HHS Public Access

Author manuscript

Parent Sci Pract. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2016 July 31.

Published in final edited form as:

Parent Sci Pract. 2015 ; 15(3): 166–186. doi:10.1080/15295192.2015.1053321.

Who are the Gatekeepers? Predictors of Maternal Gatekeeping

Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan,
Department of Human Sciences, The Ohio State University, 1787 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210

Lauren E. Altenburger,
The Ohio State University

Meghan A. Lee,
Arizona State University

Daniel J. Bower, and
Agility Clinical Biotechnology, Carlsbad, CA

Claire M. Kamp Dush
The Ohio State University

Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan: schoppe-sullivan.1@osu.edu

SYNOPSIS

Objective—The goal of this study was to identify determinants of maternal gatekeeping at the transition to parenthood.

Design—Participants included 182 different-gender dual-earner couples. During pregnancy, expectant parents completed questionnaires regarding their psychological functioning, attitudes, and expectations, and at 3 months postpartum questionnaires regarding maternal gatekeeping behavior and gate closing attitudes.

Results—SEM analyses revealed that mothers were more likely to close the gate to fathers when mothers held greater perfectionistic expectations for fathers' parenting, had poorer psychological functioning, perceived their romantic relationship as less stable, and had higher levels of parenting self-efficacy. In contrast, fathers with lower parenting self-efficacy appeared to elicit greater maternal gate closing behavior. Mothers who engaged in greater gate opening behavior were more religious.

Conclusions—Maternal gatekeeping may be more strongly associated with maternal expectations and psychological functioning than with maternal traditional gender attitudes. Fathers' characteristics are less predictive of maternal gatekeeping than mothers' characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

Children and families benefit when fathers are more involved in childrearing (Lamb, 2010; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008). However, even as fathers have

Corresponding author contact information: Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan, Department of Human Sciences, The Ohio State University, 1787 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210. schoppe-sullivan.1@osu.edu.

increased their involvement in childrearing over time (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004), fathers' involvement remains much lower than mothers', especially when children are very young (Kotila, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Kamp Dush, 2013). One possible explanation for this childrearing gap is maternal gatekeeping – maternal behaviors and attitudes that may support or limit father involvement in childrearing (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Cannon, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, & Sokolowski, 2008). Although several investigations have linked maternal gatekeeping to father involvement in childrearing (Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2010; Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008), very few studies have examined characteristics of mothers and their families that may make some mothers more (or less) likely to act as gatekeepers. Without knowledge of the origins of maternal gatekeeping, efforts to increase fathers' involvement in childrearing may be stymied.

The current study aimed to identify determinants of maternal gatekeeping at the unique time of the transition to parenthood, when couples are working to establish their new parental roles. This is an important juncture at which to examine gatekeeping because this transition has been described as a "critical period" (Doherty, Erickson, & LaRossa, 2006, p. 438) for the establishment of father-child relationships. Given that early levels of father involvement in infancy tend to persist (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, & Cabrera, 2006), maternal gatekeeping in the early postpartum months could have a particularly long-lasting effect on father involvement. We followed 182 dual-earner expectant couples from the third trimester through 3 months postpartum. We focused on couples in which both partners were working full time prior to their child's birth and both partners planned to return to paid work shortly after the birth because, in these couples, partners were more likely to be motivated to share childcare responsibilities, and we reasoned that maternal gatekeeping might be especially influential for partners' abilities to balance work and family.

This study is notable for its conceptual and methodological advances over previous research. It is the only study of predictors of maternal gatekeeping to (1) model multiple aspects of maternal gatekeeping, including maternal gate closing behavior, maternal gate opening behavior, and maternal gate closing attitudes, (2) include both partners' perceptions of maternal gatekeeping behavior, and (3) consider fathers' as well as mothers' characteristics as determinants of maternal gatekeeping. Moreover, the use of a longitudinal design spanning the transition to parenthood puts claims regarding determinants (versus correlates) of maternal gatekeeping on more solid ground.

In this study, we assessed the psychological functioning, traditional gender attitudes, and expectations of mothers and fathers to ascertain – who are the gatekeepers? Specifically, we were interested in determining whether maternal psychological functioning, traditional gender attitudes, or maternal expectations contributed to maternal gatekeeping behavior and attitudes. We further considered fathers' as well as mothers' characteristics as predictors of maternal gatekeeping to determine whether mothers' characteristics were the primary predictors of gatekeeping, or whether fathers' characteristics were also responsible for eliciting gatekeeping from mothers.

Maternal Gatekeeping

Maternal gatekeeping is a component of the coparenting relationship – the aspect of the interparental relationship focused on parenting children (Feinberg, 2003). Allen and Hawkins (1999, p. 200) described maternal gatekeeping as "a collection of beliefs and behaviors that ultimately inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work". Others have placed greater emphasis on maternal gatekeeping behavior than on associated attitudes. Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2008) conceptualized maternal gatekeeping as the degree to which mothers encourage or discourage father involvement in childrearing.

Studies have established the validity of the construct of maternal gatekeeping by demonstrating associations between maternal attitudes about gender and parent roles and the degree to which fathers are involved in childrearing (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Rane & McBride, 2000). However, establishing an association between general maternal gender attitudes and father involvement does not necessarily validate a gatekeeping process. Central to the notion of gatekeeping is the idea that mothers are actually doing something – engaging in some sort of behavior – that discourages or encourages fathers' involvement. As such, we argue that it is critical to distinguish between maternal gatekeeping behavior and the attitudes associated with it and to measure these multiple components of gatekeeping. Thus, in the current study, to measure maternal gatekeeping at 3 months postpartum, we asked parents to report on maternal "gate closing" (discouraging behavior; e.g., criticizing father's parenting, redoing childcare tasks fathers have already completed, taking control over parental decision-making) and "gate opening" (encouraging behavior; e.g., asking father's opinion on a parenting issue, arranging activities for father to do with child; Trinder, 2008). We also asked mothers to report "gate closing attitudes" – attitudes that are closely connected to gate closing behavior – reflecting the extent to which they believe women are ultimately responsible for setting the standards for successful completion of housework and childcare tasks, and the extent to which performance of family work is an importance source of validation of their roles as women and mothers. We conceptualized maternal gate closing behavior, maternal gate opening behavior, and maternal gate closing attitudes as related yet distinct aspects of gatekeeping. As described below, we further tested associations of all three aspects of maternal gatekeeping with mothers' traditional attitudes about parent and gender roles assessed prior to the child's birth.

Theory and Research on Predictors of Maternal Gatekeeping

Psychological functioning—Given that models of determinants of parenting (Belsky, 1984; Bornstein, 2015) and coparenting (Feinberg, 2003) emphasize parents' psychological functioning as the cornerstone of their ability to be effective parents and coparents, it is surprising that psychological functioning has been given so little attention in the literature on predictors of maternal gatekeeping. In the two studies that have considered personality or related characteristics as correlates of maternal gatekeeping, Cannon et al. (2008) found no direct associations between mothers' negative emotionality and maternal gatekeeping, and Kulik and Tsoref (2010) did not find a significant association between mothers' desire for control and maternal gatekeeping attitudes. Moreover, no known studies have focused on mothers' psychological states (i.e., depression, anxiety) as predictors of maternal gatekeeping, despite voluminous evidence linking these states to poor parenting and couple

relationship problems (Whisman & Baucom, 2012; Zahn-Waxler, Duggal, & Gruber, 2002). Despite the lack of direct evidence linking mothers' psychological functioning and gatekeeping, we hypothesized that mothers with poorer psychological functioning would engage in greater reported gate closing and less reported gate opening behavior and would have stronger gate closing attitudes. In particular, we expected that mothers with higher levels of neuroticism, anxiety, and depression would be less able to regulate negative emotions in the context of stressful coparenting experiences common to new parents, and hence may more often close the gate. Further, we expected that mothers with higher levels of neuroticism, anxiety, and depression would lack energy and motivation to actively encourage father involvement in childrearing.

