terms of task performance, a "Who does what?" measure asked participants to indicate their involvement in 19 specific childcare tasks (adapted from Gaunt, 2005; Gaunt & Bassi, 2012).<sup>1</sup> The 19 tasks were selected to reflect those types of involvement typical of both fathers (playing and disciplining) and mothers (preparing food and packing child's bag). Some tasks were designed to tap daily care activities (feeding and putting to bed), some were designed to reflect responsibility for the child (choosing daycare/school and planning activities), and some were selected to reflect emotional care (helping with social/emotional problems). Participants were asked: "In the division of labor between you and your spouse, which of you performs each of the following tasks?" Responses were indicated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*almost always my spouse*) through 2 (*my spouse more than myself*), 3 (*both of us equally*), and 4 (*myself more than my spouse*) to 5 (*almost always myself*). For the mothers, the scale was reversed, so that higher ratings indicated more participation by the father. Participants were also given the opportunity to rate 9 (*not applicable to my child*), which was treated as missing data. The average Pearson correlation between the mothers' and the fathers' ratings for each of the 19 tasks was .67, suggesting an acceptable level of convergent validity. The mean score for each task was obtained

by averaging the ratings given by both the father and the mother for that task. An average of the 19 task ratings was calculated to create a single measure of total involvement in childcare tasks. Higher scores on this measure reflected greater participation on the part of the father relative to the mother. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this measure was .89.

**Identity salience.** To measure the salience of mothers' and fathers' identities, a "Who am I?" open-ended question (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954) asked participants to define themselves in terms of their relationships and roles. This measure has been widely used to explore gender and cultural differences in self-concept (Dhawan, Roseman, Naidu, Thapa, & Rettek, 1995; Eaton & Louw, 2000; Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001; Mackie, 1983), as well as its relations to self-esteem and well-being (Lay & Verkuyten, 1999; Rentsch & Heffner, 1992; Thoits, 1992). Based on the assumption that the order of spontaneous recall responses reflects mental availability (Mussweiler & Bodenhausen, 2002), participants' responses were coded according to their content and ordinal placement. Participants were given the option to provide up to 10 responses, which were then coded from 10 (*the identity was mentioned first*), through 9 (*mentioned second*), down to 1 (*mentioned tenth*). An identity that was not mentioned by the participant was coded 0. Although the participants mentioned a wide range of identities, subsequent analyses focused on parental and work-related identity salience scores.

**Identity centrality.** To measure the psychological centrality of the participants' identities, they were asked to distribute 100% between various identities, in a way that reflected the extent to which each identity was important to them. Participants were presented with a list of eight identities (friend, sibling, wife/husband, work, son/daughter, parent, national identity, and religious identity) and could also add other identities to the list (for similar lists, see Cassidy & Trew, 2001; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Cognizant of the controversy over the hierarchical nature of identities (Marks & MacDermid, 1996), this measure allowed participants to express the equal importance of two or more identities by allocating them equal percentages. The percentages allocated to parental and work identities were then coded to obtain participants' psychological centrality scores.

**Sociodemographic characteristics.** Participants indicated their level of education, work hours, and income. They also reported their age, ethnic background, religiosity level, and the number of children in the household, as well as the age and gender of each. These latter variables were considered in our preliminary analyses, but because they did not affect involvement in childcare or confound the associations between identities and involvement, they were not included in the final analyses.

### Analytic Strategy

As a first stage, we examined Pearson correlations between identity scores, sociodemographic variables, and measures

of parents' involvement in childcare. Next, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses separately for fathers and mothers. In each analysis, a variable pertaining to one measure of involvement was regressed on the set of identity variables and controls. All variables were assessed for possible multicollinearity using tolerance and the variance inflation factor (VIF). VIF values greater than 10 and tolerance values below .10 would indicate multicollinearity among variables. However, there were no signs of multicollinearity in any of the regression models (VIF values ranged from 1.04 to 2.16, and tolerance values ranged from .46 to .96).

