

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHILDREN'S HOUSEHOLD
WORK TO MEASURES OF CHILDREN'S PROSOCIAL
BEHAVIORS AND POSITIVE SELF-PERCEPTIONS

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Data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics regarding 648 racially and ethnically diverse children was used to examine the relationship between the amount of time 10-12 year old children were expected to spend in household work that benefits the family and its relationship with children's prosocial behaviors, as well as children's self-reported positive self-perceptions. Children who were expected to almost always do household work that benefits the family were found to behave more prosocially, compared to children who rarely were expected to do such work. Boys who were almost always expected to do household work that benefits the family were reported to have more responsibility behaviors, although this pattern did not hold for girls. Research results showed no significant effect for positive self-perceptions of children who were expected to almost always do household work benefiting the family compared to children who were rarely expected to do such household work.

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AND POSITIVE SELF-PERCEPTIONS

by

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Sam Baldwin, for his unwavering encouragement, patience, and support of every kind.

It is also dedicated to my children, Carter and Claire, who almost never do their household work assignments willingly.

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Introduction

It seems probable that children have always been called upon to help their families to the best of their ability. Until very recently, it took an enormous amount of effort to adequately feed, clothe, warm, and clean a family—especially when such tasks involved chopping wood, hauling clean water in and dirty water out, plucking chickens, and stitching every item of clothing. As late as 1900, a typical housewife spent six hours a day on meal preparation and cleaning alone (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). It seems reasonable to assume that every competent member of the household would be called upon to assist in such labors. Assigning children household tasks also gave adults the opportunity to train and supervise children in the very skills that children would eventually need in adulthood.

This basic pattern of parents assigning household chores to children to promote their socialization and skills has been found replicated in every human culture. Parents around the world assign children family household work for much the same reasons: to assist the family, to channel the energy of children, to train them in age appropriate skills, and to teach children the skills they will need in adult life (Whiting & Edwards, 1988). Children around the world seem to agree with parents that they should have a share in the household's work. In a survey of over 4,000 adolescents in six countries, the majority (97.2%) thought that all older children should be assigned household tasks to benefit the family (Bowes, Flanagan, & Taylor, 2001).

Over the last couple of centuries, family lives have changed in every industrialized nation, and most of the undeveloped world as well. A great deal, if not

most of the attention has been focused on how much women's lives have changed as a result. From generation to generation, the opportunities have expanded for women to gain education, employment, and to pursue careers outside of the home. The changes in women's lives have been very visible in both the public and private spheres, and these changes have permeated virtually every profession and every family.

At the same time, however, children's roles have also changed significantly and with much less fanfare. For the most part, these changes have meant great improvement in children's lives. Today's children, who are fortunate enough to live in the developed world, are safer, better nourished, and better educated than ever before. Yet while modern women's roles and work to increase family resources have expanded, children's roles appear to be diminishing. Yesterday's children's contributions were often vital to a family's economic survival and success. In comparison, today's children are expected to contribute affection, and little else, in many families (Zelizer, 1985).

This thesis focuses on children's work in the household. In particular, the research focuses on children's household work that benefits others rather than household work which is primarily self-care (such as picking up one's own toys). This topic was chosen as a measure of the extent to which children contribute to and feel like useful members in their family. Of particular note is the research indicating that children's average hours in household work had dropped by 30% between 1981 and 1997 (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Since children, on average, are contributing less to overall household work, what would it mean for children if, ultimately, they were not expected to do any household work at all?

The discussion and the research that follows are the result of the efforts to answer those questions.

Historical Background

Between the end of the 18th century and the mid-19th century, a new type of urban middle class family was evolving in the United States. The relationships between parents and children would remain much the same in this new type of family. Yet as the functions of families changed, the meaning and importance of children's contributions to the household would also change dramatically.

The traditional family, with its authoritarian hierarchy, had managed the economic production functions as well as the personal relationships of the household. This arrangement changed when the industrial revolution forced the national economy to increasingly shift towards industrial production. For the first time, the middle class home became the focus of solely domestic tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and rearing children. The major centers of economic production were no longer based predominantly in the home, but were located away from the household in shops, warehouses and factories (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988; O'Day, 1994).

As the economic and social needs met by the middle-class domestic household changed, each individual's roles in the household changed as well. In contrast to the traditional family, with its emphasis upon the economic support of the family and the preparation of children for adulthood, this new type of democratic family emphasized companionship, affection, and the protection and nurturing of children. Children became less important for their present or future contributions to household economic production and were increasingly valued as "sentimentalized objects of their parent's affection"

(Zelizer, 1985). Eventually, as sociologist Viviana Zelizer points out, “The useful labor of the nineteenth century child was replaced by educational work of the useless child” (Zelizer, 1985, p. 97-98).

Over time, children’s roles as economic producers virtually disappeared to be replaced with the new role of economic consumers. In addition, the period of childhood was increasingly seen as a unique time in human development when children needed to be sheltered and gradually prepared for adulthood. Middle class parents were prepared to invest more attention and wealth in their children’s education, training and preparation for adulthood. Diminishing birth rates meant fewer children were being born in middle and upper class families. With smaller families and more economic resources, middle class parents wanted their children to spend time in school rather than in labor to increase family resources (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988).

Many children from low-income families continued to help provide substantial financial support for their families by working for pay outside of the home. Children continued to participate as an important part of the labor force in the early years of the industrial revolution, particularly in the southern states. But, by 1879, children’s advocates were successful in passing the first legislation to limit child labor in the marketplace. Spurred in part by the burgeoning labor unions and the growing availability of public education, child labor was increasingly limited by law. New legal guidelines were established which first limited paid employment for children to ages 12, then 14, and finally age 16 (Zelizer, 1985).

Ultimately, the importance of educating children proved to be a stronger selling point for child labor reform than the evils of child exploitation in the marketplace.

Demonstrating to legislators how inappropriate employment interfered with children's education was the key to the success of the child labor reform movement (Zelizer, 1985).

By the early part of the 20th century, the public debate over child labor legislation caused the relationship of children to work, both outside and inside the home, to be redefined even further. The struggle by reformers to prohibit children's labor in the marketplace led to a new emphasis on the educational value of children's labor in the home. The 1931 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection issued a report recommending to parents and educators that, "less emphasis...be placed on the amount of assistance rendered and more on the educational values (to the child) of the responsibilities involved in the performance of household tasks".

Seventy-two years after the 1931 White House conference, parents continue to be advised that household work responsibilities, or "chores" as they are commonly referred to, are educationally beneficial for children. The benefits emphasized for children doing household work are now primarily social learning rather than educational in the academic sense (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Collins, et al, 1995).

The benefits often cited by the authors of modern parent advice books for giving children household work responsibilities are 1) to share the workload; 2) to learn housekeeping skills; 3) to contribute to the family; and 4) to learn responsibility. Examples of these popular books are "The Family That Works Together...Turning Family Chores from Drudgery to Fun," (Lott & Intner 1995) and "Pick Up Your Socks...and Other Skills Growing Children Need" (Crary, 1990).

Research has consistently shown that many, if not most, children continue to do some household work. White and Brinkerhoff (1981) found that in a random survey of

almost 800 Nebraska families, well over a third of the youngest children (0-4) had regular chores, and by the time children are 9-10 years old, over 90% had regular chores. Cogle and Tasker (1982) also found in their study of over 100 two-parent, two-child families living in urban Louisiana that more children did more household work (primarily house-cleaning and food preparation) as they aged, with participation increasing from 78% of 6-8 year olds to 93% of 9-11 year olds. In a demographically balanced study of children's time in 1997 using parent's time logs of their children's time, it was found that 88% of 851 9-12 year olds were engaging in some household work (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Other research suggests that fewer children are doing household work. A random telephone survey of children's use of time found that only 40% of children aged 9-11 self-reported that they had done some household work on the previous day and these children self-reported working for close to an hour (Bianchi and Robinson, 1997).

The emphasis on White, middle class populations may have biased the earliest research into children and household work cited above. There are two more recent studies looking at children and household work in African American families. The results of these studies indicate that the patterns of children and household work in African American families does indeed reflect that of the wider society. In Padgett's research (1997), children assisted with household work in over a third of the families included in the study, mostly contributing to house cleaning and washing dishes. Phillip (1992) reported that African-American children were more likely to have chores if there were more children in the family and if the education level of the family was higher. Phillip also found less overall gender differences in the chores done by boys and girls. Research by Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) found that Hispanic children generally spent

more time in household work, including shopping, than White non-Hispanic children, and African-American and Asian children spent less time in household work, including shopping.

The most important change in modern children's household work may be the decrease in the amount of time they spend doing such tasks. There is new research drawn from studies of how children occupy their time that suggests that the hours spent by children doing household work are declining, similar to the declines found in all children's activities which require substantial parental input. A longitudinal time-use study has found that children aged 9-12 do 30% less household work in 1997 than in a similar study conducted in 1981. This change translates into about 32 minutes a day of household work in 1997, compared to 45 minutes a day in 1981. Instead of household work, children in 1997 are spending an increasing amount of time on hobbies (+150%), art activities (+148%), as well as shopping (+54%) (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001).

Despite the continuing and widespread beliefs that household chores are beneficial for children, housework is not considered a popular use of time by most adults, and presumably it is not especially popular among children either. Most men and women report that they do not like housework (Robinson & Milkie, 1997). As a result, it is probably not surprising to note that the number of overall hours of household work done by adults (excluding child care and shopping) has been in decline since 1965. Women are spending little more than half the hours doing household work in 1995 than they did in 1965, and women who are unmarried, unemployed, and have no children are doing the least amount of housework of all. The greatest part of the decline is believed to be due to the general decrease in women's investment in doing housework, with a lesser amount of

the decline attributable to the increasing numbers of women in the workforce (Bianchi, et al, 2000). Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) also found that differences in family structure and maternal employment were not related to differences in children's household work time. The historical decline in children's hours spent upon household work may ultimately prove to simply be a reflection of the overall decline in women's hours spent upon household work, and not a result of other family and maternal changes.