Traditional gender attitudes—A number of theoretical perspectives on gatekeeping, including Allen and Hawkins' (1999) seminal conceptualization, have emphasized the critical role of mothers' traditional gender attitudes in maternal gatekeeping. At first glance, the evidence that maternal traditional gender attitudes are associated with maternal gatekeeping appears robust. Kulik and Tsoref (2010) reported that traditional gender role ideology was a stronger predictor of gatekeeping attitudes than socioeconomic status and mothers' satisfaction with father involvement among Israeli mothers of young children. Moreover, in a study of the transition to parenthood among dual-earner, working-class couples, Meteyer and Perry-Jenkins (2010) found that, when both parents endorsed more egalitarian views of gender roles prior to the child's birth, mothers were less likely to hold gatekeeping attitudes at 1 month postpartum.

However, it is difficult to determine on the basis of previous research whether mothers' gender attitudes predict gatekeeping behavior because few studies have measured gatekeeping behavior, even via self-report, or attempted to distinguish between gatekeeping behavior and traditional gender attitudes. In one study that made this distinction by assessing attitudes prior to the birth of a child and reported maternal gatekeeping behavior postpartum, neither mothers' nor fathers' attitudes regarding fathers' roles were associated with parental reports of maternal gatekeeping behavior (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). Thus, evidence is mixed regarding associations of mothers' gender attitudes with more behavioral aspects of gatekeeping. Regardless, given the close conceptual ties between mothers' gender attitudes and gatekeeping behavior (Allen & Hawkins, 1999), we hypothesized that mothers' traditional attitudes regarding parent and gender roles would predict greater maternal gate closing attitudes, more reported maternal gate closing behavior, and less reported maternal gate opening behavior.

Maternal expectations—From an evolutionary perspective (e.g., Geary, 2000), females are more invested in parenting effort than in mating effort, whereas for males it is the opposite. Thus, maternal gatekeeping could stem from mothers' efforts to protect their substantial investments in offspring. As such, mothers may be engaged in a process of evaluation of fathers' motivation and fitness for parenting, and their assessment of the father's suitability for parenting may affect their gatekeeping behavior and gatekeeping attitudes. When mothers have unrealistically lofty expectations for their partner's parenting, that is high levels of partner-oriented parenting perfectionism (Snell, Overbey, & Brewer,

2005), fathers may fail to “measure up”, reinforcing maternal gate closing attitudes and sparking greater maternal gate closing behavior.

Similarly, mothers also evaluate the father’s level of investment in the couple relationship (Rusbult, 1980), which may serve as an indicator of his investment in parenting. In the current study, we examined associations between mothers’ perceptions of relationship instability and maternal gatekeeping. We posited that mothers who assessed a high level of investment in the couple relationship from the father would engage in more reported gate opening behavior and less gate closing behavior, and endorse gate closing attitudes less strongly. However, if mothers perceived a low level of investment in the couple relationship from the father, we expected that mothers would engage in more reported gate closing and less gate opening behavior and that their gate closing attitudes would strengthen. Given the prominent role ascribed to the couple relationship in models of determinants of parenting (Belsky, 1984) and coparenting (Feinberg, 2003), and the robust associations between couple and coparenting relationship quality (Mangelsdorf, Laxman, & Jessee, 2011), it is surprising that aspects of the couple relationship have received relatively little attention as predictors of maternal gatekeeping. In fact, we could not find a single study that reported associations between any aspect of couple relationship functioning and maternal gatekeeping, although gatekeeping, especially gate closing behavior, is likely even more prevalent in divorced or separated families (Trinder, 2008), lending support to our examination of maternal perceived relationship instability as a predictor of gatekeeping.

Expectant mothers also have beliefs regarding their own ability to parent competently and effectively (Teti & Gelfand, 1991), and these parenting self-efficacy expectations may also be relevant to maternal gatekeeping. On the one hand, parenting self-efficacy is a critical resource for effective parenting and promotes positive child development (Jones & Prinz, 2005), and new mothers with higher levels of confidence in their parenting abilities may be more willing to open the gate to fathers’ involvement in childrearing via active encouragement. On the other hand, mothers with high levels of parenting self-efficacy, because of their strong confidence in their own approach to parenting, may be more likely to experience frustration when fathers – who tend to have less experience with infants and less confidence in their own parenting (Hudson, Elek, & Fleck, 2001) – care for or engage with their children in ways they do not endorse. Thus, we expected that mothers with greater parenting self-efficacy would be more likely to engage in both types of gatekeeping behavior – reported gate closing as well as gate opening – and would be more likely to hold gate closing attitudes.

Maternal religiosity—Another factor that may be related to maternal gatekeeping is religiosity. Religious teachings often prescribe or imply specific gender role beliefs and childrearing expectations (Mahoney, 2005). Indeed, prior research has indicated that mothers with stronger religious beliefs have more prominent maternal identities and are less likely to relinquish their share of family work to the father (Gaunt, 2008). Moreover, DeMaris, Mahoney, and Pargament (2011) found that the stronger a couple’s religiosity, the greater their gender gap in caring for newborns; religious mothers were much more involved in the care of newborns than fathers. Thus, we expected that mothers who placed greater importance on religion would be more likely to hold maternal gate closing attitudes,

consistent with more traditional gender role beliefs. We also anticipated that more religious mothers would engage in greater reported gate closing and less reported gate opening behavior.

Fathers' characteristics—Family systems theory describes families as consisting of multiple interdependent individuals and relationships; thus, family members' behaviors affect each other, and it is impossible to understand individual behavior in isolation from the system (Minuchin, 1985). From this perspective, understanding the predictors of maternal gatekeeping necessitates examination of fathers' characteristics as well as mothers' characteristics, as fathers' characteristics or behaviors may elicit gatekeeping in mothers (Walker & McGraw, 2000). In fact, limited evidence indicates that fathers' characteristics are associated with maternal gatekeeping. When fathers held more egalitarian beliefs about fathers' roles, mothers were observed to facilitate their involvement more, but when fathers were higher on negative emotionality, mothers facilitated their involvement less (Cannon et al., 2008).

In the current study, we examined associations of fathers' psychological functioning, traditional gender attitudes, and parenting self-efficacy expectations with reported maternal gatekeeping behavior and gate closing attitudes. We hypothesized that fathers with poorer psychological functioning, more traditional attitudes, and lower parenting self-efficacy would elicit greater gate closing and less gate opening behavior from mothers as well as stronger gate closing attitudes. Although we did not collect measures of expectant mothers' perceptions of their partners' characteristics, and thus could not test our logic directly, our hypotheses assume a process in which mothers assess fathers' motivation and suitability to parent in order to protect their substantial investments in offspring (Geary, 2000). As such, fathers who experience frequent and intense negative emotions, who have more traditional beliefs about the roles of men and women in families, and who lack confidence in their parenting abilities are likely to have partners who gate close more frequently, gate open less frequently, and are more likely to endorse gate closing attitudes.

The Present Study

The central goal of this study was to identify determinants of maternal gate closing behavior, maternal gate opening behavior, and maternal gate closing attitudes using pre- and postpartum data on 182 dual-earner couples across their transition into parenthood. Specifically, we addressed the following research questions: (1) Is maternal gatekeeping predicted by maternal psychological functioning, traditional gender attitudes, or maternal expectations? and (2) Are mothers' characteristics the primary determinants of gatekeeping, or are fathers' characteristics also responsible for eliciting gatekeeping from mothers?