Finally, to test the moderated mediation of work hours in the relationship between work identities and hours of childcare, we followed the methods developed by Preacher and Hayes (Hayes, 2013; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) for evaluating conditional indirect effects using the bootstrap procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Bootstrap resampling of the data provides estimates for the model paths and a confidence interval (CI) of these estimates. We first evaluated a mediation model in the overall sample (Hypothesis 3c) and then assessed a moderated mediation (Hypothesis 3d) through the construction and estimation of a conditional process model (Hayes, 2013). All analyses were conducted using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro with 1,000 bootstrap samples and bias-corrected CIs.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents the means, *SDs*, and Pearson correlations among the four measures of involvement in childcare, the four identity scores, and three sociodemographic variables. In addition to work hours, the effects of parents' income and education were examined, in line with previous findings regarding their possible associations with both identities (Gaunt, 2008; Maurer et al., 2001) and involvement in childcare (Aldous et al., 1998; Deutsch et al., 1993; Yeung et al., 2001).

The intercorrelations among involvement measures of task performance and hours of care were generally moderate, ranging from .40 to .57. This pattern suggests that performance of tasks and investment of time as a sole care provider reflect relatively independent aspects of involvement. Consistent with previous studies, there was no significant correlation between the number of weekly hours of care provided by the mother and the father (Gaunt, 2006). The correlations among the salience and centrality measures of identity hierarchies were low to moderate: .19 and .20 for parental identities and .44 and .37 for work identities of mothers and fathers, respectively. This supports Stryker and Serpe's (1994) argument regarding the importance of maintaining a distinction between these concepts and including both in research designs. Finally, replicating previous findings (Aldous et al., 1998; Gaunt, 2005; Yeung et al., 2001), mothers' and fathers' work hours and incomes were negatively related to

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables.

Variables	Fathers'												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	M	SD
Involvement in childcare tasks <sup>a</sup>	—	-.47***	.40***	-.57***	.04	.09	-.09	-.04	-.38***	-.18*	.04	2.25	.43
Mother hours of care	-.47***	—	-.13	.91***	.07	-.05	.04	.16	.18*	.10	-.08	32.76	17.72
Father hours of care	.40***	-.13	—	-.52***	.22**	.11	-.17*	-.06	-.49***	-.29***	-.23**	10.21	8.23
Gap in childcare hours	-.57***	.91***	-.52***	—	-.03	-.09	.11	.16	.35***	.21*	.02	22.54	20.54
Parental identity salience	-.17*	.20*	-.20*	.25**	—	.20*	-.07	-.16	-.11	-.13	-.05	9.35	.91
Parent identity centrality	-.19*	.22**	-.18*	.26**	.19*	—	-.19*	-.44***	-.01	.22*	-.14	31.73	13.22
Work identity salience	.14	-.20*	.12	-.22**	-.20*	-.15	—	.37***	.29***	.14	.19*	5.91	3.41
Work identity centrality	.31***	-.38***	.18*	-.40***	-.15	-.41***	.44***	—	.17*	-.07	-.01	13.66	10.62
Work hours	.34***	-.63***	.24**	-.64***	-.17*	-.22**	.40***	.46***	—	.41***	.04	44.93	13.56
Income	.28**	-.44***	.17*	-.45***	-.14	-.16	.28***	.38***	.67***	—	.23**	5.74	2.02
Education	.03	-.11	-.07	-.06	.01	-.11	.08	.25**	.07	.15	—	6.08	2.45
Mothers' M	2.25	32.76	10.21	22.54	9.69	39.01	5.27	10.36	17.88	2.83	5.94		
Mothers' SD	.43	17.72	8.23	20.54	.60	15.15	3.57	9.00	15.84	2.26	2.34		

Note. Correlations for fathers are presented above the diagonal; for mothers, below the diagonal.

<sup>a</sup>Higher scores reflect greater father involvement relative to mother involvement.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

**Table 2.** Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Involvement in Childcare from Parent Identity, Work Identity, and Sociodemographic Variables.

