Making meaning of gender from role division in long-term, dual-earner marriages
by Barbara Jo Stelmack

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Home Economics
Montana State University
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Abstract:
The meaning of gender, as reflected in role division in the home, was qualitatively examined in couples who were married for ten years or more and both worked outside the home. A social construction theory framework was applied to the construction of gender to discern -the contingencies and interactions that inform gender meanings. Sixteen couples were conjointly interviewed regarding their role division in the domains of 1) housework and child-care, 2) financial management and decision-making, and 3) leisure and relationship. Grounded theory techniques guided the interview process and the data, derived from audio-tapes of the interviews, was presented descriptively. Couples were found to mostly conform to a contemporary model of role division where men assume primacy over work and financial matters, women assume primacy over the home, children and relationship concerns. Roles were influenced by primary socialization, ie., what had been learned in their families of origin; employment, ie., the relative amounts of time available for the home; and, changes in life circumstances, ie., work and children. Couples denied power imbalances in their marriages and adamantly stressed teamwork, fairness and equity in their roles. Although women took greater responsibility for negotiating changes in the home share, couples perceived gender to be incidental in their organization, citing balance and equity as driving their role division. Implications of contemporary role structures and the application of equity theory were discussed.

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APPROVAL

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Barbara Jo Stelmack

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4-25-94
Date

Carmen Knudson-Martin
Chairperson, Graduate Committee

Approved for the Major Department

4/26/94
Date

Head, Major Department

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

5/10/94
Date

R L Brown
Graduate Dean

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Date April 25, 1994

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Abstract

The meaning of gender, as reflected in role division in the home, was qualitatively examined in couples who were married for ten years or more and both worked outside the home. A social construction theory framework was applied to the construction of gender to discern the contingencies and interactions that inform gender meanings. Sixteen couples were conjointly interviewed regarding their role division in the domains of 1) housework and child-care, 2) financial management and decision-making, and 3) leisure and relationship. Grounded theory techniques guided the interview process and the data, derived from audio-tapes of the interviews, was presented descriptively. Couples were found to mostly conform to a contemporary model of role division where men assume primacy over work and financial matters, women assume primacy over the home, children and relationship concerns. Roles were influenced by primary socialization, ie., what had been learned in their families of origin; employment, ie., the relative amounts of time available for the home; and, changes in life circumstances, ie., work and children. Couples denied power imbalances in their marriages and adamantly stressed teamwork, fairness and equity in their roles. Although women took greater responsibility for negotiating changes in the home share, couples perceived gender to be incidental in their organization, citing balance and equity as driving their role division. Implications of contemporary role structures and the application of equity theory were discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Gender-making, defined as the meaning imbued in and derived from behavioral displays of male or female identities, is a dynamic, interactional process. Within the context of a long-term, dual-earner marriage, gender-making manifests in the negotiation and adaptation of labor division, decision-making, leisure activities and relationship maintenance. The purpose of this study is to examine how the meaning of gender both impacts and is affected by (as a circular process) the process of role division and/or sharing within the enduring, dual-earner marriage.

Social construction theory declares that "...social interpretation and the intersubjective influences of language, family, and culture" (Atwood, 1993, p.116) comprise meaning systems. Gender is the socially constructed categorization into one of two behavioral patterns associated with male and female identities (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). Gender is an omnipresent social construction ever in the making as individuals interact (West & Zimmerman, 1991). It is a socially constructed social status that underlies virtually all known societies

(Kessler & McKenna, 1978).

In the contemporary Western world an emergent duality appears when examining the objectified, stereotypical masculine and feminine genders. Yet, much of the research in gender differences allows that men and women are fundamentally more alike than different (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). The complex social and economic climate of today allows us to construct our meanings of gender in new ways with more freedom of choice, movement and even confusion where gender-related behaviors are concerned.

The current proliferation of dual-earner marriages provides an environment that both necessitates and provides options for the construction and re-making of gender. Working couples represent a cross-over, or merging, of the behaviorally construed gender dichotomy as both men and women take responsibility for the family's financial support. The couple's sharing of the traditionally male responsibility of economic provision will likely reverberate to other aspects of their lives together. Division and/or sharing of household labor, decision-making, leisure activities and relationship "work" may require or bring about a reconstruction of gender in an ongoing, dynamic process as a family develops.