METHOD

Participants/Sample

Data were drawn from The New Parents Project, a longitudinal study of 182 different-gender dual-earner expectant couples followed across the transition to parenthood during 2008–2010. Participants were primarily recruited through childbirth education classes, newspaper

ads, snowball sampling, and word-of-mouth. To be eligible, participants had to be: currently married or cohabiting, each expecting their first biological child, both working full time prior to the child's birth and both expecting to return to work postbirth, able to read/speak English, and at least 18 years old.

Eighty-six percent of the couples were married, and 14% cohabiting. Of the expectant mothers, 85% identified as White/European American, 6% as Black/African American, 3% as Asian American, 2% as other race, and 4% as mixed race; 4% identified as Hispanic/Latin American. Of the expectant fathers, 85% identified as White/European American, 7% as Black/African American, 4% as Asian American or Pacific Islander, 3% as other race, and 1% as mixed race; 2% identified as Hispanic/Latin American. Seventy-five percent of expectant mothers and 65% of expectant fathers had earned at least a bachelor's degree. Couples' annual median household income was $81,000. Expectant mothers' ages ranged from 18 to 42 years, $M = 28.24$, $SD = 4.02$, and expectant fathers' ages ranged from 18 to 50 years, $M = 30.20$, $SD = 4.81$. No mothers reported that their infants had discernible physical disabilities. Of the original sample of 182 couples, 174 mothers and 172 fathers completed surveys on maternal gatekeeping at 3 months postpartum. Given the study's target population, study eligibility criteria, and participant demographic characteristics, the results of this study are most generalizable to dual-earner, first-time parent couples with relatively high levels of social and financial capital.

Procedures

Data were collected twice: at the third trimester of pregnancy and at 3 months postpartum. At the third trimester, expectant mothers and fathers completed surveys on their psychological functioning, attitudes, and expectations. At 3 months postpartum, mothers and fathers completed surveys on maternal gatekeeping.

Measurement of Predictors of Maternal Gatekeeping

During the third trimester, expectant mothers and fathers completed survey measures regarding their psychological functioning, attitudes, expectations, and other characteristics.

Poor psychological functioning—Expectant parents completed three measures of psychological functioning: the 12-item Neuroticism scale of the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992; $\alpha_m = .79$; $\alpha_f = .85$), the 6-item Brief State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Marteau & Bekker, 1992; $\alpha_m = .84$; $\alpha_f = .79$), and the 5-item Brief CES-D measure of depression ($\alpha_m = .61$; $\alpha_f = .56$; Bonomi, Kernic, Anderson, Cannon, & Slesnick, 2008; Radloff, 1977). The three scores generated for expectant mothers and fathers were used as indicators of latent variables tapping maternal and paternal poor psychological functioning.

Traditional gender attitudes—Participants completed three measures to assess their attitudes about parent and gender roles. On the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996; $\alpha_m = .95$; $\alpha_f = .90$), respondents rated statements such as "Women should be cherished and protected by men." on a 6-point scale (0 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly*). On the 26-item Beliefs Concerning the Parental Role Scale (Bonney & Kelley, 1996; $\alpha_m = .86$; $\alpha_f = .85$), expectant parents rated items such as "It is more important for a

mother rather than a father to stay home with an ill child." on a 5-point scale (1 = *disagree strongly*; 5 = *agree strongly*). Participants also completed 3 items from the Survey of First-Time Mothers (Beitel & Parke, 1998; α_m =.86; α_f =.84) tapping beliefs about the innate superiority of mothers as caregivers for infants (e.g., "Mothers are instinctively better caretakers than fathers." 1 = *disagree strongly* and 5 = *agree strongly*). The three scores generated for expectant mothers and fathers were used as indicators of latent variables tapping maternal and paternal traditional gender attitudes.

Maternal expectations—To tap mothers' partner-oriented parenting perfectionism, mothers completed 4 items from the Partner-Oriented Parenting Perfectionism scale of the Multidimensional Parenting Perfectionism Questionnaire (Snell et al., 2005). Mothers rated items such as "I expect my partner to always be a top-notch and competent parent." on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all characteristic of me* to 5 = *very characteristic of me*; α =.76). Items were averaged and mothers' partner-oriented parenting perfectionism was modeled as an observed variable in SEM analyses.

Expectant mothers' perceptions of the instability of their relationship with their child's father were assessed using two items from the brief Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Sabourin, Valois, & Lussier, 2005; Spanier, 1976). These items were: "How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?" and "In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?" Respondents answered using a scale where 1 = *never* and 6 = *all of the time*. The second item was reverse scored and responses to the two items were summed together (the correlation between the two items was $r(180) = .36$, $p < .01$) to form an observed variable indexing mothers' perceptions of relationship instability.

Expectant mothers also reported on their expectations regarding their own parenting competence using six items (e.g., "When your baby is upset, fussy or crying, how good will you be at soothing him or her?"; α = .80) adapted from the Maternal Self-Efficacy scale (Teti & Gelfand, 1991) to tap expectations prior to parenthood and rated on a scale from 1 = *not good at all*; 4 = *very good*. Items were averaged to create a summary score for mothers' parenting self-efficacy that was modeled as an observed variable in SEM analyses.

Mothers' religiosity—Mothers also responded to one item that indexed their religiosity: "How important is religion to you?" Possible responses were 1 = *very important*, 2 = *fairly important*, 3 = *fairly unimportant*, and 4 = *not important at all*. Responses were reverse scored so that higher scores indicated greater religiosity. Religiosity was modeled as an observed variable in SEM analyses.

Fathers' parenting self-efficacy—To create an observed variable that tapped expectant fathers' expectations regarding their parenting competence, men responded to the same six items adapted from Teti and Gelfand (1991) that women responded to (α = .82). Items were averaged to create a summary score for fathers' parenting self-efficacy that was modeled as an observed variable in SEM analyses.

Measurement of Maternal Gatekeeping

At 3 months postpartum, mothers and fathers completed reports of maternal gate closing and gate opening behavior, and mothers completed measures of gate closing attitudes. Items drawn from measures not already published elsewhere are included in the Appendix.

Maternal gate closing—Mothers and fathers reported on maternal gate closing behavior using a set of 9 items from the Parental Regulation Inventory (PRI; Van Egeren, 2000; see Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008). In the section of the PRI from which the gate closing items are drawn, mothers were asked to rate how often (1 = *never* to 6 = *several times a day*) they engaged in various behaviors when "your baby's father does something that you don't approve of regarding child care or with your baby". In the father's version of the questionnaire, he was asked to rate how often his baby's mother engaged in these same behaviors when "you do something that your baby's mother doesn't approve of regarding child care or with your baby." For instance, in one item the mother was asked to rate how often she criticized her baby's father; the corresponding item for the father asked him to rate how often his baby's mother criticized him (see Appendix). These 9 items were averaged separately for mothers and fathers (α_m = .76; α_f = .88) and used as indicators of a latent variable capturing gate closing behavior.

An additional indicator of maternal gate closing behavior came from Fagan and Barnett's (2003) measure of maternal control over parental decision-making, which contains 9 items (e.g., "I should be the one to decide when my baby needs a bath, not my baby's father.") rated by mothers on a 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) scale (α = .92). These items were reverse scored and averaged such that higher scores indicated greater maternal control over parental decision-making. Thus, the latent variable created to represent reported maternal gate closing behavior in analysis included three indicators: mothers' reports of gate closing, fathers' reports of gate closing, and mothers' control over parental decision-making.