Model	Division of Tasks <sup>a</sup>			Mothers' Hours			Fathers' Hours			Gap in Hours		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>(a) Mothers</b>												
Parent identity												
Saliency	-.17*	-.15	-.12	.20*	.17*	.10	-.21**	-.19*	-.17*	.24**	.20*	.16*
Centrality	-.19*	-.09	-.09	.19*	.07	.05	-.12	-.07	-.07	.21*	.08	.06
Work identity												
Saliency	—	-.07	-.09	—	-.06	.08	—	.10	.06	—	-.09	.05
Centrality	—	.23*	.17	—	-.28**	-.09	—	.09	.07	—	-.28**	-.11
Sociodemographic variables												
Work hours	—	—	.20	—	—	-.54***	—	—	.17	—	—	-.53***
Income	—	—	.09	—	—	-.05	—	—	-.01	—	—	-.04
Education	—	—	-.07	—	—	-.01	—	—	-.08	—	—	.03
R <sup>2</sup>	.08**	.11**	.17***	.08**	.16***	.41***	.08**	.10**	.13*	.12***	.21***	.45***
F(7, 135)			3.80***		12.60***				2.69*		15.11***	
<b>(b) Fathers</b>												
Parent identity												
Saliency	.07	.07	-.03	.06	.07	.13	.28**	.27**	.18*	-.05	-.03	.05
Centrality	.06	.07	.17	-.06	.01	-.07	.06	.06	.09	-.08	-.02	-.10
Work identity												
Saliency	—	-.01	.05	—	.01	-.02	—	-.15	-.03	—	.05	.01
Centrality	—	.01	.08	—	.17	.12	—	.06	.08	—	.12	.07
Sociodemographic variables												
Work hours	—	—	-.37***	—	—	.19	—	—	-.36***	—	—	.30**
Income	—	—	-.14	—	—	.11	—	—	-.05	—	—	.12
Education	—	—	.11	—	—	-.14	—	—	-.16	—	—	-.05
R <sup>2</sup>	.01	.01	.18***	.01	.03	.10	.09**	.11**	.26***	.01	.03	.14**
F(7, 126)			3.78***		1.75				6.11***		2.87*	

Note. Standardized  $\beta$  coefficients are reported. Model 1: Parental identity only. Model 2: Parental identity variables entered first, followed by work identity variables. Model 3: Parental identity variables are followed by work identity variables, and sociodemographic variables entered third.

<sup>a</sup>Higher scores reflect greater father involvement relative to mother involvement.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed. \*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed.

their relative share of childcare tasks and the hours of care they provided.

### Parental Identities and Involvement in Childcare

The first hypothesis suggested that the saliency and centrality of parental identities would be positively related to involvement in childcare. To determine the contribution of each identity measure to each form of parental involvement, we ran a series of multiple regression analyses for mothers and fathers separately (see Table 2, Model 1). In each analysis, a variable pertaining to one form of involvement was regressed on the set of two identity measures. Although the reported measures of involvement in childcare were obtained by averaging the assessments given by the father and the mother, the pattern of results remained the same when the analyses were conducted using separate assessments made by each parent.

Table 2a indicates that the regression equations of mothers' involvement in childcare on the set of maternal identity measures (Model 1) were significant overall and accounted for 8–12% of the variance in maternal involvement. The saliency and centrality of maternal identity were significant

predictors in all three regression analyses: The more salient and central the mother's identity, the greater was her share of childcare tasks relative to the father's, the greater the number of hours during which she was the sole care provider for the child, and the greater the gap between the mother's and the father's hours of care.

The regression equation of fathers' hours of childcare on the set of paternal identity measures (Table 2b) was also significant and accounted for 9% of the variance in paternal involvement (Model 1). The saliency of paternal identity was a significant predictor in this analysis: The more salient the father's identity, the greater the number of hours during which he was the sole care provider for the child. Nevertheless, paternal identity did not predict the father's relative share of childcare tasks and the gap between the mother's and the father's hours of care.

