Shared Responsibility
For Discipline and
Discipline Strategies Used by
Mothers and Fathers
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Other publications on the DDI and related issues can be
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Egalitarian vs. Traditional

- Egalitarian parenting
  - Shared responsibility
  - Equal power between parents
  - Dual income
- Traditional parenting
  - Mother in charge of home and children
  - Father as breadwinner
- Egalitarian increasing over time

Clinical Illustration

Egalitarian Fathers

- High involvement in child-rearing (Bulanda, 2004)
- Low discipline
- Children more aggressive than in traditional families (Schoppe-Sullivan & Buckley, 2007)
- Parenting styles
  - Fathers: Authoritative
  - Mothers: Authoritative or permissive (Sabattini & Leaper, 2004)

Definitions of “Traditional” Parenting

- Traditional parenting = power-assertive discipline
  - Religious and cultural influences
- Or, traditional = differentiated responsibility
  - Mother as primary disciplinarian, father disengaged (Sabattini & Leaper, 2004)
  - Father in charge of discipline, but not other child-rearing (Schoppe-Sullivan & Buckley, 2007)
- Are these two definitions of traditional parenting related?
Aims
• What types of discipline do parents use in families where mother, father, or both are responsible for discipline?
• Are differentiated responsibility and power-assertive parenting related?
• Three types of parenting
  – Inductive discipline
  – Corporal punishment
  – Psychological aggression
• Impact of parental responsibility on child misbehavior

Methods: Procedure
• University students from psychology subject pool
• Completed adult-recall Dimensions of Discipline Inventory (Straus & Fauchier, 2007) and other measures via web-based survey
• Reported on pre-adolescent period (10 or 13)
• DDI question about parents’ relative responsibility for discipline
• 3 questions about power in parents’ relationship

Methods: Dimensions of Discipline Inventory
5-part self-report questionnaire
A. Demographics
B. Child misbehavior examples and frequency
C. 26 discipline behaviors (x2 for mother and father)
D. 23 items (x2 for mother and father) about discipline mode (e.g., impulsivity, consistency) and context (e.g., conflict with other parent)
E. Respondent’s appraisal of 26 discipline behaviors

Methods: Responsibility & Power
• Responsibility: Who had responsibility for disciplining you at age 10 (or 13)?
• Power:
  – Who made important family decisions?
  – Who had the final say when your parents disagreed?
  – Who had more power in your parents’ relationship?

Methods: Participants
N 700
Age 19.4 (1.6)
% Female 72%
% Caucasian 94%

Excluded Ss with only one parent from analyses

Results: Distribution of Discipline Responsibility

Excluded Ss with only one parent from analyses
Results: Inductive Discipline & Discipline Responsibility

Results: Corporal Punishment & Discipline Responsibility

Results: Psychological Aggression & Discipline Responsibility

Results: Power

- Highly related to discipline responsibility
- Similar results to responsibility

Summary

- Egalitarian parents least likely to use corporal punishment or psychological aggression
- Contrary to prior research, egalitarian parents are equally or more likely than traditional parents to use inductive discipline
- As would be expected, the dominant parent tends to have a larger role in discipline
- Contrary to prior research, children of equal parents have fewer behavior problems, not more
Conclusions

- Dynamics between parents are related to fathers’ and mothers’ use of discipline
- Two definitions of “traditional” parenting related: Differentiated responsibility and power-assertive discipline
- Egalitarian stereotype not supported
  - Children don’t run wild
  - Active discipline instead of “We’ve tried nothing and we’re all out of ideas”