Maternal gate opening—An additional set of 9 items from the PRI (Van Egeren, 2000; see Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008) was used to assess mothers' and fathers' perceptions of maternal gate opening behavior. In the section of the PRI from which the gate opening items are drawn, mothers rated how often (1 = *never* to 6 = *several times a day*) they engaged in various behaviors "to encourage your baby's father to be involved in child care and with your baby, including feeding, play, and emotional support". In the father's version of the questionnaire, he rated how often his baby's mother engaged in these same behaviors "to encourage you to be involved in child care and with your baby, including feeding, play, and emotional support". For instance, the mother was asked to indicate how often she invited her baby's father to help. In the corresponding item, the father was asked how often his baby's mother invites him to help (see Appendix). Ratings on these 9 items (α_m = .82; α_f = .87) were averaged separately for mothers and fathers and the two parents' summary variables were used as indicators of a latent variable representing reported maternal gate opening behavior.

Maternal gate closing attitudes—Two subscales from Allen and Hawkins' (1999) Maternal Gatekeeping Measure completed by mothers were used as indicators of a latent

variable representing maternal gate closing attitudes. On this measure, mothers rated their feelings about family roles from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 4 (*very much like me*). The 5 items on the Standards and Responsibilities subscale include "I have higher standards than my spouse/partner for how well cared for the house should be." The 4 items on the Maternal Role Confirmation subscale include "When my family looks well groomed in public I feel very proud." Maternal Role Confirmation had an alpha of $\alpha = .69$. Note that one item, "I frequently redo some household tasks that my spouse/partner has not done well." was removed from the Standards and Responsibilities subscale to reduce overlap with gate closing behavior. The alpha for the 4 remaining items in the Standards and Responsibilities subscale was .76.

RESULTS

Analysis Plan

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for all observed variables are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Structural equation modeling using IBM SPSS AMOS 21.0 was employed to examine the fit of the measurement models for the latent variables and the fit of the hypothesized structural model and significance of individual paths. Full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation was used to estimate parameters without replacing missing data by using all available information from each case (Schafer, 1997). Model fit was assessed using multiple indices, according to criteria outlined by Hu and Bentler (1999): the chi-square test, which indicates adequate fit if non-significant, the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA; values < .06 are acceptable), and the Comparative Fit Index (values > .95 are acceptable).

SEM Analyses of Predictors of Maternal Gatekeeping

Measurement models—First, the measurement model for the three latent variables representing reported gate closing behavior, reported gate opening behavior, and maternal gate closing attitudes was tested. As noted in the Method section, the latent variable tapping gate closing behavior was indicated by mothers' and fathers' reports of gate closing behavior and mothers' control over parental decision-making. The latent variable for gate opening behavior was indicated by mothers' and fathers' reports of gate opening behavior, and the latent variable for maternal gate closing attitudes was indicated by mothers' standards and responsibilities and maternal role confirmation. In the model, all three latent variables were allowed to correlate with each other. The model fit the data well, $\chi^2(11) = 5.45$, $p = .91$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00. All factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .05$ and ranged from .40 – .73. Reported gate opening and gate closing behavior were significantly correlated, $r = -.49$, $p < .05$, as were reported gate closing behavior and gate closing attitudes, $r = .48$, $p < .01$. Reported gate opening behavior and gate closing attitudes were not significantly associated, $r = .03$, $p = .82$.

Second, the measurement model for the latent predictor variables representing maternal and paternal poor psychological functioning, and maternal and paternal traditional gender attitudes, was tested for fit to the data. All correlations among the four latent variables were estimated. In addition, error terms were correlated across corresponding indicators for

mothers and fathers (e.g., the error terms for mothers' and fathers' ambivalent sexism were allowed to correlate), given that the same measures were used for mothers and fathers. The model showed a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(42) = 44.08$, $p = .38$, RMSEA = .02, CFI = 1.00. All factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .01$ and ranged from .46 – .84. The only significant correlations among the latent variables were between mothers' and fathers' traditional gender attitudes, $r = .39$, $p < .01$, between fathers' traditional gender attitudes and fathers' poor psychological functioning, $r = .23$, $p < .05$, and between fathers' traditional gender attitudes and mothers' poor psychological functioning, $r = -.32$, $p < .01$. Correlations between these latent variables and the other observed predictor variables in the context of the structural model (see below) are reported in Table 3.

Structural model—Next, a structural model was estimated that included the latent variables of maternal and paternal poor psychological functioning and maternal and paternal traditional gender attitudes as predictors of reported gate closing, reported gate opening, and gate closing attitudes. This model also included the observed variables of mothers' partner-oriented parenting perfectionism, mothers' perceived relationship instability, mothers' parenting self-efficacy, mothers' religiosity, and fathers' parenting self-efficacy as predictors of maternal gatekeeping. These additional variables were modeled as observed variables because only a handful of items (or a single item) was available to measure each of these constructs. All covariances among predictor variables were estimated, as were all directional paths between predictors and the gatekeeping variables. The disturbance terms for maternal gatekeeping variables were correlated. As in the measurement model for the latent predictor variables representing maternal and paternal poor psychological functioning and maternal and paternal traditional gender attitudes, error terms were correlated across corresponding indicators for mothers and fathers. Results of this model are shown in Figure 1, with only significant directional paths depicted. The model demonstrated an adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2(185) = 210.96$, $p = .09$, RMSEA = .03, CFI = .96.

As shown in Figure 1, greater reported gate closing by mothers was predicted by poorer maternal psychological functioning, $\beta = .29$, $p < .05$, greater maternal partner-oriented parenting perfectionism, $\beta = .37$, $p < .01$, and greater maternal perceived relationship instability, $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$. Parents were also more likely to report that mothers engaged in gate closing behavior when mothers had higher parenting self-efficacy, $\beta = .25$, $p < .05$, and when fathers had lower parenting self-efficacy, $\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$. In total, the predictors explained 46% of the variance in reported gate closing behavior.

In contrast, greater reported maternal gate opening behavior was significantly predicted only by higher maternal religiosity, $\beta = .26$, $p < .05$. As such, the predictors explained a smaller 20% of the variance in reported gate opening behavior. Similarly, the predictors explained 29% of the variance in mothers' gate closing attitudes, which was driven by a single significant predictor: mothers' partner-oriented parenting perfectionism, $\beta = .39$, $p < .01$. There were no statistically significant paths from fathers' poor psychological functioning, or either parent's traditional gender attitudes, to any aspect of maternal gatekeeping.

DISCUSSION

This study identified several determinants of maternal gatekeeping, a construct that has been theoretically (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998) and empirically (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008) linked to father involvement in childrearing, at the critical transition to parenthood when father-child relationships are being established. Our results suggest that maternal gatekeeping is more strongly associated with maternal expectations and psychological functioning than with maternal traditional gender attitudes. Fathers' characteristics were less predictive of maternal gatekeeping than mothers' characteristics, although fathers with lower parenting self-efficacy appeared to elicit greater maternal gate closing behavior. In addition, although previous studies have implicated religiosity in mothers' gate closing behavior, our results indicated that more religious mothers were actually more likely to engage in gate opening.

The maternal characteristics most predictive of maternal gatekeeping were mothers' expectations, especially mothers' partner-oriented parenting perfectionism and mothers' perceptions of relationship instability. As hypothesized, when expectant mothers endorsed higher levels of partner-oriented parenting perfectionism (Snell et al., 2005) they were more likely to engage in reported gate closing behavior at 3 months postpartum and to hold stronger gate closing attitudes. In other words, mothers who held excessively high standards for their partner's parenting were more likely to scrutinize fathers' parenting and find it lacking.

As anticipated, parents reported that mothers closed the gate to the father's involvement in parenting more frequently when mothers perceived their romantic relationship with him as less stable. This finding is consistent with the close ties between couple and coparenting relationships (Feinberg, 2003; Mangelsdorf et al., 2011). Even though maternal gatekeeping may be especially prevalent after relationship dissolution or divorce (Trinder, 2008), our finding of a prospective link between mothers' perceptions of relationship instability and maternal gate closing could mean that gatekeeping can start well before relationship dissolution, when mothers first start doubting the longevity of the romantic relationship. Indeed, lower levels of investment in the couple relationship prior to dissolution are associated with poorer coparenting in the longer term (Kamp Dush, Kotila, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). Overall, the important role of maternal expectations in this study lends support to our contention that mothers may evaluate fathers' motivation and fitness for parenting and act as gatekeepers accordingly in order to protect their substantial investments in offspring (Geary, 2000).