Finally, no introduction to children's household work is complete without mentioning traditional gender inequity, and how little this phenomenon has changed over time. Regardless of demographic or life-stage characteristics, gender accounts for most of the division of housework between men and women and between boys and girls (Bianchi, et al, 2000; Manke, et al, 1994). Over time, study after study has shown that, while men have almost doubled their hours of housework, women continue to do twice as much housework as men, regardless of employment status, income, education levels, or marital status (Bergmann, 1986; Ferree, 1991; Hochschild, 1989; Bianchi, et al, 2000; Coltrane, 2000).

It is reasonable to assume that it is mothers who usually decide to ask their children to do household work, as well as train and supervise their children in such work. Childcare is another area of household responsibility that has traditionally fallen to women. While men have been found to be increasing their hours spent in child care, research has confirmed that women continue to take most of the responsibility for children, spend more time with them, and make more of the decisions about their care than the children's fathers (Leslie, Anderson, & Branson, 1991). Perhaps because it is mothers who take

most of the responsibility for assigning chores to their children, 78% of the household work tasks asked of children are traditional female tasks (Blair, 1992).

When children are assigned a share of the work in the household, they begin to acquire the skills that will eventually enable them to be self-sufficient as adults, as well as competent in eventually caring for a family of their own. The acquisition of these skills and competencies can have their own beneficial effects for the individual, apart from the benefits for the family as a whole.

The study of human development over the course of the life span has found that personal “control” in the care of one’s self and one’s environment is a central theme characterizing human development from infancy to old age. Beginning in infancy, human beings are driven to acquire increasing control (sometimes referred to as autonomy) in order to optimize their successful development (Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996). Preparing food for oneself and keeping one’s environment and clothing clean are common household tasks. Competencies in these tasks are an accepted part of self-sufficiency and personal environmental control.

Research of the frail elderly at the opposite end of the life span has found that perceptions of self-competence are closely tied to positive self-perception and self-worth (Langer & Rodin, 1976). As Grams and Albee (1996) note, “The development of competence is, of course, closely linked to one’s feelings of worth and value, which are, in turn, important components of self-esteem.” This relationship suggests that life skill competencies, entailing both personal control and responsibility, are among the most important factors in the individual’s perception of personal efficacy and satisfaction at every stage of life.

It is generally understood that children's behavior is influenced in part by how they spend their time, which would include the time they spend on household work. This influence is partly due to the rapidly developing brains of children, which are profoundly responsive to experience (Nelson and Bloom, 1997). Both the brain structure and its functioning are affected by experience, a phenomenon which is known as brain plasticity. The time children spend in various activities represent learning opportunities, or what Larson and Verma (1999) term "experiential niches." As a result of experiential learning, children's neurological development is affected as they develop competencies and skills drawn from those experiences. The more time children spend in an activity is directly related to increased learning and skills as neurological pathways grow and are reinforced, laying the foundation for future brain development.

This experiential learning can be logically extended to learning values, such as those expressed in prosocial behavior. Children who are encouraged to be helpful have been found to behave more helpfully on subsequent occasions (Eisenberg, 1999). Giving children responsibility for household tasks that are helpful to the family as a whole is an experience they may later internalize as a moral value. As Staub writes, assigning children responsibility, such as household work, gives children the opportunity to learn pro-social values experientially, "which is crucial for the moral development of children" (Staub, 1979, p. 197).

In addition, children's experiences have been shown to affect them positively or negatively at the physiological level. Research has found that doing household tasks reduces children's glucocorticoid stress response, with concurrent benefits for children's growth and health. Chronic high cortisol levels in children have been found to be

associated with immune deficiency, cognitive impairment, inhibited growth, delayed sexual maturity, damage to the hippocampus, and psychological maladjustment (Ader, Felton, and Cohen; Dunn; Glaser & Kiecolt-Glaser's studies as cited in Flinn & England, 1995). Research into the relationships between stress response, as measured by the production of the hormone cortisol, and family environments has shown that the greatest stressors for children are family traumas such as punishment, family conflict or change of residence. In contrast, cortisol levels have been shown to be reduced in children by their engagement in domestic chores and other household responsibilities, at a level similar to the benefits from affectionate contact and non-competitive play (Flinn & England, 1995).

There are reciprocal effects between cortisol and behavior. Just as children's behavior affects their cortisol production, elevated cortisol levels have been shown to be linked to children's behavior. Unusually low basal cortisol levels with occasional high spikes have been associated with negative external behaviors, such as hostility and antisocial behavior (e.g. theft, running away from home), and are more common among males. Chronically high cortisol levels have been associated with anxiety and withdrawal behavior and are more common among females (Gray, 1987; Sapolsky, 1991; Yehuda et al., 1991; McBurnett et al., 1991 as cited in Flinn & England, 1997).

Future research may identify further what among the constellation of family routines and behaviors are the most beneficial for children and their successful development. There is a great need for more solid research on this subject. As Moore and Halle (2001) observed, although there has been a great deal of research about negative outcomes for children, there has been surprisingly little research about positive child behaviors and outcomes.

One of the more productive subjects of research has been at-risk children who succeed despite the odds. These children are sometimes found to succeed because of characteristics that are generally considered to contribute to a quality of “resilience” (Masten and Coatsworth, 1998). Researchers in this field have identified various characteristics that help make resilient children competent. One component of the child’s growing competence is successful personal self-regulation. Self-regulation is defined as the child’s increasing self-control over attention, emotions and behavior (Cicchetti & Tucker, as cited in Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

The research in this thesis is focused on pre-adolescent children between the ages of 10 and 12. Children in this age range are expected to be gaining a more mature capacity for self-control and self-regulation (Maccoby, 1984). The preadolescent child’s increasing capacity for self-regulation means that parents expect more autonomy and independence in school and household tasks from children at this age (Collins, et al., 1995). Successful maturation in pre-adolescence helps to prepare the children for greater autonomy in adolescence and young adulthood.

Competent adult caregivers give children the support to gradually gain increasing control over their behavior or self-regulation. Maccoby and Martin (1983) proposed a

model of parenting “co-regulation” as a kind of family social system that allows parents and children to influence and be influenced by each other. According to this model, the child progressively assumes greater responsibility for the well-being of the family within the limits of the child’s capabilities, meaning that the degree to which a child is capable of participating in a co-regulatory family system increases with age (Maccoby, 1992).

Assigning children responsibilities in the home is one way children experience greater self-management, while their parents or caregivers retain oversight (Collins, et al, 1995). Requiring children to pick up their belongings or set the table for dinner are two examples of parental directives supporting the development of behavioral self-regulation in a child. Eventually, a child’s ability to self-regulate enables them to behave in a way that is increasingly compliant, responsible and pro-social (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989).

When Strom and Cooledge (1984) surveyed parents, teachers and children to find the most important topics parents should help children learn, teaching responsibility was consistently among the top 4 issues. Parents typically assign chores to children with the expectation that the experience will promote increased responsibility and independence in the child (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981; Zill & Peterson, 1982).

Parents also tend to believe that the assignment of household tasks promote children’s social skills by teaching them about how they are expected to relate to others in the home (Collins, et al, 1995; Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Staub, 1979). Goodnow and Delaney (1989) found that mothers also use work to teach children about their changing relationship and roles. As the child matures, mothers train their children not to

always expect that others will clean up after them; as well as other basic rules of family cooperation and respect.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that children develop socially and cognitively through their interactions with trusted, more competent partners who provide a structure (which he refers to as scaffolding) that increases the likelihood of the child successfully learning. The parent provides structure, according to Rogoff (1990) by simplifying problems, focusing the child's attention, and providing the child with routines to use as they contribute to increasingly complex activities.

Eisenberg and Murphy (1995) note that direct instruction, through verbal prompts, instructions or commands can induce prosocial behaviors in children. Research (mostly in laboratories, not homes) has found that practicing prosocial behaviors tends to promote prosocial tendencies in children (Barton, 1981; Staub, 1979; Moore & Eisenberg, 1984, as cited in Eisenberg & Murphy (1995). Children who were given responsibilities to help other children displayed more prosocial behavior later (Staub, 1979).

Parents also support their children's learning when they work together with their child. As Bronfenbrenner (1994) hypothesized "The environmental effects that are the most immediate and potent in affecting a person's development are activities that are engaged in by others with that person or in her presence" (pp. 6-7). This perspective suggests that one of the benefits for children working cooperatively with parents is the opportunity to learn household skills as well as observing the parent as she or he models responsibility in caring for the home and the child. Bronfenbrenner's hypothesis is supported by Cogle and Tasker's findings (1982) that children did indeed benefit the most from household work done cooperatively with the parent(s). They observed that

children benefited from the parent's encouragement to assume additional responsibilities as well as the more equitable distribution of the family's workload.

Social Cognitive Theory

Socialization was defined by Parsons as the process by which individuals learn the things that bind members of their society together, including the society's shared norms and values (Parsons, 1951). These shared values include the values discussed in this thesis, such as cooperation, contribution, and personal responsibility. How individuals acquire these shared values through learning is a question that has been explored by behavioral and social psychologists through the development of the social learning theory dating back to the late 1800's. Beginning in the early 1950's, Robert Sears was the first to address how social learning theory could explain parent's roles in fostering their children's cultural internalization of values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Albert Bandura has continued Sears' work by focusing on how children and adults think about their social experiences, and how these thoughts influence the individual's behavior and development. Bandura has also introduced several unique concepts, such as reciprocal determinism and self-efficacy. Bandura renamed his theory the social cognitive theory in 1986, as a more accurately descriptive title.