### Maternal Identities and Fathers' Involvement

The second hypothesis suggested that the saliency and centrality of the mother's maternal identity would be negatively related to the father's involvement in childcare. The



**Table 3.** Bias-Corrected Bootstrap Estimates for Mediation and Moderated Mediation Analyses.

	Simple Mediation			Moderated Mediation								
	Full Sample ( <i>N</i> = 296)			Mothers ( <i>n</i> = 148)			Fathers ( <i>n</i> = 148)			Moderation		
	95% CI			95% CI			95% CI			95% CI		
	Estimate	Lower	Upper	Estimate	Lower	Upper	Estimate	Lower	Upper	Estimate	Lower	Upper
Work identity salience → work hours → childcare hours	-1.21*	-1.66	-.75	-.93*	-1.33	-.55	-.61*	-1.01	-.28	-.32	-.81	.20
Work identity centrality → work hours → childcare hours	-.44*	-.61	-.30	-.39*	-.54	-.27	-.09	-.18	.00	-.30*	-.46	-.15

Note. CI = confidence interval.

\**p* < .05.

regression equation of fathers' hours of childcare on the set of maternal identity measures (Table 2b, Model 1) supported this hypothesis. This equation was significant and accounted for 8% of the variance in paternal involvement. The salience of maternal identity was a significant predictor in this analysis: The more salient the mother's maternal identity, the fewer the number of hours during which the father was the sole care provider for the child. (The same pattern of results was obtained with father's hours as reported by fathers:  $\beta = -.19$ ,  $p = .035$ .) Importantly, this effect was not mediated through the mother's work hours: A simple mediation model using PROCESS (Model 4; Hayes, 2012, 2013) indicated that the indirect effect of identity salience was not significant as evidenced by a bootstrap CI that contains zero: 95% CI [1.31, 0.04]. Thus, mothers' work hours did not mediate the effect of maternal identity salience on fathers' hours of childcare.

### Work Identities and Involvement in Childcare

Our third hypothesis suggested a moderated mediation process. In particular, the salience and centrality of parents' work-related identities were expected to correlate positively with time invested in paid work (Hypothesis 3a) and negatively with time invested in childcare (Hypothesis 3b). We further hypothesized that time investment in paid work would mediate the hypothesized negative relationship between the salience and centrality of work identities and hours of childcare (Hypothesis 3c). Finally, we predicted that the mediating role of work hours in the relationship between work identities and hours of care would be moderated by gender (Hypothesis 3d). Specifically, we expected the negative association between work identities and hours of care to be attenuated or eliminated among men.

The correlations presented in Table 1 support Hypothesis 3a: The salience and centrality of fathers' and mothers' work identities were positively related to their work hours.

That is, the more salient and central the parents' work identity, the more hours they invested in paid work. To assess Hypothesis 3b regarding the contribution of work identities to hours of childcare, we conducted a series of multiple regression analyses in which the set of two work identity variables was entered in the second step (Model 2). Table 2a indicates that the regression equations of mothers' involvement in childcare on the set of maternal and work identity measures (Model 2) were significant overall and accounted for 11–21% of the variance in maternal involvement. The centrality of mothers' work identity was a significant predictor in all three regression analyses: The more central the mother's work identity, the smaller was her share of childcare tasks relative to the father's, the fewer the number of hours during which she was the sole care provider for the child, and the smaller the gap between the mother's and the father's hours of care. In contrast, the salience and centrality of fathers' work identities did not predict their involvement in childcare (Table 2b).

We next assessed Hypothesis 3c regarding the mediating role of work hours in the relationships between work identities and hours of childcare. To this end, we evaluated a simple mediation model in the overall sample following the methods developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004). These analyses were conducted using the PROCESS program (Model 4; Hayes, 2012, 2013) with bias-corrected bootstrap estimates and 95% CIs. Table 3 summarizes the results of the simple mediation analysis. Consistent with Hypothesis 3c, these results indicate that the effect of work identity salience and work identity centrality on hours of childcare was mediated by parents' work hours. As can be seen in the table, the indirect effects of both identity measures were negative, and the bootstrap CIs for these effects were entirely below zero: 95% CI [-1.66, -0.75] for salience and [-0.61, -0.30] for centrality. Thus, participants' work hours mediated the effect of their work-related identities on their involvement in childcare.