Mothers were also more likely to close the gate to fathers when mothers had poorer psychological functioning (greater neuroticism and more anxiety and depression prior to their infant's birth). These results are consistent with theory emphasizing the importance of parental psychological functioning to effective parenting and coparenting (Belsky, 1984; Feinberg, 2003), and the vast literature linking poor psychological functioning to parenting difficulties and couple relationship problems (Whisman & Baucom, 2012; Zahn-Waxler et al., 2002). Ours is the first study to demonstrate links between maternal psychological functioning and maternal gatekeeping behavior. Future research should delve further into the

processes linking maternal psychological functioning to gatekeeping behavior, as these associations may or may not be direct. Mothers with poorer psychological functioning may simply be more antagonistic coparents; alternatively, such mothers may be over-investing in their children via a compensatory mechanism. Models of maternal gatekeeping (e.g., Allen & Hawkins, 1999) need to be expanded to account for the likely influence of maternal psychological functioning on gatekeeping behavior, the inclusion of which may also facilitate integration of conceptualizations of gatekeeping with broader models of coparenting (e.g., Feinberg, 2003).

Our study also yielded intriguing relations between fathers' and mothers' parenting self-efficacy and reported maternal gate closing behavior. For fathers, as anticipated, lower levels of parenting self-efficacy in the third trimester of pregnancy portended higher levels of reported maternal gate closing behavior at 3 months postpartum, although higher levels of parenting self-efficacy for fathers were not associated with greater reported gate opening on the part of mothers. In contrast, when expectant mothers were more confident in their parenting abilities, they engaged in more frequent gate closing behavior, but not more frequent gate opening behavior, in the postpartum period. That less confident fathers may elicit gate closing from mothers is consistent with the notion that mothers may assess fathers' motivation and suitability to parent, and if they find it deficient, discourage fathers' involvement in childrearing.

But, why would mothers with high levels of parenting self-efficacy, which is considered a critical asset for high-quality parenting and has been consistently associated with more positive maternal psychological functioning and well-being (Jones & Prinz, 2005), discourage fathers' parenting? We believe the answer lies in the fact that mothers tend to have an advantage in parenting self-efficacy over fathers (Hudson et al., 2001). Hence, mothers may be in the position of the "expert" parent and fathers in the position of "apprentice" parent – even prior to the child's birth (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2014) – setting the stage for maternal gate closing behavior. However, the extent to which mothers have a self-efficacy advantage may differ across families, and future research should examine more closely the relative parenting self-efficacy of expectant fathers and mothers and how that may affect patterns of maternal gatekeeping and father involvement postpartum.

Surprisingly, mothers' traditional gender attitudes were not related to reported gate closing behavior or even maternal gate closing attitudes although prior theory (Allen & Hawkins, 1999) and research (e.g., Kulik & Tsoref, 2010) posited that traditional gender attitudes are a primary determinant of maternal gatekeeping. By utilizing a longitudinal design to assess traditional gender attitudes prior to the child's birth and maternal gatekeeping behavior and gate closing attitudes postpartum, we may have been able to reduce inflation of these associations that in prior research have been most often tested concurrently. Contemporaneous associations between traditional gender attitudes and maternal gatekeeping may exist because traditional gender attitudes are not so much a determinant of gatekeeping as a consequence. When mothers close the gate to fathers, and fathers are less involved in childrearing, mothers may adjust their own attitudes to match their behavior and the division of labor in their family, consistent with psychological perspectives on attitude change (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006); that is, mothers may change their attitudes to

reflect their reality to achieve consistency. Future studies with longitudinal designs that assess traditional gender attitudes, gatekeeping attitudes, and gatekeeping behavior at multiple time points are needed to disentangle directions of effects. Moreover, future work should use more sensitive implicit attitude measures (see Park, Smith, & Correll, 2010) to examine associations between traditional gender attitudes and maternal gatekeeping.

Finally, in contrast to our expectations, when mothers indicated that religion was more important to them, mothers were reported to engage in more frequent gate opening behavior. Although in some cases religious mothers might limit father-child interaction because they have a strong traditional gender ideology (Gaunt, 2008), traditional gender attitudes and religiosity were not associated in the current study. In fact, other research indicates that more religious fathers are actually more involved in childrearing (King, 2003; Wilcox, 2002). Many religious teachings emphasize the importance of family relationships; thus, religious fathers may be more comfortable in nurturing family relationships than other fathers. Furthermore, more religious mothers who share these beliefs might be more willing to facilitate greater father involvement, especially when fathers are more comfortable taking a supportive role, such as when interacting with infants. However, many of the measures used to assess religiosity, including the one used in the current study, are simplistic, and a more thorough understanding of links between religiosity and coparenting will necessitate use of more complex measures (DeMaris et al., 2011).

Although this investigation made critical conceptual and methodological advances in the study of maternal gatekeeping, including modeling multiple aspects of maternal gatekeeping, measuring both partners' perceptions of maternal gatekeeping behavior, considering fathers' as well as mothers' characteristics as determinants of maternal gatekeeping, and using a longitudinal design, some limitations should be acknowledged. The conceptualization and measurement of maternal gatekeeping is in its infancy, and even though the current study arguably used the best available measures, these measures are yet far from perfect. For instance, some could claim that Fagan and Barnett's (2003) measure assesses attitudes, not behaviors, even though in support of our labeling of this measure as assessing behavior, scores on this measure were more closely correlated with other measures of gate closing behavior than with the measures of gate closing attitudes. Moreover, the dimensions of Allen and Hawkins' (2003) measure used to tap maternal gate closing attitudes are quite general, and may not be specific to gatekeeping behavior. Clearly more work is needed both in conceptualization of components of maternal gatekeeping and in more precise measurement. What is more, even though mothers and fathers in the current study reported specifically on mothers' behaviors in response to fathers' parenting, these reports were still subject to self-report biases. Future studies should incorporate naturalistic observations of families in the measurement of maternal gatekeeping behavior.

In addition, although our theoretically motivated and extensive set of predictor variables accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in reported maternal gate closing behavior, the predictors we examined explained smaller portions of the variance in reported maternal gate opening behavior and maternal gate closing attitudes. Furthermore, the sociodemographic composition of the sample may limit generalizability of these findings to other populations of mothers and fathers, especially parents of lower socioeconomic status

and families in which both partners are not working outside the home. Additional theoretical and empirical work is needed to identify predictors of multiple aspects of the maternal gatekeeping construct and to determine whether these models generalize to diverse populations of new parents. Finally, the use of the term "gatekeeping" and the focus on mothers in this research reflects the reality that in most families around the world, including those in our study of contemporary, dual-earner couples (Kotila et al., 2013), mothers are the primary caregivers of young children. At the same time, we acknowledge the potential for fathers to act as gatekeepers in some contexts, and would encourage future work on "paternal gatekeeping."

