Using Identity Processes to Understand Persistent Inequality in Parenting

SPQ SNAPS Discussion Guide
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1. The authors argue that fatherhood is an identity that is particularly prone to vague expectations. Why is this the case? Are there other identities that this is true for as well? What contributes to the flexibility in those identity standards? On the flip side, what identities are more likely to have very specific expectations? Why?

2. Where do individual men learn the expectations or identity standards for fatherhood? How does this contribute to their vagueness or specificity?

3. Although the article focuses on fathers, mothers play an important role in families and carework. What role do mothers or conception of motherhood play in the processes outlined in the article? How might mothers influence fathers’ definitions and their household contributions?

4. Take a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns. On one side, list expectations for mothers. On the other, list expectations for fathers. How are these two lists different? What is the relationship between the two?

5. What are the identities that are most important to your sense of self? What are the expectations associated with them? Can you think of times when you experienced self-verification in those identities? What about self-discrepancy? How did you react when your behavior fell short of your expectations for yourself?

6. This article focuses on fathers from a particular socioeconomic status. Do you think the results would be different for fathers who had higher levels of education or income? Why or why not? How does social class, or related social structure, influence fathering?

7. The Time, Love, and Cash in Couples with Children (TLC3) data were generated by qualitative interviews. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using such an approach to study identity standards and behavior? How would you create a quantitative study (e.g., survey or experiment) of specificity and its effects?

8. According to the authors, there are a number of positive outcomes associated with specific standards. What are they? Consider these as you create a pamphlet, flyer, or other type of public service announcement to improve fathers’ fathering.