Purpose of the Study

Gender-making, the meaning-making of gender, both impacts and is influenced by the process of negotiating and adapting roles within marriage. This study examines, in-depth, the evolving meanings of gender manifesting around the process of role division of long term, dual-earner couples. It addresses a) how working men and women are and are not using gender as an organizing principle in their family roles, b) the contingencies, over time, impacting family roles and the reconstruction of gender, and c) what it means to be the husband or wife, respectively, in marriages where gender cross-over is evident.

This gender-making process is investigated within the paradigm of qualitative inquiry. The data is descriptive, presenting the content of the interviews. Grounded theory techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) are employed in the interview process to enhance the rigor of the study. Grounded theory research seeks to discover and generate theory from social investigation; theory that is grounded in the socially derived data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While the present study does not generate new theory, the use of grounded theory techniques contributes to the theoretical understanding of the gender-making process. Inherent assumptions concerning the social processes under study are derived from social construction

theory as it applies to knowledge and reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1982, 1985); to marriage (Berger & Kellner, 1970); and to gender (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Lorber & Farrell, 1991).

The researcher's primary aim in this study is to provide insight for marriage and family therapists into the implications of the social construction of gender in marital interaction. The secondary aim is to exemplify a research agenda that seeks to expose gender-making as a culturally situated, mutable, interactional process. The choice of a qualitative, narrative-based design for the examination of social construction provides a mirror for the application of social construction in the clinical setting. An understanding of the processes that reflect gender meanings in marriage can have implications for the often ignored or potentially invisible gender-making in a therapeutic relationship.

Costa and Sorenson (1993) address the ethical implications for clinicians of intruding into therapy with gender issues not directly presented. They consider this a matter of choice but conclude that family therapists have an ethical responsibility to be aware of the current, culturally situated feminist issues as well as the therapist's own gender-based transference issues. For Pittman (1985) family therapists need a non-sexist approach, becoming "gender brokers" (p.29) who can help to dispel the

myths of gender and their constraints, "...opening up the full range of functional and emotional activities to people of both genders" (p.30). Whether the choice is made to explore gender in therapy or not, the marriage and family therapist can benefit from understanding the social construction process as it applies to gender and other realities both for oneself and for clients.

This study holds particular relevance for marriage and family counselors wishing to incorporate social construction theory and gender awareness into their therapy. It contributes to an understanding of how gender meanings evolve.

Theoretical Context

Because gender is a dynamic, socially conceived concept it is best examined within the theoretical framework of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1982). The social construction frameworks of marriage (Berger & Kellner, 1970) and gender (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Lorber & Farrell, 1991) discourage global social comparisons that lose sight of the particular interactional processes that contribute to their making. Instead, marriage and the gender categories, i.e., their construction and maintenance, are examined within the context of particular social groups and micro-groups such as the family. Gender is a fundamental underpinning of all societies yet must be understood in a

historical, societal and situational context.

The Social Construction of Reality

Berger and Luckmann (1966) acknowledge the historical origins and development of their theory in the works of Marx, Scheler, Mannheim, Mead and Durkheim, and others. However, for the purpose of this study, the focus will begin with Berger and Luckmann's seminal work on the social construction of reality and knowledge. The fundamental principle of the sociology of knowledge is that human consciousness is the product of the evolving social being. The acquisition of knowledge originates in social context and is disseminated, maintained and transformed through social interaction. Social interaction involves both maintenance and reconstruction of social knowledge.

A central concept in the sociology of knowledge is "ideology". Ideology, defined as "...ideas serving as weapons for social interests" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.5), influences virtually all thought and is inherent in every social context. The everyday realities and common sense knowledge shared by a society's membership are the source of its essential meanings. Common language substantiates, provides order and gives meaning to individual and shared human experience; creating an assumed, taken for granted reality that is not lightly challenged. "Typifications", the typical interaction patterns that come with shared knowledge and ideologies, may characterize a

society. However, typifications are subject to the variability and flexibility arising from the exchange of the subjective meanings of the participants. Although we approach face-to-face interaction from unique positions that may be grounded in a shared reality, it is the interplay of our relative, subjective experiences of that reality that will manifest and conceivably bear influence.