Bandura's social cognitive theory provides the best explanation of how parents transmit behavioral values and expectations to their children through the assignment of household work responsibilities, and how children interpret those experiences, internalize them as symbolic controls, and then reproduce them behaviorally.

Assumptions About Human Behavior.

Most human behavior has a purpose, according to the social cognitive theory, and is directed by the person's capability to motivate themselves and to make choices about how to act. Bandura proposed the idea of "reciprocal determinism" which states that

individuals are able to influence their own destiny, yet are also influenced by forces outside of their control (Bandura, 1986; 1989). Previous experiences guide the individual to anticipate outcomes that will occur as a result of any particular chosen behavior, creating an expectancy of anticipated outcomes. Expectations of the outcomes of certain behaviors influence the individual's choices of how to act. The choice to behave in certain ways on the basis of anticipated outcomes is what enables the individual to regulate their own behavior (Bandura, 1989).

The Influences Upon Learning.

As suggested by the social cognitive theory, learning takes place in a continuous, reciprocal three-way interaction between the distinctive personal features of the individual, the choices the individual makes about how to act, and the social influences and physical structures within the environment that affect the individual and their behavior.

Included in the social influences of the environment are such features as physical control, social persuasion, the assignment of responsibility, teaching, reinforcing and modeling. These social influences can both transmit information and evoke emotional responses from the individual. Parents play a key role in the child's social environment, and they may use all of the above techniques in order to influence their children's learning. Parents respond to their children's maturation by increasingly using social sanctions, such as persuasion and teaching, to replace physical sanctions. Social sanctions work by substituting symbolic and internal controls for external sanctions and demands (Bandura, 1977). An example of this behavior is a child's acceptance of

personal responsibility for keeping their own possessions cleaned up, and understanding that it would be unreasonable to always expect others to pick up after them.

As noted by Bandura (1977a; 1986; 1989), individuals are both products and producers of their environment. Human behavior influences their environment, such as when a child is whiny and petulant evoking an impatient and annoyed response from the parent. The environment also influences human behavior, such as when a child living in a hostile environment develops aggressive characteristics (Bandura, 1989).

The social cognitive theory explains how children are actively involved in their selection of morals and behavior. Bandura suggests that which standards are internalized is dependent upon the degree to which the model is like oneself, the value of an activity, and one's perceptions of how much personal control one has over the behavior (Bandura, 1989; 1991). This concept might also explain why girls are more likely to spend more time in household work just as mothers spend more time doing household work than fathers. Another example is the children are notoriously so slow to adopt parental guidelines about responsibility and household work. As explained by the social cognitive theory, it may be that children are unlikely to value household cleanliness as highly as adults do until they have more adult-like responsibilities for setting the standards of household cleanliness.

The Mechanism of Learning.

The mechanisms by which individuals learn, according to social cognitive theory, is by observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of other individuals. There are four components in the process of modeling and each of these components helps the individual to choose whether or not to acquire the information and

whether or not to use the information in guiding behavior. The individual components of learning are: attention; the retention of new information in memory; the symbolic representation of information into action similar to the originally modeled behavior; and motivational variables as incentives to act upon the new information.

The social cognitive theory states that individuals are continuously setting goals for themselves and assessing whether they meet that goal successfully or not. Motivation can come from others, such as a parent not permitting free play with friends until a child has completed their assigned household work. Motivation can also be the result of the positive self-regard resulting from reaching a goal, such as a child's pleasure at successfully making its own sandwich.

The social cognitive theory offers an explanation of how children gradually substitute external behavioral control by their parents and other adults with internalized behavioral self-control. Bandura suggested that through the process of self-regulation, individuals are able to internally maintain prosocial behavior by mediating external influences and providing a basis for purposeful action (Bandura, 1989, 1991). Self-regulation is basically a mechanism for internal self-control over personal behavior, with self-imposed consequences of self-approval or self-disapproval resulting from what behavior occurs.

Young children do not yet have internalized standards of self-regulation. Individuals gradually acquire these internalized standards by observing how others model self-regulatory behavior, by obtaining feedback on behaviors from significant others, and by being directly taught social and moral standards. In the broader environment,

education, media, religion, political and legal agencies also influence which moral and social standards individuals adopt.

As children gain more experience, they develop and refine their own set of behavioral expectations. As children increasingly act on the basis of their own set of anticipated outcomes, their behavior becomes increasingly self-regulated.

The Mechanism by Which Behaviors Lead to More Positive Self-Perceptions

By training and assigning children to do household work independently, parents widely assume that children will gain a sense of independence, self-sufficiency and greater empathy for others, all of which will contribute to a child's positive self-esteem. As Eisenberg and Mussen note, "...being assigned responsibility may evoke greater empathy for others, heighten the child's sense of importance, or add to the child's self-perception as a 'helpful person,' intrinsically motivated" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 91).

Social cognitive theory incorporates a "self-reflection" feature that enables individuals to analyze their experiences and thoughts, and change their thinking as a result. One type of self-reflection is self-efficacy, defined by Bandura as a type of self-reflective thought that influences the individual's motivation and effort (Bandura, 1977, 1989). An individual's sense of self-efficacy is derived from their history of success in a particular domain, from observations of the successes and failures of others, and from the individual's own physiological state (eg. nervousness or anxiety) while performing a behavior (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, an individual's sense of self-efficacy provides a measure of how information is judged and determines whether or how individuals act on the knowledge that they have. A positive sense of self-efficacy enables a person to

believe that they are effective and able to perform well, and a negative sense of self-efficacy leads to the belief that the person is ineffective and does not have the ability to perform well.

For the purposes of this thesis, the concept of self-efficacy provides an explanation of how household work activities influence a child's self-perception. The experience of doing household work leads to the formation of skills and competencies for the child. Researchers have found that there are indeed "cascading effects" from children's growing competence, and one of these effects is the development and maintenance of the child's positive self-perceptions or self-esteem (Masten and Coatsworth, 1995). In addition, the observations of successful task completion by others in the home contribute to the child's positive sense of self-efficacy. As Eisenberg & Mussen write, "In their homes, schools and communities, children who take responsibility often are rewarded for prosocial acts (by praise or feelings of self-competence or maturity)... (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 91; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Literature Review

This literature review provides a wide overview of research on children and housework is addressed. In particular, research is emphasized that examines the relationship between children's household work activities and evidence of positive outcomes from those activities is emphasized.

A review of academic literature on the subject of children and housework is notable for its paucity, particularly on the subject of whether or not household work is a beneficial occupation for children. This lack of research may be due to the widespread

acceptance of the popular assumption that household work tasks are so beneficial for children that this is a point that needs no confirmation. An alternative explanation is that no one wants to question such an assumption because of its widespread popularity among parents.

The different research emphases about families and housework reflect the changing cultural attitudes towards housework in the late 20th century. The relationship between children's chores and the development of positive personal attributes, such as responsibility, was an early research interest. This interest has continued over time, albeit at a very slow pace. Harris, et al, (1954) found no positive relationship between chores and a child's level of responsibility. Kohlberg (1964) found that when parents made strong demands for children to do chores, it had a negative effect upon the child's moral responses. Smith (1969) found a higher achievement motivation positively correlated with children who did household chores. Baumrind (1975) found that children who did housework were friendlier, and more sociable, than children who were not assigned housework. A literature review by Goodnow (1988) found no consistent pattern of positive outcomes for children related to their performance of household tasks, although she attributed this inconsistency to the lack of precise statements of values and outcomes in the research. Amato (1989) found that, for 8-9 year olds, regular household chores along with high levels of parental control and support were positively associated with high general competence. And most recently, Grusec, Goodnow, and Cohen (1996) found that routine household work that benefited the family as a whole was positively correlated with the level of 14 year old children's (particularly girls) concern for others.

By the 1970s and 1980s, researchers began to be interested in the question of who substituted for mothers' labors in the home when she went to work outside of the home. Some research found that children whose parents both worked outside of the home were more likely to have household work, and to engage in more of it (Bergen, 1991; Blair, 1992; Peters & Haldemand, 1987; Thrall, 1978). More recent research has found no difference in the time children spend doing household chores on the basis of mother's employment (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). By the 1990s, children overall were doing less household work, including children in families with two parents working outside of the home (Manke, et al, 1994; Waite & Goldscheider, 1992).

In the 1990's, researchers were predominantly interested in the effects of a child's gender on whether or not they did household work, how much household work, and the types of tasks each gender was given to do. Overall, researchers found that children's household tasks are less gender typed than those of adolescents and adults (Benin & Edwards, 1990; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Hilton & Haldeman, 1991; McHale, et al, 1990). Over time, however, children's labor in the home increasingly reflects the adult gender-typing of household labor. Adolescent girls, especially, do an average of twice as much household work as boys, and engage in more of the shopping, house cleaning, food preparation, dishwashing, clothing care, and clothing construction than boys (Brody & Steelman, 1985; Cogle & Tasker, 1982). Home maintenance and yard work is the only area where boys were found to engage in more work than girls (Lawrence & Wozniak, 1987).

Individual studies documenting the amount of time children spend on household chores have found varying results. In White and Brinkerhoff 's research, children spent

an average of four hours a week on household work (1981). Cogle and Tasker's research showed children spending approximately three and a half hours a week (1982). Children spent approximately seven hours a week on household chores in Blair's research (1992), and just under three hours housework per week were reported by children in Robinson and Bianchi's study (1997). Finally, Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) found children ages 9-12 spent 5 hours 18 minutes on household work in 1981 and 3 hours 42 minutes in 1997.

Parent's Goals in Assigning Household Work to Their Children

The primary reason given by parents in 1978 for giving children chores was for children to feel like a member of the family and for the training in skills needed in adulthood (Thrall, 1978). When White and Brinkerhoff (1981) asked parents the question: "Why do you ask your children to work," 72% replied that responsibility and/or character development were the primary reasons. Twenty-three percent of the parents surveyed by White and Brinkerhoff (1981) reported asking their children to do household work because they needed the help, and most of those parents also added developmental reasons for assigning work to their children. Blair (1992) found that parent's asked children to contribute to household work primarily because they wished to promote their child's growth and development, and secondarily because the parents are too busy to do the entire work themselves.