As evidence supporting the importance of father-child relationships for children's development continues to mount, efforts to understand factors that increase or decrease fathers' involvement in childrearing will endure. It is indisputable that mothers play an important role in father-child relationships (Doherty et al., 1998), and it seems likely that some of this maternal influence happens through gatekeeping. As such, to understand fathers' involvement and to remove barriers thereto it will be necessary to continue to examine maternal gatekeeping and its antecedents as well as its consequences. Our research suggests that an approach that takes into account multiple characteristics of fathers as well as of mothers, with particular attention to maternal expectations and psychological functioning, will be most fruitful.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, APPLICATION, THEORY, AND POLICY

Our findings on determinants of maternal gatekeeping at the transition to parenthood also have implications for practice, especially for programs that target couple relationships, coparenting, and father involvement in the prenatal and early postpartum periods (e.g., Doherty et al., 2006; Feinberg & Kan, 2008; Hawkins, Lovejoy, Holmes, Blanchard, & Fawcett, 2008). Maternal gatekeeping is multiply determined, and traditional attitudes about parent and gender roles may not play as strong a role in gatekeeping as is often assumed. We suggest that practitioners work with expectant and new mothers to ensure that their expectations of fathers' parenting are realistic, and to understand that their assessments of fathers' investment in the couple relationship and parenting can evolve into self-fulfilling prophecies via gatekeeping. At the same time, it appears critical that programming for expectant and new fathers continues to target fathers' parenting self-efficacy, as increasing this paternal asset may not only benefit fathers' parenting quality and well-being (Jones & Prinz, 2005), but may also stave off maternal gate closing behavior.

Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank the many graduate and undergraduate students who recruited for, and collected, entered, and coded the data of, the New Parents Project as well as the families who participated in the research.

FUNDING

The New Parents Project was funded by the National Science Foundation (CAREER 0746548, Schoppe-Sullivan), with additional support from the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD; 1K01HD056238, Kamp Dush), and The Ohio State University's Institute for Population Research (NICHD R24HD058484) and program in Human Development and Family Science.

REFERENCES

Allen SM, Hawkins AJ. Maternal gatekeeping: Mothers' beliefs and behaviors that inhibit greater father involvement in family work. Journal of Marriage and the Family. 1999; 61:199–212. http://www.jstor.org/stable/353894.

Beitel AH, Parke RD. Paternal involvement in infancy: The role of maternal and paternal attitudes. Journal of Family Psychology. 1998; 12:268–288. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.12.2.268.

Belsky J. The determinants of parenting: A process model. Child Development. 1984; 55:83–96. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1129836. [PubMed: 6705636]

Bonney, JF.; Kelley, M. Development of a measure assessing maternal and paternal beliefs regarding the parental role: The Beliefs Concerning the Parental Role Scale. Norfolk, VA: Old Dominion University; 1996. Unpublished manuscript

Bonomi AE, Kernic MA, Anderson ML, Cannon EA, Slesnick N. Use of brief tools to measure depressive symptoms in women with a history of intimate partner violence. Nursing Research. 2008; 57:150–156. [PubMed: 18496100]

Bornstein, MH. Determinants of parenting. In: Cicchetti, D., editor. Developmental psychopathology. 3e. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley; 2015. p. xx-xx.

Cannon EA, Schoppe-Sullivan SJ, Mangelsdorf SC, Brown GL, Sokolowski MS. Parent characteristics as antecedents of maternal gatekeeping and fathering behavior. Family Process. 2008; 47:501–519. [PubMed: 19130790]

Costa PT, McCrae RR. Normal personality assessment in clinical practice: The NEO personality inventory. Psychological Assessment. 1992; 4:5–13. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.4.1.5.

DeMaris A, Mahoney A, Pargament K. Doing the scut work of infant care: Does religiousness encourage father involvement? Journal of Marriage and Family. 2011; 73:354–368. [PubMed: 21966024]

Doherty WJ, Erickson MF, LaRossa R. An intervention to increase father involvement and skills with infants during the transition to parenthood. Journal of Family Psychology. 2006; 20(3):438–447. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.20.3.438. [PubMed: 16938002]

Doherty WJ, Kouneski EF, Erickson MF. Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework. Journal of Marriage and the Family. 1998; 60:277–292. http://www.jstor.org/stable/353848.

Fagan J, Barnett M. The relationship between maternal gatekeeping, paternal competence, mothers' attitudes about the father role, and father involvement. Journal of Family Issues. 2003; 24:1020–1043.

Feinberg ME. The internal structure and ecological context of coparenting: A framework for research and intervention. Parenting: Science and Practice. 2003; 3:95–132.

Feinberg ME, Kan ML. Establishing family foundations: Intervention effects on coparenting, parent/infant well-being, and parent-child relations. Journal of Family Psychology. 2008; 22:253–263. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.253. [PubMed: 18410212]

Gaunt R. Maternal gatekeeping: Antecedents and consequences. Journal of Family Issues. 2008; 29:373–395.

Gawronski B, Bodenhausen GV. Associative and propositional processes in evaluation: An integrative review of implicit and explicit attitude change. Psychological Bulletin. 2006; 132:692–731. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.5.692. [PubMed: 16910748]

Geary DC. Evolution and proximate expression of human paternal investment. Psychological Bulletin. 2000; 126(1):55–77. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.126.1.55. [PubMed: 10668350]

Glick P, Fiske ST. The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 1996; 70:491–512. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491.

Hawkins AJ, Lovejoy KR, Holmes EK, Blanchard VL, Fawcett E. Increasing fathers' involvement in child care with a couple-focused intervention during the transition to parenthood. Family Relations. 2008; 57(1):49–59.

Hu L, Bentler PM. Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal. 1999; 6:1–55.

Hudson DB, Elek SM, Fleck MO. First-time mothers' and fathers' transition to parenthood: Infant care self-efficacy, parenting satisfaction, and infant sex. Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing. 2001; 24:31–43. [PubMed: 11881635]

Jones TL, Prinz RJ. Potential roles of parental self-efficacy in parent and child adjustment: A review. Clinical Psychology Review. 2005; 25:341–363. [PubMed: 15792853]

Kamp Dush CM, Kotila LE, Schoppe-Sullivan SJ. Predictors of supportive coparenting after relationship dissolution among at-risk parents. Journal of Family Psychology. 2011; 25:356–365. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0023652. [PubMed: 21534670]

King V. The influence of religion on fathers' relationships with their children. Journal of Marriage and Family. 2003; 65:382–395.

Kotila LE, Schoppe-Sullivan SJ, Kamp Dush CM. Time in parenting activities in dual-earner families at the transition to parenthood. Family Relations. 2013; 62:795–807. [PubMed: 26405367]

Kulik L, Tsoref H. The entrance to the maternal garden: Environmental and personal variables that explain maternal gatekeeping. Journal of Gender Studies. 2010; 19:263–277.

Lamb, ME. How do fathers influence children's development? Let me count the ways. In: Lamb, ME., editor. The role of the father in child development. 5th. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 2010. p. 1-26.

Mahoney A. Religion and conflict in marital and parent-child relationships. Journal of Social Issues. 2005; 61:689–706.

Mangelsdorf, SC.; Laxman, D.; Jessee, A. Co-parenting in two-parent nuclear families. In: McHale, JP.; Lindahl, KM., editors. Co-parenting: Theory, research, and clinical applications. American Psychological Association; 2011. p. 15-38.

Marteau TM, Bekker H. The development of a six-item short-form of the state scale of the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). British Journal of Clinical Psychology. 1992; 31:301–306. [PubMed: 1393159]

Meteyer K, Perry-Jenkins M. Father involvement among working-class, dual-earner couples. Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers. 2010; 8:379–403.

Minuchin P. Families and individual development: Provocations from the field of family therapy. Child Development. 1985; 56:289–302. [PubMed: 3886321]

Park B, Smith JA, Correll J. The persistence of implicit behavioral association for moms and dads. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. 2010; 46:809–815.

Pleck, JH.; Masciadrelli, BP. Paternal involvement by U.S. residential fathers: Levels, sources and consequences. In: Lamb, ME., editor. The role of the father in child development. 4th. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 2004. p. 222-271.