Shared reality grows out of repeated patterns of action, or habituation, and grows into institutionalization; that is, the cultural embedment of behavioral patterns. Institutions are thus "...embodied in individual experience by means of roles" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.69) which, when internalized, "...represent the institutional order" (p.70). Role analysis is key to understanding how individuals subjectively experience and exemplify the objective meanings of their society and how identities are formed. The process of internalization and identification with "socially assigned typifications" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.84), or roles, is mediated by primary and secondary socialization.

Through primary socialization "...the individual's first world is constructed" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.125) as the "significant others" of childhood impart and exemplify social knowledge. There is no choosing of significant others for primary socialization; identification is limited to the options at hand representing the narrow

reality of the available possibilities. The internalization of one's primary socialization becomes firmly rooted in consciousness but, ultimately, is never complete in the ongoing internalization of society.

In secondary socialization the society's institutions are internalized with the adoption of specific roles and the achievement of the role-related knowledge that has foundations in the division of labor. The intractableness of primary socialization can present a problem for the imposition of new knowledge in secondary socialization, "...a problem of consistency between the original and new internalizations" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.129). Significant others play a major, although not exclusive, part in maintaining the individual's subjective reality and its central component, identity, throughout life. Conversation is the subtle conveyor "...that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs...subjective reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.140). A complex society presents a greater variety of objective realities and significant others. This leads to a "heterogeneity in the socializing personnel" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.154) in competition for influence, obfuscating the socializing process with multiple options.

In summary of Berger and Luckmann's conception of the social construction of reality, there is a circular, dialectical process where humans are both the creators and

the created, the producers and the products of the societies that represent an objective reality. That objective knowledge is ever-susceptible to subjective interpretation. Identity is shaped by social processes and, once formed, is sustained, transformed or reconstructed by social interactions determined by social structure. Identities, in turn, influence the maintenance, transformation and restructuring of societies. Significant others play pivotal roles and language is the vehicle for reality construction and meaning. The social construction of knowledge, reality and self can only be understood from the foundation of the particular social context.

Gergen's (1982) use of the concept of reflexivity (for which he credits Alfred Shutz) must be added to Berger and Luckmann's delineation of the process of reality construction. Reflexivity is the consideration of past events such that the past can reassert itself in the present and, the possibility exists, for the past to be reconstituted by virtue of the present. Both the past and the present are co-constructors of both the present and the past in a complex, dialectical process.

This study examines the interplay of primary and secondary socialization in the gender-making process as roles and subjective meanings interact. Marriage provides an ideal setting for the examination of the contingencies and conversations that reconstruct typified gender

realities.

The Social Construction of Marriage

Berger and Kellner (1970) apply the social construction of reality to the institution of marriage on the microsocial level; that is, how marriage reflects social process for individuals in the context of a specific marriage. Marriage is viewed as a social configuration that gives order and meaning and helps to make sense of life. The meaning-making process is dependent on the society's rules for conduct, it's role proscriptions within marriage, and the perceptions and interpretations of the married persons. The objective realities of marriage, defined by a particular social context, are subjectively experienced and conceivably reconstructed within each marriage.

Berger and Kellner (1970) consider marriage to be the most central "validating" (p.53) relationship in our society, requiring a "dramatic redefinition" of life as two histories merge. They further emphasize that in present-day society there is an alienation in the economic or public sphere that has led to the creation of a private sphere (home, family and friends) that plays the pivotal role in a person's self definition. Presently, it is a time of extreme demands and expectations within marriage.

Conversation is the vehicle for understanding and meaning-making, the material from which marriages are constructed (Berger & Kellner, 1970). As the objective

meanings of marriage for the individuals are subjectively played out through their interaction, a unique conversation evolves. Each person's reality is reconstructed as it interrelates with the reality of the other. What prior to marriage were considered the objective or typical pitfalls to be overcome within the marital arrangement becomes the unanticipated transformation of identity, "a new and ever-changing reality" (Berger & Kellner, 1970, p.59) resulting from secondary socialization.

Gender is a relational reality present in all heterosexual marriages. This study will examine the evolving marriage roles for their impact on the gender-making process.

The Social Construction of Gender

Lorber and Farrell (1991) assume a social structural position, based on social construction theory, for examining genders. Not gender, but genders are defined based on the historical situation combined with various social groups. Genders are products of context. Yet, it is a given that men and women remain distinguishable; that gender is fabricated in the social order as a social status; and that gender categories endure in the face of mutable sexual behaviors (Lorber & Farrell, 1991).