Finally, we constructed a conditional process model (Hayes, 2013) to directly test our hypothesis that the mediated effect of work identities on hours of childcare through work hours is moderated by gender (Hypothesis 3d). We applied Model 8 of the PROCESS program (Hayes, 2012, 2013) to test a moderated mediation model with bias-corrected bootstrap estimates and 95% CIs. The results testing conditional indirect effects for mothers and fathers are presented in Table 3. As can be seen in the table, the indirect effects of mothers' work identity salience and centrality were negative, and the bootstrap CIs for these effects were entirely below zero: 95% CI [-1.33, -.55] for salience and [-.54, -.27] for centrality. This indicates that mothers' work hours mediated the effect of their work-related identities on their hours of childcare. Similar results were obtained for the indirect effect of fathers' work identity salience on their hours of childcare: 95% CI [-1.01, -.28]. However, the indirect effect of fathers' work centrality was not significant as evidenced by a bootstrap CI that contains zero: 95% CI [-.18, .00].

Thus, the mediating role of work hours in the relationships between work centrality and involvement in childcare was dependent on gender: Work hours mediated the effect of work identity centrality on hours of childcare among women but not among men. Table 3 further shows the estimates of the moderation effect. Consistent with Hypothesis 3d, the moderating effect of gender on the mediated effect of work identity centrality was significant as evidenced by a bootstrap CI that was entirely below zero: 95% CI [-.46, -.15]. However, the mediated effect of work identity salience was not significantly moderated by gender (CI contains zero). All in all, these results provide support for the moderated mediation process in the effect of work identity centrality, but not work identity salience, on involvement in childcare.

## Discussion

Our study was designed to test the predictions derived from identity theory (Stryker, 1980, 2008) regarding the role of parents' identities in guiding involvement in childcare. Overall, the findings supported our first hypothesis regarding the effects of maternal identity salience and centrality on mothers' involvement and provided some evidence for the role of fathers' identity salience in their hours of childcare.

Our second hypothesis that fathers' involvement in childcare is associated with mothers' identities, as well as those of fathers, was also supported. These findings extend the growing body of research on the importance of mothers' characteristics in fathers' involvement Gaertner et al., 2007; (Gaunt, 2006; Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). In the current study, paternal identity salience was only related to fathers' own hours of care, whereas maternal identity salience and centrality were related to mothers' hours of care as well as the fathers' hours and the parents' relative share of childcare tasks. Given that mothers are still regarded as having primary responsibility for childcare and fathers are still expected to assume main

responsibility for breadwinning (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Craig, 2006), it seems plausible that the impact of fathers' identities is limited to their own hours of care. The mothers' identities, in contrast, are important both for their own involvement and for encouraging or discouraging fathers' involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Gaunt, 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). Presumably, a more salient maternal identity is related to greater gatekeeping beliefs and behaviors (Gaunt, 2008), which, in turn, result in lower involvement of fathers (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Gaunt, 2008). This speculation is based on the assumption that mothers with more salient maternal identities have a greater need to validate their identity, and maintaining main responsibility for childcare serves this need. Alternatively, mothers' identities may guide their employment choices, which, in turn, could affect their availability for childcare and the demand for father care. Nevertheless, the current pattern of results is more consistent with the former interpretation. Specifically, fathers' hours of care were not related to mothers' work hours, and the effect of maternal identity salience on father care was not mediated by mothers' work hours.

Finally, our third set of hypotheses concerning the role of work-related identities was also confirmed: The more central a mother's work identity, the more hours she worked for pay and the fewer hours she invested in childcare. This pattern of results provides support for the argument that women's work hours play an important mediating role in their involvement. Whereas the vast majority of fathers continue to work full time after the birth of a child, there is considerable variability in women's work patterns. More central work identities may lead mothers to invest more hours in work for pay which, in turn, leaves less time for childcare. Similar gender differences in the mediating role of work hours have been documented elsewhere. For example, the effects of value priorities on mothers' involvement in childcare were shown to be mediated by their work hours, whereas the effects of fathers' value priorities were not similarly mediated by their own work hours (Gaunt, 2005).