Could it be that better educated parents are influenced by advice from parent experts suggesting that chores are an important part of a child's social development? While research has shown parental education is the most important predictor in how much parents invest in their child's education (eg. reading and studying), results about

the influence of parental education and children's household work are confusing. Bianchi and Robinson (1997) found that neither parental education nor income predicted the amount of time children spend doing household work. Manke, et al (1994) found that children with better-educated dual/earner parents did less household work. Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) found that children did more household work (including shopping) in families with a better-educated head of household. Other research suggests that the more time parents and children spend interacting, the less time children spend doing household work. In addition, the greater value parents place upon their children's learning and importance of their relationship with their child, the less work children will have responsibility for (Blair, 1992).

Only a little more than 3% of parents ask their children to contribute because the parent needs the help (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). Just 14% of the 45 Australian mothers interviewed by Goodnow and Delaney (1989) found their children's household work to benefit the family was useful at reducing their own workload.

These findings are somewhat surprising, especially considering that the presence of children significantly increases the amount of household work that needs to be done (Bianchi, et al, 2000). It is not that mothers don't need more help. Mothers in dual-career households with children often report a high daily level of exhaustion, despite increases in the amount of time fathers spend with their children (Zimmerman & Addision, 1997). Some women with full time jobs are hiring housecleaning services, but it is still a small minority of women (20%) who can afford or choose to obtain such assistance (Oropesa (1993) as cited in Bianchi, et al., (2000).

Despite the apparent need for more help with household work in homes with children, there is little evidence to suggest that modern children do a significant amount of the household work. One researcher found that children do approximately 12% of all labor in the home (Blair, 1992). There is no evidence to suggest that mothers are asking children to fill in the gap by doing more housework as the mother's amount of time spent on household work declines.

Children's Attitudes Towards the Assignment of Household Tasks

In both non-industrial and post-industrial societies, children report that household work is neither interesting nor challenging (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, Delle Fave & Massimini, 1988). Although household work is often considered boring, this does not mean that children think these tasks have no value. When 4,627 adolescents (aged 14-15) from six nations (USA, Australia, Sweden, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Hungary) were questioned as to whether or not it was useful for children to have household work, specifically to benefit the family, the majority (97.4%) replied in the affirmative. The reason most commonly given about why children should be assigned household work that benefits the family was that such tasks encourage the development of responsibility for others. Only 2.6% of the respondents thought that household work that benefits the family had no benefits at all for children (Bowes, J.M., Flanagan, C., & Taylor, A.J. (2001).

Another study suggests that children readily distinguish between a sense of responsibility for self-care tasks and household work that benefits the family. Children in Australia between the ages of 8 and 14 were willing to ask someone else to do a household task (e.g. setting the table) but were reluctant to ask anyone else to do one of

their self-care tasks (e.g. tidy up own room) for them (Goodnow, et al., 1991). In another study interviewing 45 mothers, the researchers came to the conclusion that, on the basis of their results, household work for children that benefited the family was more likely to create a sense of caring and looking after others than self-care tasks (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989).

The Types of Household Work Typically Assigned to Children

Studies of children's household work indicate that most young children begin with self-care tasks such as picking up their own playthings, and tidying their own room (Goodnow, 1988; Thrall, 1978). Parents and children see household work that benefits the family as different from self-care tasks, and parents believe that household work tends to promote a greater sense of the child's responsibility to the family (Goodnow, et al, 1991; Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Warton & Goodnow, 1991).

Much of the research on children and housework has focused on gender differences. Women have consistently done the majority of household work, and girls have been shown to engage in more household work than boys (Antill, et al, 1996; Benin & Edwards, 1990; Bergen, 1991; Blaire, 1992; Cogle & Tasker, 1982; Coltrane, 2000; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; McHale, et al, 1990; Weisner & Garnier, 1994). The younger the child, the less gender-typed their chores appear to be (Hilton & Haldeman, 1991). The parents with more egalitarian gender ideology tend to assign their sons more housework tasks (Benin & Edwards, 1990; Weisner & Garnier, 1994). Egalitarian attitudes towards assigning housework to children without regard to gender stereotypes may be gaining ground among parents. More recent research has found no significant differences between the jobs boys and girls were assigned according to sex (Grusec,

Goodnow, & Cohen, 1996) or the amount of time boys and girls spend doing housework (Robinson & Bianchi, 1997).

The Relationship Between Children's Household Work That Benefits the Family and the Development of Prosocial Behavior and Positive Self-perceptions

By training and assigning children to do household work independently, parents widely assume that children will gain a sense of independence, self-sufficiency and greater empathy for others, all of which will contribute to a child's positive self-esteem. As Eisenberg and Mussen note, "...being assigned responsibility may evoke greater empathy for others, heighten the child's sense of importance, or add to the child's self-perception as a 'helpful person,' intrinsically motivated" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 91).

Researchers have found that there are indeed "cascading effects" from children's growing competencies in many areas, and one of these effects is the development and maintenance of the child's positive self-perceptions or self-esteem (Masten and Coatsworth, 1995). As Eisenberg & Mussen write, "In their homes, schools and communities, children who take responsibility often are rewarded for prosocial acts (by praise or feelings of self-competence or maturity)... (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989, p. 91; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

As mentioned earlier, competency has also been found to be an important prerequisite to positive self-perceptions throughout the life span. This relationship is supported by research that has found that positive self-perceptions are the consequence, not the cause, of good performance (Baumeister, et al, 2003). Children's household work is one way in which children learn both the values and skills of caring for the household,

as well as how to share an increasing portion of the responsibility for the family's well-being. Both of these experiences can have a positive impact on children's overall functioning.

Researchers studying the development of helping behavior in children have found that older children are more likely to be increasingly helpful (Bryan, 1975). Parents often take advantage of a child's developmental growth by assigning them more chores as the child matures. White and Brinkerhoff's (1981) research indicated that the youngest children began with primarily self-care tasks in the preschool years, and most children contributed more with regular household work after the age of 10.

Cross-cultural research by Whiting and Whiting (1975) found that children who did the least amount of household work, and that work being primarily to benefit themselves (cleaning up their own room) were the least likely to be altruistic or helpful to others. In contrast, the children who did more work, and work that clearly benefited the family, were the most likely to be altruistic and helpful to others. Grusec, Goodnow, & Cohen (1996) also found a significant link between older children (aged 14) doing routine work for the household and a positive increase in children's prosocial behavior, with a stronger correlation for girls than boys. Their results suggest that the increased maturity of the 14-year-old children in their sample allowed them to be more generous with their expression of spontaneous prosocial behaviors.

Some researchers found no relationship between children's chores and the development of responsibility (Harris, et al, 1954) or behavioral problems (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Another researcher found that children's general household work did not directly affect children's prosocial behaviors (Staub, 1979). One study even

suggested that increased hours of housework for adolescents led to diminished feelings of competence, especially for boys (Call, Mortimer, & Shanahan, 1995).

In contrast, other research has suggested that there are varied positive benefits for children related to the experience of doing household work. Some researchers have found that the amount and type of household work children do is directly linked to their acquisition of practical skills and related competence in successful children (Zill & Peterson, 1982). Other research has found that children who do regular chores express a higher achievement motivation (Smith, 1969). Research into the origins of children's prosocial behavior has found that children who do chores are friendlier and more sociable (Baumrind, 1971, 1975; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Crouter, et al (1993), found that boys in families with two parents who engage in more household work are more satisfied and have better relationships with their parents. Longitudinal studies by Vaillant and Vaillant (1981) suggest that increased work responsibilities outside of the home during childhood are linked to positive mental health and work success in adulthood. Whiting and Whiting (1973, 1975) found that even young preschool-aged children who had chores behaved more responsibly overall.

More recent research into children's household work has drawn a distinction between tasks performed routinely by children and tasks done in response to specific requests from adults. This research found a positive correlation between routine family work and prosocial behavior, but only in the older children (aged 14). No such correlation was found in younger children, aged 9 (Grusec, Goodnow, & Cohen (1996).

Research Questions

This review of research suggests that several issues must be addressed when studying the effects on children of doing household work that benefits the family. First, as suggested by previous research, it is important to distinguish between self-care and household work that benefits the family as a whole. Parents and children both see different benefits according to who benefits from the different types of work (Bowes, et al., 2001; Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Goodnow, et al., 1991). Second, as the research by Grusec, et al., (1996) suggests, the age of the child is relevant. Younger children may still be benefiting from the experiences of sharing in household work that benefits the family, but the benefits may not be immediately apparent. Third, also suggested by Grusec, et al, (1996), there may be a difference in the benefits from regular assigned household work as opposed to intermittent requests from parents to children to do certain tasks.

Further research is needed on this topic in order to clarify the question of whether or not children's participation in household work that benefits the family is an important part of gaining prosocial personal attributes, such as cooperation, and responsibility. Past research about the relationship between children's participation in household work to benefit the family and children's prosocial behaviors has produced inconsistent results. These results are intriguing considering the continued widespread popular acceptance of the value of assigning household tasks to children.

In addition, the present research looks at the relationship between children's household work to benefit the family and children's own reported positive self-perceptions. No other research on the effects of children's household work to benefit the

family has questioned children directly about their self-perceptions. In comparison, similar research has relied on the assessments of children's primary caregivers and teachers alone.

The present research is also particularly appropriate at this time because previous research has shown that the amount of time children are spending doing any household work is in decline. Very little is known about whether or how this diminishment of time spent on household work might affect children. By comparing children who are expected to almost always do household work to benefit the family with children who are rarely expected to do such household work, the results may suggest how children are influenced by their household work activities and, in particular, how children are influenced by household work to benefit the family.