Kessler and McKenna (1978) agree, defining gender as the "...psychological, social and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness" (p.7). Gender is a "social

accomplishment" (p.22) and the construction of gender is a part of reality construction (p.162). They argue that the social and psychological dichotomies attributed to men and women grow out of the physical dichotomies; as long as the physical distinctions are emphasized the social and psychological distinctions naturally. however inaccurate, follow.

In this study the endurance and the mutability of genders will be questioned as gender cross-over manifests. How genders persist and resist in the face of shared roles inform the gender-making process in a marital context.

Summary

Social construction is the interaction of socio-cultural influences and a person's subjective perceptions and meanings of everyday life. Socialization results in typifications, or predictable patterns of behavior, that provide order and stability yet are subject to scrutiny and reformulation as primary and secondary socialization combine. The past informs the present while the present, through reflexivity, reconstructs the past. Just as the greater society and socializing influences bear on the social constructions of its membership, so do the meaning constructions of the members transform the society.

Gender is a social construction that no known human is without. The influence of gender is pervasive, manifesting

in every social encounter. Therefore, gender must be a pivotal factor in the marriage construction process as identities and roles combine in the making of new meaning systems. It is inevitable that gender will be reconstructed, and the process discernable, in marital interaction.

Definitions

Gender: The social and psychological delineations of male and female identities that grow out of the physical distinctions and become incorporated into social knowledge.

Gender cross-over: The merging or sharing of socially defined, gender related roles and behaviors by men and women.

Gender-making: The meanings of gender that infuse and grow out of the interactions between men and women; the construction and reconstruction of gender.

Primary socialization: The socializing influences of childhood, including the ideologies and relationships exemplified by one's social context and early caretakers.

Reflexivity: Understanding the present in light of the past as well as reconsidering the past in light of present knowledge.

Secondary socialization: The interplay of primary socialization and internalized roles, mediated by the cultural experiences and significant relationships of adulthood.

Social Construction: The dialectic of social knowledge as imparted by the agents of society and social knowledge as understood and interpreted by the society's members in everyday life; the continuous shaping of individuals by their social context and the concurrent influence of individuals on the evolution of their society.

Typifications: The repeated patterns of behavior that come with shared knowledge; the expected, culturally embedded behaviors associated with social categories, eg., roles or gender.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender related research proliferated in the 1970's. Deaux (1984), assuming a social psychology perspective, analyzed and classified the prior decade's research on sex and gender, finding three approaches: the examination of sex as a subject variable; the focus on individual differences in masculinity, femininity and androgyny; and sex as a social category. The latter approach most closely relates to the concept of gender by focusing on men's and women's conceptions of the categories. Much evidence is found to support the notion that "...sex serves as a social category, influencing judgements, explanations for performance, and expectations for behavior" (Deaux, 1984, p.113), revealing the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes.

This review will be less concerned with the reified or hotly debated conceptualizations of masculine and feminine traits but will emphasize gender as a social category and examine gender roles in the marital context. First, sex role socialization and the influences upon the social understandings of gender will be examined. Second, gender as sex roles and the resultant typifications will be addressed. Finally, current research on family roles and

the implications for gender will be explored.

Gender as Social Knowledge

The differences between the genders can be viewed through various lenses; including biology, socialization and social structure. Each perspective informs the social knowledge of gender, shaping the beliefs and expectations for gendered behavior. The impartation of gender knowledge begins early in life and continues throughout.

Differential Socialization

For social theorist Erving Goffman (1977) "Gender, not religion, is the opiate of the masses. In any case, we have here a remarkable organizational device" (p.315). Goffman finds the immutable, biologically based differences between the sexes to be inconsequential compared with the vast social consequences stemming from those differences. How the innate differences underlie social organization and how social institutions have secured the gender renderings is the process of "institutional reflexivity" (Goffman, 1977).

The process begins with the birth of an individual, the subsequent assignation to one of two sex classes (based on genitalia) and consequent labeling (boy-girl, male-female) that begins the "...sorting process whereby members of the two classes are subject to differential socialization" (Goffman, 1977, p.303). While gender is the complex "...sex-class-specific way of appearing, acting and feeling"

(Goffman, 1977, p.303), gender identity is the individual's sense of belonging and self appraisal based on the ideals of the sex class. A "genderism" (Goffman, 1977) is a "...sex-class linked individual behavioral practice" (p.305). These conceptions take form in the family of origin, the household, "...a socialization depot" (Goffman, 1977, p.314).