This moderating role of gender should be considered within the context of the differential social norms regarding fathering and mothering. Whereas new fathers are expected to work full time and provide for their families, new mothers are expected to remain available to care for their children (Hoffnung & Williams, 2013; McRae, 2003; Wall, 2013). Full-time employment is thus the default option for men, who are relatively free from deliberations on their work hours. Women, however, need to overcome internal and external barriers to commit to full-time employment, and our findings help reveal the ways in which their internalized expectations from their roles (i.e., their identities) guide their decisions.

The positive associations between paternal identity salience and father's involvement are in line with certain earlier findings (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Goldberg, 2014; Pasley et al., 2002), but they are inconsistent with several previous attempts to apply identity theory to married fathers' involvement that

have failed to document such associations (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Maurer et al., 2001; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000). Considering the conceptual and empirical distinction between salience and centrality may help clarify these inconsistencies (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). In the present study, father involvement was related to the mental availability of paternal identity, of which fathers were not necessarily aware (i.e., identity salience), rather than to the importance fathers consciously attached to their paternal identity (i.e., psychological centrality). It is possible that because high paternal involvement is nonnormative, fathers' conscious reports on the centrality of their parental identity are more susceptible to social desirability bias and thus less accurate and predictive than their identity's implicit mental availability. Reconsidering previous findings in light of this distinction, it is plausible that identity measures that captured the concept of centrality did not yield associations with involvement (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Maurer et al., 2001; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000), whereas operationalizations in terms of identity salience lent greater support to the role of identity in guiding parental behaviors (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Pasley et al., 2002).

### *Limitations and Future Research*

Several limitations of our study must be acknowledged. First, the study's focus on heterosexual married couples with young children limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings. Parents' involvement in other family structures (e.g., single, same-sex, divorced, or nonresident parents) or with older children may exhibit different associations with parental and work identities. In particular, parents' identities may be more important during early childhood when childcare requires a profound investment of time and could play a lesser role as the children grow up. In contrast, parental identities may have even more pronounced implications for divorced or nonresident fathers (DeGarmo, 2010) and for same-sex parents for whom gender-based considerations are reduced.

The current sample was also characterized by an overrepresentation of well-educated participants. Identities may play a reduced role in guiding childcare choices among less educated parents. Specifically, parents with a lower socioeconomic background may be more constrained in terms of work and childcare alternatives and would, therefore, show weaker associations between their identities and involvement in childcare. Moreover, because the findings indicated positive associations between parents' education level and the importance of work identities, it is possible that less educated mothers would exhibit lower salience and centrality of work identities, which would in turn be related to a more traditional division of childcare. Alternatively, lower education level might be related to greater importance of work identities among the very low educated parents who were not represented in our sample because of the crucial role of their work in providing for basic necessities. Replicating our study on a

representative sample of parents with young children that pays attention to this diversity would help determine whether the role of identities is moderated by parents' sociodemographic background.

The measures in our study relied on self-reports that could be subject to social desirability concerns and reduced validity. Findings regarding the division of household labor show that individuals sometimes overestimate their own contribution or underestimate the contribution of their partner (Lee & Waite, 2005). To address this concern, our analyses were based on data from both fathers and mothers, and the measures addressed specific and well-defined forms of involvement. Nevertheless, a combination of self-reports and observations would improve the research design. In particular, measuring parents' involvement in childcare would benefit from direct observations in the home setting. It should also be noted that the number of regression analyses conducted may have inflated Type 1 error. Findings that were not consistent across the four dependent measures (the effect of paternal identity salience) should therefore be treated with more caution. However, broader patterns of findings (maternal identity salience and centrality and mothers' work centrality and fathers' work hours) can be viewed with more confidence.