Hypotheses

Household work that benefits the family and children's positive self-perceptions.

First, in regard to the relationship between children's household work that benefits the family and children's positive self-perceptions, the hypotheses to be tested in this thesis are these:

1. Do children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, have more positive self-perceptions than children, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?
2. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, have more positive self-

perceptions than boys, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

3. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, have more positive self-perceptions than girls, ages 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

Household work that benefits the family and children's prosocial behaviors.

Next, in regard to the relationship between children's household work that benefits the family and prosocial behaviors as evaluated by the children's primary caregivers, the following hypotheses are tested:

4. Do children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?
5. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?
6. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

Relationship between children's level of household work to benefit the family and responsibility behaviors. Next, in regard to the relationship between children's household work that benefits the family and responsibility behaviors as evaluated by the children's primary caregivers, the following hypotheses are tested:

7. Do children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?
8. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?
9. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

Relationship between children's level of household work to benefit the family and cooperation behaviors. Next, in regard to the relationship between children's household work that benefits the family and responsibility behaviors as evaluated by the children's primary caregivers, the following hypotheses are tested:

10. Do children, aged 10-12, who almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible

behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

11. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

12. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work?

Method

In this thesis, 10-12 year old children who are expected by their primary caregiver to almost always do household work that benefits the family are compared with 10-12 year old children who are rarely or never expected by their primary caregiver to do household work that benefits the family to determine if these two groups of children differ in their positive self-perceptions and prosocial behaviors, including responsible and cooperative behaviors.

Definitions

For the purpose of this review, children's positive self-perceptions are examined. Positive self-perceptions are often referred to in the literature as self-esteem. Here the definition of positive self-perceptions is the same definition used by Smith (1999) to define self-esteem as "confidence and belief in oneself".

Prosocial behavior is defined as "voluntary, intentional behavior intended to benefit others" (Eisenberg, 1999). Cooperation is included as one aspect of prosocial behavior. Dreikurs (1964) states that family cooperation means, "that each and every member moves along together to accomplish that which is best for all."

Another prosocial behavior examined is responsibility. This term is defined as "(a) following through on specific interpersonal agreements and commitments, (b) fulfilling one's social role obligations, and (c) conforming to widely held social and moral rules of conduct" (Ford, Wentzel, Wood, Stevens, & Siesfeld, 1989 as cited in Bornstein, 1995).

Sample

The data presented are from a study entitled the Child Development Supplement (CDS) to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), which was conducted by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center in 1997 (CDS/PSID, 1997). This study was designed to provide comprehensive, nationally representative, and longitudinal data about children and their families. Data were obtained in this research about the cognitive, behavioral, and health status of the children, parental and caregiver time inputs to children; information about how children and adolescents spend their time; and the learning, school, and neighborhood resources available to children. Two thousand, three hundred ninety four families were chosen to be interviewed for the Child Development Supplement (CDS). The sample families had 3,563 eligible children aged 12 and under, of which assessments were completed for 2,228 children aged 3-12.

Of this research subject pool, the data are drawn from 648, 10 to 12 year old children, and their primary caregivers. This specific group of older children is used because preadolescent children have a greater capacity (than that of younger children) to understand the impact of their actions upon others and a greater understanding of what is required to be helpful (Barnett, Darcie, Holland, & Kobasigawa, 1982 as cited in Collins, et al, 1995).

The unweighted PSID/CDS sample data used for this research is over-represented with Black and other minority families, compared to national population data, as seen in Table 1. Therefore, this research sample is predominantly (88.5%) White, non-Hispanic children and Black, non-Hispanic children. The remainder (11.5%) is Hispanic,

Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaska Native, and other minority races/ethnicities (see Table 1).

Out of the pool of 648 children, the sample was comprised of comparable numbers of 10, 11, and 12 year olds, as seen in Table 2. Of these children, approximately half were boys and half were girls, as seen in Table 3.

Table 1.

Racial and Ethnic Composition of Research Subjects

	Number and Percentage of Children in Research Sample	1997 U.S. Census Data: Percentage of Children Under Age 18
White	285 (44%)	66%
Black	288 (44.5%)	15%
Hispanic	38 (5.9%)	15%
Asian/Pacific Islander	13 (2.0%)	4%
Native American/ Alaska Native	4 (.6%)	1%
Other	17 (2.6%)	>1%
No Answer/ Don't Know	3 (.3%)	>1%
Total of all children	648 (100%)	

Note: Census data cited in "Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family
Statistics, 2000."

Table 2.

Age/Racial Characteristics of Research Subjects

Numbers and percentages of children at different ages				
	10	11	12	Total Sample
White	102 (44.3%)	81 (28.4%)	102 (35.8%)	285 (44%)
Black	105 (36.5%)	82 (28.5%)	101 (35.1%)	288 (44.5%)
Hispanic	9 (23.7%)	11 (28.9%)	18 (23.1%)	38 (5.9%)
Asian	7 (53.8%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (23.1 %)	13 (2.0%)
Native American	2 (50.0%)	1 (25.0%)	1 (25.0 %)	4 (.6%)
Other	5 (29.4%)	5 (29.4%)	7 (41.2%)	17 (2.6%)
No Answer/ Don't Know		2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (.3%)
Total of all children	230 (35.5%)	186 (28.4%)	233 (36.0%)	648 (100%)

Table 3.

Gender/Racial Characteristics of Research Subjects

	Numbers of children of each gender n(%)		Number and Percent of Total
	Male	Female	
White	134 (20.7%)	151 (23.3%)	285 (44.0%)
Black	156 (24.1%)	132 (20.4%)	288 (44.5%)
Hispanic	16 (2.5%)	22 (3.4%)	38 (5.9%)
Asian	6 (.9%)	7 (1.1%)	13 (2.0%)
Native American	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)	4 (.6%)
Other	6 (.9%)	11 (1.7%)	17 (2.6%)
No Answer/ Don't Know	3 (.3%)		3 (.3%)
Total of all children	322 (49.6%)	326 (50.4%)	648 (100%)

The child's primary caregiver is the main respondent for the study and in 96% of the cases the primary caregiver is the child's mother. The primary caregiver provided the information in face-to-face interviews about how much household work the child does and about the child's behaviors. In the original Child Development Supplement study there are 3,563 Primary caregivers. Because the Primary caregivers are matched with the 648 children in the current sample, the number of Primary caregivers is also 648.

Procedures

The Child Development Supplement/PSID survey was conducted between March 1997 and December 1997, with no data collected during July and August when schools were closed. The interviewers first completed a core PSID Family Unit interview to determine the numbers and ages of eligible children. The central office randomly selected eligible households, mailed preliminary information to the household, and made an appointment for an interview. When field interviewers visited the household, they obtained child assessments, interviewed the primary caregiver, and asked for written permission for the selected children to be interviewed. The children's responses to questions about their positive self-perceptions were obtained in face-to-face interviews with CDS field interviewers. The primary caregiver was given a small amount of money as a token of appreciation for doing the interview, and each child received a small gift.

Measures

The independent variable tested for the hypotheses is the amount of time spent by children doing household work that benefits the family. The data to measure this variable are obtained from two questions that were asked of the primary caregiver of the target

child in the Child Development Supplement. Answers to these questions were used to differentiate between children who infrequently help do household work that benefits the family, and those who routinely do so. These questions were originally developed for the Caldwell and Bradley HOME Inventory (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984 as cited in the PSID/CDS, User guide, 1998). The scales were designed to be similar to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Mother-Child Supplement. The question utilized is:

“How often is (child) expected to do each of the following? Would you say almost never, less than half the time, about half the time, more than half the time or almost always?”

1. Help keep shared living areas clean and straight?
2. Do routine chores such as mow the lawn, help with dinner, wash dishes, etc.?”

(PSID/CDS, 1997).

In the first part of the analysis, the relationship between children’s self-perceptions and their primary caregiver’s expectations that they do more or less household work to benefit the family is examined. To test this dependent variable, children’s answers to the question of whether they agree or not with positive statements about how they feel about themselves are analyzed. The questions for this section were created by H.W. Marsh as a global self-perception scale for the Marsh Self-Description Questionnaire, 1990 and used in the National Longitudinal Survey of Canadian Children and Youth, 1997. The answers for these questions are on a Likert scale, with (1) never; (2); (3); (4) sometimes; (5); (6); (7) always. The question utilized is:

“Now I am going to read some statements. For each, think about whether the statement never applies to you, sometimes applies to you, always applies to you, or is

somewhere in between. Then give me the number from the booklet after I read each sentence.”

1. “I do lots of important things (never, always, or somewhere in between?)”
2. “I like being the way I am.”
3. “Overall, I have a lot to be proud of.”
4. “I can do things as well as most people.”
5. “A lot of things about me are good.”
6. “I’m as good as most other people” (PSID/CDS, 1997).

The other dependent variables utilized in this study are measures that generally reflect a child’s level of pro-social behavior, and in particular, reflect the child’s level of responsibility and cooperation. The answers to the positive behavior questions in the CDS are used for these data. Denise Polit (1998) originally developed twenty-five positive behavior questions for use in the New Chance Evaluation. Ten of Polit’s original questions were selected by Child Trends, Inc., and were later used by PSID-CDS (1998).

The positive behavior questions are answered on a Likert scale that was developed by Child Trend, Inc., and adapted by PSID-CDS for use with the positive behavior scale. The respondents are asked whether or not each statement applies to the child, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not at all like my child,” and 5 means “totally like my child,” and 2, 3, and 4 are somewhere in-between. The question utilized is:

“Thinking about (CHILD), please tell me how much each statement applies to (CHILD) on a scale from 1-5, where 1 means “Not at all like your child,” and 5 means “totally like your child,” and 2,3, and 4 are somewhere in between.”