Using the example of a middle-class family where cross-sexed siblings are governed by the same parents in the same rooms, where equality of class and economics remain constant, the household becomes an "...ideal setting for role differentiation" (Goffman, 1977, p.314). The female will learn, here, that she is different from and subordinate to males; the male will learn (regardless of the family's social position) that he is different from and superordinate to females. Goffman states:

> It is as if society planted a brother with sisters so women could from the beginning learn their place, and a sister with brothers so men could learn their place. Each sex becomes a training device for the other, a device that is brought right into the house; and what will serve to structure wider social life is thus given its shape and its impetus in a very small and very cozy circle. (Goffman, 1977, p.314-315)

This process represents but one example of institutional reflexivity where differential socialization is based on the presumed natural differences between the sex-classes and thus insures the production of those differences (Goffman, 1977). Goffman finds societal processes accountable to the core for manufacturing in every social environment and

encounter the setting for displays of gender.

Biological Differences

Antithetical to the argument for differential socialization is a currently popular understanding of the male/female differences as innately imbedded in our brains (Moir & Jessel, 1991) with differential organization and structure attributable to the influences of hormones. Based upon increasingly sophisticated methods of studying the brain, the reviewers of the researcher (Moir & Jessel, 1991) point to a "...startling sexual asymmetry" (p.5).

Moir & Jessel (1991) report findings of myriad distinctions attributable to different brains; revealing male superiority in spatial ability, hand-eye coordination and perception of abstract relationships; females exhibit superior sensitivity to sensory stimuli and are verbally more fluent. Female brain activity is diffuse, exhibiting a great deal of interchange between hemispheres, whereas male brain activity is specific, more localized. This accounts for, among other phenomena, the apparently superior ability of women to verbally express emotions that originate in the right hemisphere but flow easily to the left hemisphere where verbal ability is seated. Males do not exhibit such fluidity.

The researchers go on to associate the different brains with differing social behaviors, including aggression. Aggression is directly linked to the presence of the male

hormone, testosterone, both prenatally and subsequently. This connection leads to the male's greater, and the female's lesser, need to dominate and seek hierarchal ascendancy. Because of their differently wired brains, "his relationships are those of power and dominance; hers are those of interplay, complement, and association" (Moir & Jessel, 1991, p.101).

The reviewers conclude that the social dichotomies and labor divisions of men and women are the natural consequences of differently wired brains, in spite of feminist argument. Carol Tavris (1992), whose explicit premise is to dispel the notion of "...universal and unvarying...natures of men and women" (p.21) exposes the biases in the assessment and reporting of gender differences in the brain-sex research. She argues that as long as the focus remains on the biological as opposed to the circumstantial, on the inner psyche as opposed to the social structure, inequities will persist. The history of brain research shows evidence of new technology that has failed to eradicate the antiquated values and biases (Tavris, 1992).

After providing a compelling argument, Tavris (1992) concludes that although the data about brain-sex differences may be weak, they support the prevailing beliefs about gender, thus earning more credit than due. They, however, "...cannot account for the complexities of people's everyday behavior" (Tavris, 1992, p.54).

Cultural Feminism

Recent trends in feminist research that acknowledge the gender differences with a shift in valuational emphasis have gained notoriety, impacting the social reconstruction of gender knowledge. Carol Gilligan (1982) challenged accepted theories of psychological development based on the male model of separation and independence. Measuring female development, with inextricable ties to connection and care, by the patriarchal yardstick deems female development immature and inferior, overlooking the importance of the developmental process of half of the species (Gilligan, 1982).

Tavris (1992) describes the work of Gilligan and others who seek to "...overcome society's sexism by celebrating women's special qualities, women's ways, women's experiences" (p.59) as "cultural feminism". She warns that the cultural feminist paradigm perpetuates the polar opposition of the genders and may serve to keep women subjugated by virtue of their "specialness". Tavris (1992) applauds Gilligan for expanding the views of moral reasoning to include the ethic of care but exposes flaws in her research. Tavris also notes that attempts to replicate Gilligan's findings have repeatedly failed. She suggests that "woman's voice", although certainly evidenced as different from "man's voice", is not a function of inherent

gender differences but the result of the historical power inequities and different roles of men and women. She concludes that "...many (but not all) of the qualities associated with 'women's voices' prove to be qualities associated with women or men who are powerless" (Tavris, 1992, p.87).