Radloff LS. The CES-D Scale: A self-report depression scale for research in the general population. Applied Psychological Measurement. 1977; 1:385–401.

Rane TR, McBride BA. Identity theory as a guide to understanding fathers' involvement with their children. Journal of Family Issues. 2000; 31:347–366.

Rusbult CE. Commitment and satisfaction in romantic associations: A test of the investment model. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. 1980; 16(2):172–186.

Sabourin S, Valois P, Lussier Y. Development and validation of a brief version of the dyadic adjustment scale with a nonparametric item analysis model. Psychological Assessment. 2005; 17:15–27. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.17.1.15. [PubMed: 15769225]

Sarkadi A, Kristiansson R, Oberklaid F, Bremberg S. Fathers' involvement and children's development outcomes: A systematic review of longitudinal studies. Acta Paediatrica. 2008; 97:153–158. [PubMed: 18052995]

Schafer, JL. Analysis of incomplete multivariate data. London: Chapman & Hall; 1997.

Schoppe-Sullivan SJ, Altenburger LE, Settle TA, Kamp Dush CM, Sullivan JM, Bower DJ. Expectant fathers' intuitive parenting: Associations with parent characteristics and postpartum positive engagement. Infant Mental Health Journal. 2014; 35:409–421. [PubMed: 25798492]

Schoppe-Sullivan SJ, Brown GL, Cannon EA, Mangelsdorf SC, Sokolowski MS. Maternal gatekeeping, coparenting quality, and fathering behavior in families with infants. Journal of Family Psychology. 2008; 22:389–398. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.3.389. [PubMed: 18540767]

Shannon JD, Tamis-LeMonda CS, Cabrera NJ. Fathering in infancy: Mutuality and stability between 8 and 16 months. Parenting: Science and Practice. 2006; 6:167–188.

Snell WE, Overbey G, Brewer AL. Parenting perfectionism and the parenting role. Personality and Individual Differences. 2005; 39:613–624.

Spanier GB. Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. Journal of Marriage and the Family. 1976; 38:15–28.

Teti DM, Gelfand DM. Behavioral competence among mothers of infants in the first year: The mediational role of maternal self-efficacy. Child Development. 1991; 62:918–929. [PubMed: 1756667]

Trinder L. Maternal gate closing and gate opening in postdivorce families. Journal of Family Issues. 2008; 29:1298–1324.

Van Egeren, LA. The Parental Regulation Inventory. East Lansing: Michigan State University; 2000. Unpublished manuscript

Walker AJ, McGraw LA. Who is responsible for responsible fathering? Journal of Marriage and Family. 2000; 62:563–596.

Whisman MA, Baucom DH. Intimate relationships and psychopathology. Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review. 2012; 15:4–13. [PubMed: 22124792]

Wilcox B. Religion, convention, and parental involvement. Journal of Marriage and Family. 2002; 64:780–792.

Zahn-Waxler, C.; Duggal, S.; Gruber, R. Parental psychopathology. In: Bornstein, MH., editor. Handbook of parenting: Vol. 4, Social conditions and applied parenting. 2nd. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum; 2002. p. 295-327.

APPENDIX

Van Egeren Parental Regulation Inventory (2000) Items

Mothers' Self-reported Gatekeeping Behavior	
How often do YOU (1 = never; 6 = several times a day):	
Gate Closing	Tell your baby's father the right way to handle the situation
	Show your baby's father that you are angry or irritated
	Tell your baby's father what you think he did wrong
	Criticize your baby's father
	Look exasperated and roll your eyes
	Tell other people about the things you don't like
	Take over and do it your own way
	Tell your baby's father what he did wrong by "talking through" the baby
	Not mention anything, but redo things after your baby's father is gone
Gate Opening	Compliment your baby's father
	Invite your baby's father to help
	Let your baby's father know you appreciate his contributions
	Tell your baby's father what a good parent he is
	Ask for your baby's father's opinion
	Tell other people about what a good parent he is at a time when he can hear you
	Tell your baby's father how happy he makes your baby
	Encourage your baby's father to spend time alone with your baby
	Arrange activities for your baby's father and child to do together

Fathers' Reports of Mothers' Gatekeeping Behavior	
How often does YOUR BABY'S MOTHER (1 = never; 6 = several times a day):	
Gate Closing	Tell you the right way to handle the situation
	Show you that she is angry or irritated
	Tell you what she thinks you did wrong
	Criticize you
	Look exasperated and roll her eyes
	Tell other people about the things she doesn't like
	Take over and do it her own way
	Tell you what you did wrong by "talking through" the baby
	Not mention anything, but redo things after you are gone
Gate Opening	Compliment you
	Invite you to help
	Let you know she appreciates your contributions
	Tell you what a good parent you are
	Ask for your opinion
	Tell other people what a good parent you are at a time when you can hear her
	Tell how happy you make your baby
	Encourage you to spend time alone with your baby
	Arrange activities for you and your child to do together

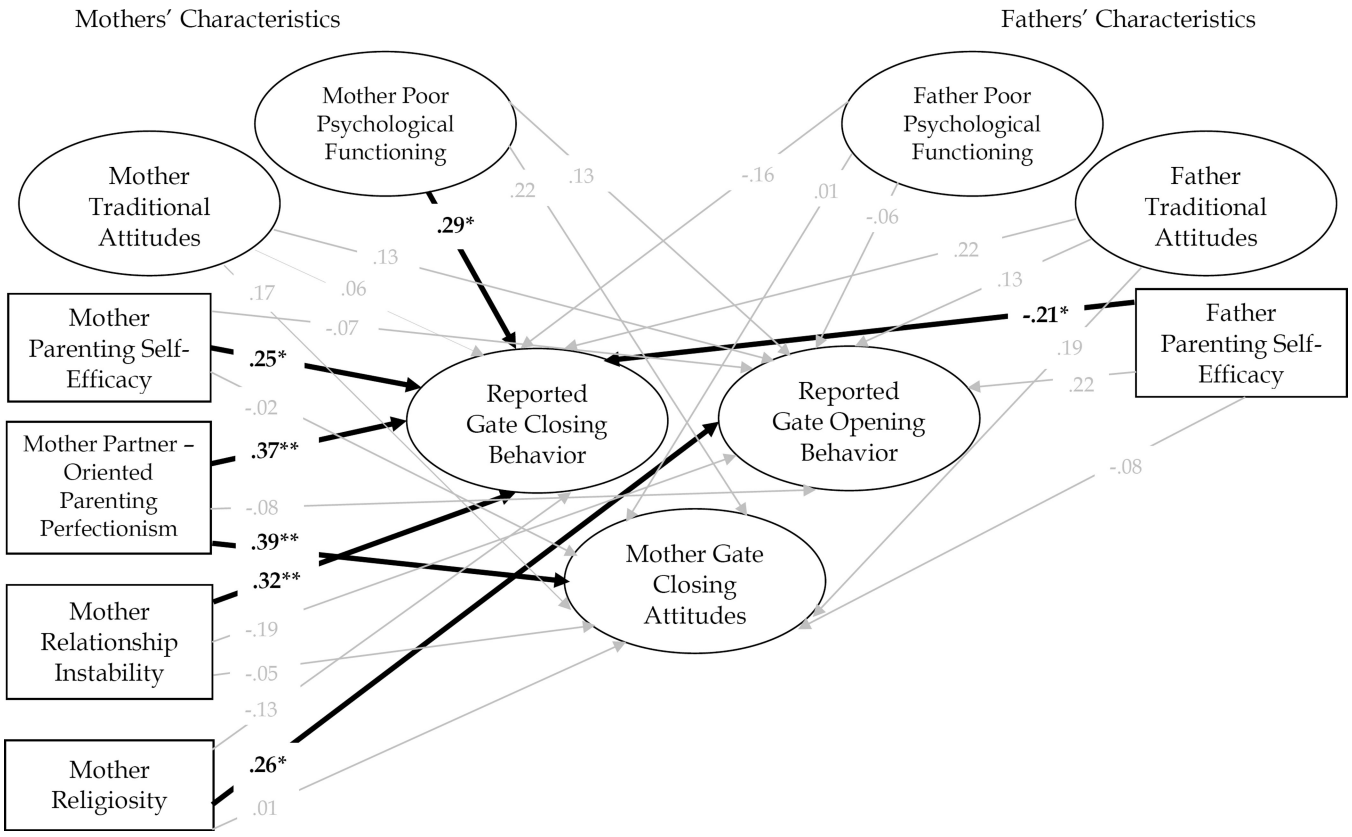

FIGURE 1.