1. “Is cheerful, happy.”
2. “Waits (his/her) turn in games and other activities”
3. “Does neat, careful work.”
4. “Is curious and exploring, likes new experiences.”
5. “Thinks before (he/she) acts, is not impulsive.”
6. “Gets along well with other children.”
7. “Usually does what you tell him/her to do.”
8. “Can get over being upset quickly.”
9. “Is admired and well liked by other children.”
10. “Tries to do things for (himself/herself), is self-reliant” (PSID/CDS, 1997).

For further analysis, three descriptions were selected that asked about cooperative type behaviors. The three questions utilized are are:

1. “waits (his/her) turn in games and other activities;”
2. “gets along well with other children;” and
3. “admired and well liked by other children” (PSID/CDS, 1997).

Additionally, three questions which asked about responsible behaviors were selected. The three questions utilized are:

1. does neat careful work;
2. thinks before (he/she) acts, is not impulsive; and
3. tries to do things for (himself/herself), is self-reliant (PSID/CDS, 1997).

For analyses of the differences between children who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family and children who are infrequently expected to engage in household work that benefits the family, a sum of the scores that primary caregivers gave for how often children: (a) keep shared living areas clean and straight and (b) do routine chores such as mow the lawn, help with dinner, wash dishes, etc. is tallied. A correlation matrix established that there is inter-item correlation between these two questions, with Cronbach's alpha = .63. These scores were then split into three categories: low, medium, and high, as shown in Table 4. In this case, low means a score of between 2 and 6, signifying that the child is expected by the primary caregiver to do household work that benefits the family somewhere between almost never and about half the time. The high score was comprised entirely of children who had a score of 10, which indicates that the child is almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work that benefits the family.

There were slightly more children in the medium category of sometimes expected by primary caregivers to do housework that benefits the family than in the low category, and slightly more children in the higher category of almost always expected to do housework that benefits the family than in the medium category. This was true for children at every age in the sample, as seen in Table 4.

Likewise, both White and Black children showed increasing numbers in higher categories of being almost always expected by primary caregivers to do household work that benefits the family. This pattern did not hold for Hispanic and other minority children, but the numbers of other minority children are so small that these differences cannot be considered significant (See Table 5).

Table 4.

Age Characteristics of Children in Different Categories of Expectations to Do
Housework to Benefit the Family

	<u>Categories of Levels of Expectations to do Household Work</u>			<u>Total for Age</u>
	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>	
10 years old	67 (10.4%)	71 (11.0%)	92 (14.2%)	230 (35.5%)
11 years old	54 (8.3%)	60 (9.3%)	70 (10.8%)	184 (28.4%)
12 years old	57 (8.8%)	72 (11.1%)	104 (16.1%)	233 (36.0%)
Total of all children	178 (27.5%)	203 (31.4%)	266 (41.1%)	647 (100.0%)

Table 5.

Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of Children in Different Categories of Expectations to Do Housework to Benefit the Family

	<u>Categories of Levels of Expectations to Do Household Work</u>			
	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Total for Race/Ethnicity</u>
White	85 (13.1%)	94 (14.5%)	106 (16.4%)	285 (44.0%)
Black	73 (11.3%)	83 (12.8%)	132 (20.4%)	288 (44.5%)
Hispanic	14 (2.2%)	13 (2.0%)	11 (1.7%)	38 (5.9%)
Asian	4 (.6%)	5 (.8%)	4 (.6%)	13 (2.0%)
Native American		3 (.5%)	1 (.2%)	4 (.6%)
Other	2 (.3%)	4 (.6%)	11 (1.7%)	17 (2.6%)
No Answer/ Don't Know		2 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.3%)
Total of all children	178 (27.5%)	204 (31.4%)	266 (41.1%)	647 (100.0%)

One of the surprising findings in this research is the gender difference of children in the high category of expectations by primary caregivers to do household work that benefits the family. Previous research has shown that children's household work is not gender-typed (McHale, et al.; Hilton & Haldeman) or that older children's household work becomes more gender-typed as they age, and that girls engage in more household work than boys (Antill, 1996, Benin & Edwards, 1990; Bergen, 1991; Blair, 1992; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Goodnow, et al., 1996).

In contrast, this research found that more boys than girls are expected by their primary caregivers to do household work that benefits the family at the highest level, which is "almost always." The gender difference is found true for White, non-Hispanic and Asian boys, although the Asian sample is so small (13 children) that this finding is suspect (see Tables 6 and 9). The data from Asian children and

Traditional gender differences are found, with more girls than boys in the highest level of expected by their primary caregiver to do household work that benefits the family for Black, non-Hispanic children (n=288), and Hispanic children (n=38).

Similar to the pattern found with children of different races and ethnicities, there were slightly more total children in the medium category of expectations to do household work that benefits the family than in the low category, and slightly more total children in the higher category of expectations to do household work that benefits the family than in the medium category for both genders. This pattern held true across the board only for Black and Asian boys, however (see Tables 7 and 9). There were fewer White boys in the medium category of expected to do household work that benefits the family than in the lowest category. There were also fewer White girls in the high category of expected

to do housework that benefits the family than the medium category (see Table 6). Half of all Hispanic boys were in the low category of expectations to do household work, and the remainder was evenly divided between the medium and the high categories. Most of all Hispanic girls were in the medium category of expectations to do household work that benefits the family, and fewer were in the low and the high categories (see Table 8).

Table 6.

Gender Characteristics of White, Non-Hispanic Children in Different
Categories of Expectations to Do Household Work that Benefits the Family

	<u>Categories of Levels of Expectations to Do Household Work</u>			Total For Gender	Total Percentage of Sample
	Low	Medium	High		
White, Non- Hispanic	13.1%	14.5%	16.4%		44.0%
Boys	28.4%	27.6%	44.0%	100%	
Girls	31.1%	37.7%	31.1%	100%	
All Children	27.5%	31.4%	41.1%		100.0%
Boys	13.1%	14.8%	21.6%		49.6%
Girls	14.4%	16.5%	19.5%		50.4%

Table 7.

Gender Characteristics of Black, Non-Hispanic Children in Different Categories of Expectations to Do Household Work that Benefits the Family

	<u>Categories of Levels of Expectations to Do Household Work</u>				Totals for all children
	Low	Medium	Hgh	Total By Race	
All Black, non Hispanic	11.3%	12.8%	20.4%		44.5%
Boys	23.1%	32.1%	44.9%	100%	
Girls	28.0%	25.0%	47.0%	100%	
All Children	27.5%	31.4%	41.1%		100.0%
Boys	13.1%	14.8%	21.6%		49.6%
Girls	14.4%	16.5%	19.5%		50.4%

Table 8.

Gender Characteristics of Hispanic Children in Different Categories of Expectations to Do Household Work That Benefits the Family

	<u>Categories of Levels of Expectations to Do Household Work</u>				Totals for all children
	Low	Medium	High	Total By Race	
All Hispanic	2.2%	2.0%	1.7%		5.9%
Boys	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100%	
Girls	27.3%	40.9%	31.8%	100%	
All children	27.5%	31.4%	41.1%		100.0%
Boys	13.1%	14.8%	21.6%		49.6%
Girls	14.4%	16.5%	19.5%		50.4%

Table 9.

Gender Characteristics of Asian/Pacific Islander Children and Various Levels
of Expectations to Do Household Work That Benefits the Family

	<u>Categories of Levels of Expectations to Do Household Work</u>				Totals for all children
	Low	Medium	High	Total By Race	
All Asian/Pacific Islander Children	.6%	.8%	.6%		2.0%
Boys	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100%	
Girls	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%	100%	
All children	27.5%	31.4%	41.1%		100.0%
Boys	13.1%	14.8%	21.6%		49.6%
Girls	14.4%	16.5%	19.5%		50.4%

The means drawn from the dependent variables (positive self-perceptions and prosocial behaviors) of the children who are almost always expected to do household work that benefits the family are compared to the means of the children who infrequently are expected to do such household work. This comparison of extreme differences was used to provide the most effective test of the hypothesis that there is a difference in the self-perceptions and behaviors of children who are almost always expected to do household work that benefits the family and children who are infrequently or never expected to do household work that benefits the family. A t-test of independent samples is used to determine whether or not there is a difference, and whether or not that difference is statistically significant.

The responses to all of the questions assessing children's positive self-perceptions are summed for a total positive self-perception score. Internal consistency of the scale was established by a correlation matrix, with Cronbach's alpha = .77.

The responses to all of the questions assessing children's prosocial behaviors were also summed. Internal consistency of the scale was established by a correlation matrix, Cronbach's alpha=.82. The responses to the subset of questions about responsibility were found to have internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha = .60. The responses to the subset of questions about cooperation were also found to have internal consistence, Cronbach's alpha = .75 .

Chapter III: Results

Findings for the analysis of the relationship between expectations that children do household work that benefits the family to children's positive self-perceptions are presented first, followed by findings of the analysis related to prosocial behaviors, including responsible and cooperative behaviors.

Relationship Between Expectations that Children Do Household Work to Benefit the Family and Positive Self-perception

The first three hypotheses tested were: Do children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family have more positive self-perceptions than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such housework?

Hypothesis 1. Do children aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, have more positive self-perceptions than children, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such housework?

Children who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have significantly different positive self-perceptions than children who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family, as seen in Table 10 ($M_{\text{High}} = 44.96$; $M_{\text{Low}} = 44.15$), $t = -1.19$, $p = \text{ns}$.

Hypothesis 2. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, have more

positive self-perceptions than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such housework?

Boys, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family, were not found to have significantly different positive self-perceptions than boys who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family, as seen in Table 10 ($M_{\text{High}} = 44.91$; $M_{\text{Low}} = 44.11$), $t = -.83$, $p = \text{ns}$.

Hypothesis 3. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, have more positive self-perceptions than girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such housework?