Hare-Mustin (1987) expresses the same sentiment; that Gilligan's findings have not been corroborated; that her conclusions reinforce differential sex roles, obscuring the power differences; and that the popularity of her claims is explained by their support of the status quo, relieving society's members from the compunction leading to change (Hare-Mustin, 1987).

Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1990) explores the differences in conversational styles of men and women. She defines the feminine style, "rapport talk", as emanating from woman's unique world that seeks connection and consensus. The masculine style, "report talk", originates from the man's world of competition, of hierarchal superiority and status. Tannen (1990) finds the origins of the dichotomous styles, or "genderlects", not in biology but they "...grow out of the distinct kinds of relations women and men learn and practice as boys and girls growing up" (p.292). Instead of encouraging the duality, Tannen sees the advantage of men and women learning each other's styles, breaking out of their automatic ways toward more flexible

styles.

Tavris (1992) acknowledges Tannen's research as appealing in that it shows "...how women and men differ in their use of language, and it characterizes many familiar misunderstandings" (p.298). However, she observes that Tannen's approach overlooks the verified position that the variation in speaking styles "...often depend more on the gender of the person they are speaking with than on their own intrinsic 'conversational style'" (Tavris, 1992, p.299). Tavris argues, and provides support for, the view that women in positions of authority speak more like men and men in subordinate positions speak more like women. The different styles, then, have less to do with gender or even socialization but, again, reflect power imbalances (Tavris, 1992).

The differing conversations of men and women reflect their different worlds, the relations of gender. The interaction of male and female voices reveals the social knowledge of gender. The language can both support their historically relative positions, preserving the culture, or reconstruct the social relationships and, ultimately, society.

The ongoing debate over gender differences is not an academic controversy over the salience of either biology, psychology or sociology (each story leaves something amiss) but a dialectic of power, context and relationship (Tavris,

1992). The proclivities of science impact the manufacturing and understanding of gender categories, the social knowledge of genders. But, ultimately, genders define not what we "are" but what we "do", situationally and interactionally (West & Zimmerman, 1991).

Masculine and Feminine Sex Roles

What men and women do is largely comprised of roles that are differentiated by sexual category. The study of sex roles is central to the understanding of gender and family (Scanzoni & Fox, 1980). Scanzoni (1975) broadly refers to sex roles as "...differences among persons and groups that are the result of gender, i.e., differences based on ascribed characteristics" (p.20).

Sociology and psychology diverge in their respective foci for sex role research (Scanzoni, 1975). Whereas sociology is concerned with "...the norms, ideologies, values, and beliefs that are used to label, apply to, or define the two sexes" (Scanzoni, 1975, p.20), psychology is concerned with the behavioral aspects, including attitudes, traits, overt behaviors and interactions. Somewhere between the two schools of thought is a little studied process that links norms to behaviors, inspiring questions concerning the predictability of behaviors based on norms; the degree to which behaviors fail to conform to norms, and why; and, the circumstances that act to transform and create new norms

(Scanzoni, 1975). This discussion of sex role theory and research will address the aforementioned concerns in a family context; examining the normative ideologies, the growing deviations from normative behaviors and the conditions contributing to new sex role norms.

Traditional Sex Roles

Although much maligned in recent years, the work of Talcott Parsons (Parsons & Bales, 1955) represents the bedrock of theory of sex roles in family. Parsons viewed the family as an isolated, economic unit dependent on the earnings of the father. The man's role, based on his occupational status, was that of "instrumental leader". The man determined the standard of living and life style of the family. Woman's role, by virtue of the bearing and nurturing of children, was that of "expressive leader". The irrefragability of woman's reproductive role naturally confined her to the interior domain of family, forcing the man to negotiate the external functions of the family.