Although the findings from the current study were greatly enhanced by applying distinct measures of identity salience and centrality, each of these measures has its limitations. The measure of salience via a "Who am I?" question captured the mental availability of various identities through the ordinal placement of the identities mentioned, but it was not a fully implicit measure. Future studies could benefit from using response latencies or other similarly unconscious and uncontrollable measures to fully capture the theorized nature of identity salience. The measure of identity centrality, in contrast, engaged respondents in conscious deliberation about the percentages they allocated to various identities and, as such, it served its purpose well. However, although this measure allowed participants to express the equal importance of two or more identities by allocating them equal percentages, the requirement to add up the allocated percentages to 100% also meant that respondents could not allocate the maximum percentage to several identities simultaneously. In this respect, this measure still restricted respondents' ability to express a maximal importance of a number of identities.

Finally, because of the cross-sectional design of our study, no definitive causal conclusions can be made concerning the relationships between identities and involvement in childcare. In fact, identity theory does permit influence in the opposite direction—from behaviors to identities—assuming that although identities guide behavioral choices, behaviors also serve as a basis for inferences about the self and thus reinforce, support, and validate identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Findings from qualitative studies show, for example, that fathers who stay at home for economic reasons came to value their increased involvement in childcare and developed more egalitarian gender views (Chesley, 2011). Nevertheless,

both the theory and existing evidence suggest that the influence of identity on behavior is greater than the reverse (Burke & Stets, 2009). Specifically, the theory assumes that identities and their salience are relatively stable across time and situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000), and evidence from longitudinal studies provides support for this assumption and shows that changes in identities occur only slowly and in response to persistent pressure (Burke, 2006; Cassidy & Trew, 2001). DeGarmo's (2010) longitudinal study on nonresident fathers' involvement specifically showed that identities were more predictive of involvement than vice versa. It is therefore more plausible to assume that parents' identities in the present study affected their participation in childcare rather than the reverse. Nonetheless, future research is needed to replicate the findings using a longitudinal design.

### Practice Implications

Many studies have shown the important benefits of increased father involvement in childcare for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Aldous & Mulligan, 2002; Milkie et al., 2010), as well as for parents' well-being and marital satisfaction (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Schober, 2012). These benefits have led to the development of numerous programs designed to enhance father involvement (Doherty, Erickson, & LaRossa, 2006; Fagan & Iglesias, 1999; see for a review Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong, 2009). Understanding the determinants of father involvement informs such programs and provides a number of potential routes for intervention. Our findings highlight the importance of parents' identities and stress the need to address the salience and centrality of parental identities as part of the intervention. For example, a recent short-term group intervention delivered co-parenting relationship workshops to increase fathers' participation (Rienks, Wadsworth, Markman, Einhorn, & Moran Etter, 2011). Such interventions can be further honed by addressing fathers' parental identities, including their accessibility and subjective importance to the self as well as their meanings. Thus, parenting programs could be aimed toward enhancing paternal identities while eliciting change in what it means to be a father and the specific behaviors that are linked to this identity (Burke, 2006).

### Conclusion

Although further work is required to gain a more complete understanding of the relationships between identities and parents' involvement with their children, the current findings shed light on some of the mechanisms underlying these relationships and draw attention to the importance of identity salience and centrality. Whereas social structure constrains and shapes people's identities, the self is also viewed as a source of new ideas and interpretations (Cassidy & Trew, 2001; Stryker & Burke, 2000). This explains why identities cannot

simply be inferred from social locations (Stryker & Burke, 2000) and calls for a thorough examination of the complex ways in which identities guide mothers' and fathers' behavioral choices. Illuminating the role of parents' social-psychological characteristics may advance our understanding of the processes that determine involvement in childcare and that can bring about individual and social change.

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### Note

1. The 19 childcare tasks were feeding, changing diapers, dressing, bathing/supervising personal hygiene, putting to bed, getting up at night, supervising morning routine, playing/reading, helping with social/emotional problems, helping with homework, setting limits/disciplining, taking on outings/social activities, planning activities/scheduling social meetings, preparing the child's bag before going out, taking to the doctor or dentist, providing sick care, making arrangements for childcare, contact with school/daycare team, and choosing daycare/school.

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