Girls who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have significantly different positive self-perceptions in sum than girls who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family, as seen in Table 10 ($M_{\text{High}} = 45.01$; $M_{\text{Low}} = 44.18$), $t = -.87$, $p = \text{ns}$.

To further understand these research results, additional analysis examined the answers to individual questions about positive self-perceptions. Hypothesis 3 was not supported, but there were some interesting results that indicate certain exceptions. In particular, girls who are almost always expected to do household work to benefit the family were found to have significantly higher scores on two positive self-perception questions: "I like the way I am," ($M_{\text{Low}} = 5.72$; $M_{\text{High}} = 6.24$), $t = -2.6$, $p < .05$ and "I can do things as well as other people" ($M_{\text{Low}} = 5.23$; $M_{\text{High}} = 5.48$), $t = -1.35$, $p < .05$.

Table 10.

Positive Self-perception Scores of Children in Categories of Expectations to Do Household work that Benefits the Family

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig.
All Children					
Low housework	178	44.15	7.23	-1.19	.234
High housework	266	44.96	6.90		
Boys					
Low housework	85	44.11	7.23	-.825	.41
High housework	140	44.91	7.07		
Girls					
Low housework	93	44.18	7.26	-.87	.39
High housework	126	45.01	6.74		

Relationship Between Expectations That Children Do Household Work to Benefit the Family and Prosocial Behaviors

The next three hypotheses tested were: Do children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Hypothesis 4. Do children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Children who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family were found to score significantly higher on the sum of prosocial behaviors than children who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}} = 42.85$; $M_{\text{Low}} = 41.67$, $t = -2.11$, $p < .05$), as seen in Table 11.

Hypothesis 5. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Boys who are almost always expected to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have significantly different scores on prosocial behaviors than boys who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=41.76$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 40.65$), $t=-1.29$, $p<ns$, as seen in Table 11.

Hypothesis 6. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more prosocial behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Girls who are almost always expected to do household work to benefit the family were found to have significantly higher scores on the sum of prosocial behaviors than the girls who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=44.06$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 42.61$), $t=-2.11$, $p<.05$, as seen in Table 11.

Table 11.

Prosocial Behavior Scores of Children in Category of Household Work that Benefit the Family

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig.
All Children					
Low housework	178	41.67	5.65	-2.11	.036
High housework	266	42.85	5.84		
Boys					
Low housework	85	40.65	6.36	-1.29	.197
High housework	140	41.76	6.18		
Girls					
Low housework	93	42.61	4.75	-2.11	.036
High housework	126	44.06	5.21		

Relationship Between Children's Level of Household Work to Benefit the Family and Responsibility Behaviors

The next three hypotheses tested were: Do children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who infrequently engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Hypothesis 7. Do children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who infrequently engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Children who are almost always expected to do household work to benefit the family were found to score higher on the subset of responsibility behaviors than children who are infrequently expected do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=12.31$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 11.76$), $t=-2.39$, $p<.05$, as seen in Table 12.

Hypothesis 8. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Boys who are almost always expected to do household work to benefit the family were found to score higher on responsibility behaviors than boys who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=11.86$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 11.02$), $t=-2.48$, $p<.05$, as seen in Table 12. In particular, boys who are almost always expected to

do household work to benefit the family the family were found to score significantly higher on one statement evaluating the child's level of prosocial behaviors: that statement is "tries to do things himself, is self reliant" ($M_{\text{High}}=4.70$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 4.26$), $t=-2.39$, $p<.005$.

Hypothesis 9. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more responsible behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Girls who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have different scores on the subset of responsibility behaviors than girls who infrequently do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=12.80$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 12.44$), $t=-1.27$, $p=ns$, as seen in Table 12.

Table 12.

Responsibility Behavior Scores of Children in Category of Household work to Benefit the Family

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig.
All Children					
Low housework	178	11.76	2.48	-2.39	.017
High housework	266	12.31	2.27		
Boys					
Low housework	85	11.02	2.71	-2.48	.014
High housework	140	11.86	2.31		
Girls					
Low housework	93	12.44	2.03	-1.27	.207
High housework	126	12.80	2.12		

Relationship between children's level of household work to benefit the family and cooperative behaviors

The final three hypotheses tested were: Do children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work by their primary caregiver that benefits the family, engage in more cooperative behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Hypothesis 10. Do children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more cooperative behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children/boys/girls, aged 10-12, who are infrequently expected to engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Children who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have significantly different scores on the subset of cooperative behaviors ($M_{\text{High}}=13.38$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 13.13$), $t=-1.27$, $p<.ns$, as seen in Table 13.

Hypothesis 11. Do boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more cooperative behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys, aged 10-12, who infrequently engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Boys who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have significantly different scores on the

subset of cooperative behaviors than boys who are infrequently expected to do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=13.10$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 12.81$), $t=-.918$, $p<ns$, as seen in Table 13.

Hypothesis 12. Do girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected by their primary caregiver to engage in household work that benefits the family, engage in more cooperative behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls, aged 10-12, who infrequently engage in such household work that benefits the family?

Girls who are almost always expected by their primary caregivers to do household work to benefit the family were not found to have significantly different scores on the sum of cooperative behaviors than girls who infrequently do household work to benefit the family ($M_{\text{High}}=13.70$; $M_{\text{Low}}= 13.42$), $t=-1.14$, $p=ns$, as seen in Table 13.

Table 13.

Cooperation Behavior Scores of Children in Category of Household Work to Benefit the Family

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig.
All Children					
Low housework	178	13.13	2.16	-1.27	.206
High housework	266	13.38	2.01		
Boys					
Low housework	85	12.81	2.52	-.92	.359
High housework	140	13.10	2.12		
Girls					
Low housework	93	13.42	1.73	-1.14	.255
High housework	126	13.70	1.83		

Discussion

Summary and Interpretation of Results

The relationship between different levels of household work expected from children and positive self-perceptions. The first three hypotheses proposed that there would be a positive relationship between primary caregiver's expectations that children would almost always engage in household work to benefit the family and the children's self-reports of positive self-perceptions. Overall, children who are expected to engage in more household work to benefit the family do not report significantly more positive self-perceptions than children who are not expected to frequently engage in household work. When analyzed separately for boys and girls, the same result was found to be true. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which stated that children who are almost always expected by their primary caregivers to engage in household work to benefit the family would report themselves to have higher positive self-perceptions, was not supported by these results. Hypotheses 2 and 3, which stated that similar relationships would be found for boys and girls separately were not supported as well. Therefore, there does not seem to be an effect of increased positive self-perceptions for children who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family.

Adults do the vast majority of the household work in most households. As previous research suggested, few mothers see children's contributions to household work that benefits the family as useful because it reduces the adult's workload (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; White & Brinkeroff, 1981). In addition, this research was comparing two different populations of children about whom there were different adult expectations. These results therefore suggest that there is no relationship between adult expectations of

children's household work contributions and the children's own self-perceptions.

Perhaps this is an indication that the development of children's positive self-perceptions are not dependent upon adult's expectations of how much work the child does in the household.

Children may also feel little or no personal investment in household work that benefits the family because they see this work as primarily an adult responsibility. Children generally do such a small percentage of the overall household work that they may perceive their contributions (no matter how frequently expected) to be insignificant. As the social cognitive theory explains, learning depends in part on the value of the action being learned. The children's perception that their overall contributions to family household work are insignificant may explain in part why children do not generally experience more positive self-perceptions as a result of these contributions.

In addition, Goodnow and Delaney's (1989) research showed that mothers assign their children household work to benefit the family with the intention of promoting children's understanding of the basic rules of cooperation, mutual respect, and family relationships. Learning these skills may be important in many aspects of 10-12 year old children's lives, but these rules in the context of household work may not have any relationship to the overall development of 10-12 year old children's positive self-perceptions.

Further analysis of the individual answers given by ten to twelve year old girls who are almost always expected to do household work to benefit the family to questions about positive self-perceptions found significant differences in girl's self-reports that they like themselves better and feel more confident that they can do things, compared to the

girls who rarely engage in such housework. Girls who are almost always expected to engage in household work to benefit the family may experience more positive feedback from adults than boys who engage in similar amounts of household work to benefit the family, resulting in greater gains of self-approval and confidence for girls than boys. Ten to twelve year old girls who are expected to engage in more household work to benefit the family may also enjoy the experience of gaining mastery in a traditional feminine role, which might also lead to more self-reports of positive self-perceptions. McHale, et al., (1990) also found that girls who engaged in more traditionally feminine household work perceived themselves as more competent.

The relationship between different levels of household work expected from children and children's prosocial behaviors. The next three hypotheses proposed that there would be a positive relationship between how much household work to benefit the family is expected from children and the primary caregiver's reports about the children's prosocial behaviors.

Hypotheses 4 and 6 were supported by results that showed that children overall, and girls in particular, who are almost always expected to do household work that benefits the family are reported by their primary caregivers to behave significantly more prosocially than children who rarely are expected to engage in such household work. In contrast, this relationship was not found for boys, as was predicted by Hypothesis 5.

These results suggest that there is a positive relationship between children who are almost always expected by primary caregivers to engage in household work that benefits the family and more prosocial behaviors by these children as reported by the primary caregivers. In this regard, the results support the accomplishment of parent's

often-stated goals of teaching their children important positive social values and skills through the assignment of household work, specifically work which benefits the family (Goodnow and Delaney's, 1989; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). The results can also be explained by children's acceptance of parental messages connecting household work to benefit the family with parent's prosocial behavioral expectations. A large survey of Australian children in primary school found that 60% of the children reported that their primary reason for doing household work was "to help" (Goodnow & Burns, 1985 as cited in Goodnow, 1988).