Parsons (Parsons & Bales, 1955) explicitly viewed the occupational role of the man as most important role in the family, insuring its survival. He did not see the early trends of women entering the labor force as a move toward symmetry. Instead he mostly saw working women as women without men (single, divorced, widowed). The differentiation of male instrumentality, representing technical and executive expertise and adaptive functions,

and female expressiveness, representing cultural expertise and integrative functions, formed the complementarity necessary for a healthy model of family (Parsons & Bales, 1955). The relative differentiation of male/female roles persists, according to Parsons, even when married women enter the labor force due to the superior income and economic status of men, and "Where this ceases to be true the repercussions on the family may be profound..." (Parsons & Bales, 1955, p.164).

Criticism of Parsons's functionalist view of family targets his view of career women as dysfunctional, undermining the health of family, and his failure to acknowledge the power differences between men and women while indirectly proffering status and importance on men (Hochschild, 1973). However, Parsons's concepts of instrumentality and expressiveness permeate the literature on sex roles, having become virtually synonymous with the traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity, and his model of sex role division in family was the benchmark for subsequent inquiry.

The traditional, functional family paradigm assumes a linear developmental process that focuses on the structure and stability of its narrow form, ignoring process and decrying change and deviation as unhealthy (Scanzoni, Polonko, Teachman & Thompson, 1989). Problems with the traditional paradigm include its failure to apprehend the

experiences of minorities and women, the lack of relevance as it applies to fewer and fewer households, a failure to acknowledge change and discontinuity in family development, and "...the functionalist notion of family qua institution, which misses the point that institutions are not handed down by metaphysical fiat; rather persons create, conform to, and change them" (Scanzoni et al., 1989, p.14).

Evolving Sex Roles

When Bernard (1982) and Scanzoni (1982) examine relationship trends of the 1960's and 1970's, the durability of the traditional family seems less assured than it did for Parsons in the 1950's. Both Bernard and Scanzoni view the alternative coupling and family configurations (including single parent and remarried families, couples lacking legal sanction, communal living and non-heterosexual unions) not as signifying the demise of family but as the evolution of family forms. The primary impetus for the revolution in family is seen as the ever-increasing trend of married women and mothers in the labor force (Bernard, 1982; Scanzoni, 1982).

Bernard (1982) describes the distinctive "his" and "her" experience of marriage as differentiated by roles, status, benefits and mental health. The ascendancy of sex role norms over behavioral reality may represent a crucial part of the process of gender-making in modern marriage where beliefs about behaviors are constructed, not

necessarily in a conscious or accurate way, but to maintain gender comfort within the social structure.

Bernard (1982) uses power in marriage as an example of this process, where the objective realities, the socially proscribed male/female roles, are so salient they eclipse subjective realities. Women who exert power in marriage may suffer guilt or punishment; at least they will be considered deviant. Consequently, in a study of the congruence between objective and subjective power in marriage, wives tended to report they were less powerful than the objective measures revealed, and men reported themselves more powerful (Bernard, 1982). The couples reported what "ought" to be based on expectations and acceptability, providing evidence for the intransigence of primary socialization and cultural norms.

Changes in marriage, as an institution, have historically been a function of technology, "...the way in which the society made its living" (Bernard, 1982, p.278). Bernard sees the increasing trend of working wives as among the most striking developments of the late 20th century. In spite of a "cultural lag", observed by sociologist W.F. Ogburn (Cited in Bernard, 1982, p.279) early in the century, where institutions such as marriage fail to keep pace with technological advances, Bernard suggests that the convergence of male/female roles equalizes the costs and rewards of the "his" and "her" marriage. Such convergence,

according to Bernard (1982), is characterized by role sharing where both men and women provide support for the family, care for the children and share in the housework.

Sexual Bargaining

Scanzoni (1982) stresses the importance of increased role interchangeability and concomitant "sexual bargaining" in the reconstruction of marriage roles. Citing the growing valuation of more equal or egalitarian marriages by both men and women and the documented increases in parenting by men, Scanzoni (1982) sees a trend that approaches, but falls short of, equal status for women. With increased education and success in the labor force, however, women's bargaining power inevitably grows and, as the provider role is increasingly shared, so, too, should role interchangeability in home related roles (Scanzoni, 1982).