Structural model of predictors of maternal gatekeeping. Shaded lines represent nonsignificant paths. All correlations among exogenous variables and among disturbance terms for endogenous variables were also estimated, but are not shown here (see Table 3 for correlations among predictors).

$\chi^2(185) = 210.96$, $p = .09$, RMSEA = .03, CFI = .96.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

TABLE 1

Descriptive Statistics for Observed Variables

	Mothers				Fathers			
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***Range***	**% Missing**	***M***	***SD***	***Range***	**% Missing**
Poor psychological functioning								
Neuroticism	2.53	.66	1.17–4.58	1.65	2.41	.63	1.25–4.58	4.40
Anxiety	9.47	3.38	6.00–21.00	2.20	9.73	3.21	6.00–20.00	5.49
Depression	6.66	1.98	5.00–16.00	8.24	6.65	1.79	5.00–14.00	8.24
Traditional attitudes								
Ambivalent sexism	2.70	.99	1.00–6.00	3.30	3.08	.79	1.05–4.91	8.24
Egalitarian beliefs about parent/gender roles	4.30	.41	2.96–4.88	2.20	4.25	.42	2.92–4.92	5.49
Natural superiority of mothers	2.56	1.06	1.00–5.00	2.20	3.24	1.08	1.00–5.00	7.14
Maternal expectations								
Partner-oriented parenting perfectionism	2.26	.74	1.00–5.00	1.10				
Perceived relationship instability	2.89	.97	2.00–7.00	1.10				
Mothers' parenting self-efficacy	3.52	.37	2.17–4.00	1.65				
Other factors								
Maternal religiosity	3.10	.95	1.00–4.00	2.20				
Fathers' parenting self-efficacy					3.45	.42	2.00–4.00	7.69
Maternal gatekeeping								
Reported gate closing behavior	2.22	.66	1.00–4.11	4.40	2.24	.83	1.00–4.89	6.04
Reported gate opening behavior	4.07	.77	1.89–5.78	4.40	3.80	.92	1.44–5.78	5.49
Control over parental decision-making	2.02	.73	1.00–3.78	5.49				
Standards and responsibilities	2.13	.74	1.00–4.00	5.49				

Parent Sci Pract. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2016 July 31.

Variable	Mothers				Fathers			
	M	*SD*	*Range*	% Missing	*M*	*SD*	*Range*	% Missing
Maternal role confirmation	2.57	.67	1.25–4.00	4.40				

TABLE 2

Correlations among Observed Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. M Neuroticism	-												
2. M Anxiety	.49**	-											
3. M Depression	.54**	.60**	-										
4. M Ambivalent sexism	.15*	−.06	−.01	-									
5. M Egalitarian beliefs	−.09	.11	.08	−.47**	-								
6. M Natural superiority	.10	−.12	−.08	.53**	−.56**	-							
7. M Partner-oriented parenting perfectionism	.04	−.09	.10	.32**	−.07	.20**	-						
8. M Perceived relationship instability	.07	.10	.18*	.12	−.09	.14	.12	-					
9. M Parenting self-efficacy	−.23*	−.15*	−.23**	.13	−.11	.19*	.14	−.04	-				
10. M Religiosity	.07	−.01	−.03	.10	−.15	.08	.02	−.11	.02	-			
11. F Parenting self-efficacy	.07	.10	.01	.16*	.03	.09	.22**	.13	.20**	.01	-		
12. F Neuroticism	.07	.06	.12	−.06	−.02	−.03	.04	.05	.00	.04	−.13	-	
13. F Anxiety	.05	.14	.14	−.14	.08	−.10	.03	−.06	−.06	−.04	−.10	.50**	-

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
14. F Depression	.01	−.01	.09	−.08	.03	.05	.05	.09	−.02	−.03	−.12	.51**	.42**
15. F Ambivalent sexism	−.04	−.23**	−.16*	.36**	−.18*	.23**	.00	.01	.03	.13	−.02	.22**	−.01
16. F Egalitarian beliefs	.09	.12	.24**	−.09	.29**	−.11	.11	.03	−.15	−.10	.11	−.13	.00
17. F Natural superiority	.02	−.09	−.12	.20*	−.19*	.29**	−.01	−.07	.02	−.01	−.28**	.11	.00
18. M Gate closing	.19*	.16*	.15	.17*	−.04	.12	.30**	.21**	.13	−.05	.04	−.06	−.09
19. F Gate closing	.02	.07	.05	.02	.04	.01	.10	.20**	.10	−.11	−.09	.09	.07
20. M Control over decision-making	−.06	−.06	−.13	.16*	−.28**	.26**	.14	.16*	.02	−.10	−.05	.03	−.02
21. M Gate opening	.01	.08	.01	.07	−.06	.10	−.02	−.13	.09	.10	.08	−.03	.00
22. F Gate opening	.08	−.02	.06	.14	−.08	.07	.01	−.10	−.03	.25**	.11	.00	−.03

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
23. M Standards and responsibilities	.15*	.04	.12	.11	−.11	.13	.22**	−.05	−.03	.00	−.08	−.01	.08
24. M Maternal role confirmation	.14	.11	.09	.29**	−.06	.17*	.32**	.05	.01	.08	.05	.08	.08

	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.	23.	24.
14. F Depression	-										
15. F Ambivalent sexism	.01	-									
16. F Egalitarian beliefs	−.03	−.39**	-								
17. F Natural superiority	.00	.37**	−.21**	-							
18. M Gate closing	−.02	.02	−.01	−.07	-						
19. F Gate closing	−.04	.20*	−.19*	.05	.27**	-					
20. M Control over decision-making	.11	.02	−.10	.10	.28**	.20**	-				
21. M Gate opening	−.05	.02	−.03	.12	−.10	−.14	−.11	-			
22. F Gate opening	−.12	.06	.03	.14	−.21**	−.23**	−.13	.32**	-		
23. M Standards and responsibilities	−.04	.12	−.08	.04	.23**	.08	.07	.06	.01	-	
24. M maternal role confirmation	.09	.16*	.06	.07	.27**	.11	.11	.08	−.02	.44**	-

Note. Ns ranged from 157 to 180 due to missing values. M = Mother report; F = Father report.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

TABLE 3

Correlations among Gatekeeping Predictors in the Structural Model

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. M Poor Psychological Functioning	-								
2. M Traditional Attitudes	−.05	-							
3. M Partner-oriented parenting perfectionism	.09	.27**	-						
4. M Perceived relationship instability	.16	.16	.12	-					
5. M Religiosity	.01	.15	.02	−.11	-				
6. M Parenting self-efficacy	−.25**	.20*	.14	−.04	.02	-			
7. F Poor Psychological Functioning	.12	−.07	.04	.04	.01	−.02	-		
8. F Traditional Attitudes	−.32**	.39**	−.03	.03	.15	.11	.23*	-	
9. F Parenting self-efficacy	.07	.13	.24**	.17*	.02	.20*	−.17	−.16	-

Note. $N = 182$. M = Mother; F = Father.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.