The relationship between different levels of household work expected from children and children's responsibility behaviors. The next three hypotheses proposed that there would be a positive relationship between primary caregiver's expectations that children would almost always engage in household work to benefit the family and the primary caregiver's reports about the children's responsibility behaviors. These hypotheses predict that children, boys, and/or girls who are almost always expected by primary caregivers to engage in household work that benefits the family would engage in more responsible behaviors, as reported by the child's primary caregiver, than children who rarely engage in such household work.

Hypotheses 7 and 8 were supported by the research, which found that children and boys, aged 10-12, who are regularly expected to engage in household work that benefits the family were reported by the children's primary caregivers to engage in more responsibility behaviors than children who rarely engaged in such work. The exception was Hypothesis 9, which was not supported by the results. Results showed that girls who are regularly expected to engage in household work that benefits the family did not

engage in more responsibility behaviors, as reported by the girl's primary caregivers, than girls who are rarely expected to engage in such household work.

These research results suggest that primary caregiver's expectations of frequent engagement in household work that benefits the family may influence boys and girls differently. Caregiver's expectations of frequent participation in household work to benefit the family may promote more prosocial behaviors in general for girls and may promote more responsible behaviors specifically in boys.

Another explanation may be that primary caregivers value, and therefore report, different qualities in boys and girls. The primary caregivers, who are almost always mothers, may value and report responsibility behaviors more frequently in boys and prosocial behaviors more frequently in girls. Other researchers (Berk, 1985; White & Brinkeroff, 1981) have noted that traditional household work training for girls seemed to emphasize the value of women generously doing routine household tasks for others. Mothers who have themselves been socialized in this manner may likewise value and report prosocial behaviors from their daughters, more so than from their sons.

The relationship between different levels of household work expected from children and cooperative behaviors. The final three hypotheses proposed that there would be a positive relationship between primary caregiver's expectations that children would almost always engage in household work to benefit the family and the primary caregiver's reports about the children's cooperative behaviors. These hypotheses predicted that children, boys, and/or girls who are almost always expected by primary caregivers to engage in household work that benefits the family would engage in more

cooperative behaviors, as reported by the child's primary caregiver, than children who are rarely expected to engage in such household work.

Hypotheses 10 predicted that children, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family would engage in more cooperative behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than children who are rarely expected to engage in such household work. Hypothesis 11 predicted that boys, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family would be seen by the primary caregiver to be cooperative, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than boys who are rarely expected to engage in such household work. Hypothesis 12 predicted that girls, aged 10-12, who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family would engage in more cooperative behaviors, as measured by the child's primary caregiver, than girls who rarely engage in such household work.

The research results did not support any of the hypotheses that predicted a relationship between caregiver's expectations that children would almost always engage in household work and children's cooperative behaviors. These results suggest that children who are almost always expected to engage in household work that benefits the family are not more likely to increase their cooperative behaviors in comparison to children who rarely engage in household work that benefits the family.

This finding may be explained in part by the social cognitive theory which states that learning occurs through modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. It is widely assumed that children who do household work are complying with the directions of adults, rather than as relatively equal and cooperative partners in the

family. Therefore, it might be expected that children are learning more about compliance than cooperation when engaging in household work.

It should be noted that only 15% of a large survey of children reported that they did household work because “I have to” (Goodnow & Burns, 1985, as cited in Goodnow, 1988). Nevertheless, it has been found that children are usually expected to do their assigned household work at the direction of an adult caregiver, with the adult’s expectation that the child will eventually work independently and/or will internalize the underlying values of sharing household work (Goodnow, 1988).

Findings regarding gender. By far the most unexpected findings in the data are the greater percentages of boys than girls in the highest category of being expected to engage in housework to benefit the family (boys 21.6%, girls 19.5%). Previous research has consistently shown girls performing household work that benefits the family earlier and more often than boys (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981); Zill & Peterson, (1982); as well as twice as many girls as boys doing general household work that benefits the family (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981).

Findings regarding other demographic factors. These research results were drawn from a data pool of children who were 44% White and 56% other racial minorities and ethnicities in the United States. While this racial balance does not reflect the racial demographics of the United States, it provides a diverse overview of children’s household work activities and effects.

These research results also contribute to the extremely limited amount of information about the household work to benefit families engaged in by non-White children. In particular, these results show that 44.9% of Black boys and 47.0% of Black

girls almost always participate in household work that benefits the family. In contrast, Padgett's (1997) research found that just over a third of children in Black families participated in household work to benefit the family.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Limitations. One major limitation of this research is that the level of children's household work was defined by their primary caregiver's expectations about how frequently the children should be contributing to household work. Future research would do well to examine the amount of time children actually spend on household work, as measured by time diaries, for instance, and compare children's prosocial behaviors and positive self-perceptions accordingly.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of data about the intentions of the parents in assigning or not assigning household work to benefit the family to their children. As other research has shown, many parents cite developmental reasons as their top priority in assigning this type of work to their children. It would have been useful to have had data about what were the goals of the parents in this study who were expecting their children to do household work to benefit the family.

It would also have been interesting to have more information from the children in the study about their views of the value (or lack thereof) of household work that benefits the family and what value they assigned to the work that they contributed to the household.

Another weakness of this research is the difficulty in finding clear, widely agreed upon definitions of such terms as "responsibility" and "cooperation." Other researchers have also found generalized these concepts difficult to define and test (Goodnow, 1998).

It is a situation similar to the famous comment about pornography, “I’m not sure how to define it, but I know it when I see it.” As long as these concepts are subject to being loosely defined and tested in different contexts and by different researchers, results will be difficult to compare and contrast.

Another limitation of the study has to do with the questions used to measure cooperative behaviors. These questions were primarily about behaviors related to children’s peer relationships. It may be that the questions about children’s social behaviors with their peers were not a useful comparison for children’s behaviors in the family.

Finally, the original research study used for this research did not have a specific test item measuring children’s level of empathy or altruism. Therefore, it was not possible to assess that particular behavioral quality and its relationship to children’s routine household work responsibilities, such as the research done in another recent study (Grusec, et al., 1996).

Future Research. Questions for future research might address the possibility of maternal bias in evaluating their son’s and daughter’s prosocial behaviors. Further research into the connection between children’s household work that benefits the family and children’s altruistic and empathic behaviors would also be useful to build upon previous research.

The gender and racial/ethnic differences in different levels of household work to benefit the family also call for more analysis. It was not within the purview of this research to explain the gender and racial/ethnic differences that were found, but they raise tantalizing questions which would be interesting to explore.

Further research into how parents assign and supervise children's household work activities would also be useful. Some research has indicated that if parents assign and supervise their children in household work assignments with "strong training demands" there is a negative effect upon children's moral responses (Kohlberg, 1964). Other research in Australia has indicated that mothers in particular, are teaching children about social relationships in the family when they assign children household tasks (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Goodnow, et al., 1991). Similar research in the United States, particularly among different races and ethnic communities, would also be illuminating.

Implications.

The results found in this research expand upon similar research results published recently in Australia (Grusec, et al., 1996) that found a relationship between children who frequently do household work that benefits the family and greater expressions of caring for others in the family. Whereas Grusec, et al., were looking at only the relationship of routine family-care work and children expressing caring for others demonstrated in family, this research examines the relationship of household work to benefit the family to a broader spectrum of prosocial behaviors.

The results of this study can be used to support parent education efforts to encourage parents to continue to involve their children in household work that benefits the family. In contrast to earlier research about the effects of household work for children which did not distinguish between children's self-care work and children's household work that benefits the family, the research results presented here support Australian research that has also found a positive relationship between children's

contributions to household work and an increase in girl's prosocial behaviors (Grusec, Goodnow, & Cohen, 1996).

Blair (1992) found that parents assigned children household work in part because the parents were too busy to do it all themselves. More recent studies which find children's time participating in household work decreasing (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001) despite the ever increasing demands on parent's time (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997) appear to contradict Blair's findings. It now seems plausible that parents may be saving time by doing less housework overall (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997), and doing more of the remaining household work themselves, rather than taking the time needed to supervise children as they do their assigned housework tasks.

There are indications that some parents may feel like their children benefit by contributing less to household work. Children in the more affluent and better-educated families do the least amount of household work (Manke, et al., 1994) and parents who most value their relationship with their child give their children fewer household work responsibilities (Blair, 1992). If these trends continue, it may signal the beginning of an important shift in cultural norms regarding the value of children's household work contributions as a means of acquiring prosocial behavioral attributes.

Yet parents will also want to consider the reports of most children who know they participate in household work "to help" (Goodnow & Burns, 1985, as cited in Goodnow, 1988), and the young adolescents from around the world who almost unanimously believe that household work assignments are a valuable experience that help children develop responsibility (Bowes, et al., 2001). Such studies support the veracity of

common multi-cultural and historical norms about the value of assigning some family work responsibilities to children.

As parents continue to reduce the amount of time they ask their children to contribute to household work to benefit the family, or stop asking for any contributions at all, families must find new ways to train their children in prosocial behaviors and give their children to develop the positive self-perceptions which come from learning to be capable and to make meaningful contributions to the home. It may well be that families will continue to adapt and find new activities and experiences to help their children develop these attributes.

In the meantime, families will still have to find a way to clean the living areas, feed family members, and take out the trash. This study, and future research into the benefits of children's household work to benefit the family, may provide the impetus parents need to provide the time and energy required to encourage their children to contribute to household work, to learn basic housekeeping skills, and to promote children's prosocial behaviors and positive self-perceptions through the family.

Conclusions

This research on children's household work and their prosocial behaviors and positive self-perceptions was based upon one of the largest, and most demographically balanced population samples ever used in studies of similar topics. The face-to-face interviews with primary caregivers and children, and the inclusion of children's interviews in the data, also strengthen the results found in this research. Both factors make this research an important contribution to the field.

The results found here also strongly suggest that there are distinct benefits for children regularly engaging in household work that benefits others, and that there are some gender differences in how children benefit from this activity. As parents prioritize their activities with their children, it is to be hoped that they will continue to give their children the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the family welfare.

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