In Scanzoni et al.'s (1989) nonfunctionalist view of family, couples achieve relative status through a bargaining where conflict is endemic. Gender defines the relative positions, making conflict unavoidable as the interests of the genders are negotiated. Conflict is necessarily initiated by the subordinate group, women, as "...it is rarely in the interests of the dominant group ever to disturb the status quo" (Scanzoni, 1982, p.32). Although both men and women show movement toward egalitarian preferences, women are outpacing men as it is women's individualistic achievements that are at stake (Scanzoni

et al., 1989). As our society allows and requires women to diverge from traditional patterns, more pressure is exerted on men to make changes. Conflict is the product of men's resistance to change in response to women's bargaining for change in the partnership of economic interdependence (Scanzoni et al., 1989).

Family Structure

Scanzoni et al. (1989) classify families on a continuum between the conventional and contemporary models based upon three factors: ideology, process power (decision-making) and labor division (market and home). Three partnership arrangements emerge from his classificatory system.

The head-complement partnership (HC), found at the conventional end of the spectrum, has a male head and female complement who is generally not in paid labor. The HC male subordinates family concerns to economic concerns and the HC female subordinates outside employment to family responsibilities. Decision-making must not interfere with the man's role as provider. Women in this arrangement may work at times and men may find themselves temporarily out of work but he maintains the head position, she the complement.

According to Scanzoni et al. (1989) the junior/senior partner arrangement (JSP) is replacing the HC arrangement as the most common in the United States. Both men and women are in paid labor but the woman's status is "junior" to the

man's "senior" status. However, men are more likely to engage in home related labor and should the woman's paid employment become more salient she may achieve senior status.

In the equal partner arrangement (EP) conventional norms are rejected and replaced by values that embrace caring and commitment over stability and predictability, stressing individualism and gender-role interchangeability. As the woman becomes more attached to career, she conceivably has more power to bargain with her mate over housework, childcare and geographic relocation.

Scanzoni et al. (1989) define partnership status as "...neither fixed nor unilinear" (p.79). They regard shifts between HC and JSP status as common when women enter and leave paid labor with the advent of children. Typically, they believe, couples adhere to a JSP pattern when first united, move to an HC pattern when children are born and back to JSP when children are grown. Giving up JSP status for childbirth, however, decreases status and bargaining power for women and subsequent re-entry into paid labor, because of the occupational penalties for discontinuous employment, does not appear to reinstate relationship status (Scanzoni et al., 1989).

According to Scanzoni et al. (1989), egalitarian women are minimizing the losses associated with bearing children by delaying childbirth (cultivating their labor force

involvement), having fewer children to minimize their absence from paid labor or by maintaining part-time employment instead of severing work ties completely. However, income and employment inequities for women, coupled with the benefits for men, act to reinforce and maintain traditional, patriarchal patterns (Scanzoni et al., 1989).

Bernard (1981) saw the changing roles for women in the 1960's and 1970's as usurping men's traditional, specialized role as the "good-provider". With the good-provider role came the identification of particular work endeavors with specific genders, a "...sexual 'territoriality'..." (Bernard, 1981, p.3). For men, providing had been synonymous with masculinity. Women's increased labor force participation revolutionized sex role division, adding to the burdens of the good-provider with "...increased demands...especially in the form of more emotional investment in family, more sharing of household responsibilities" (Bernard, 1981, p.8) without due appreciation. Even when ideologically prepared for role sharing, as many younger cohorts of men appeared to be, Bernard viewed the implementation as a struggle compared to deprogramming a cult member. The good-provider role was undermined, if not eradicated, by the prevailing economic and social trends; what remained unclear was the complexion of men's successive role.

A recent Time magazine cover story (Gibbs, 1993) expresses the frustrations of contemporary fatherhood as fathers receive mixed messages from both their workplace and from their wives. Asking for paternity leave is hazardous to their careers, yet pressure is on to become more fully involved in childcare. Mothers insist on greater involvement by fathers while concurrently defending and maintaining her ascendancy over the domestic domain. Mothers want more sensitive mates but fear the loss of their strength. Men want more family-accommodating careers yet the men at the top of their professions can't afford that luxury. Fathers, the article concludes, have not found equality in parenting. It appears that the difficulties for women seeking instrumental power in the economic realm are mirrored in men's quest for expressive power in the family.

The foregoing review underscores the importance of economic contingencies in the social construction of gender identities. It appears that recent decades have seen a construction boom that is reshaping the configuration of gender roles in the family context. It is not an orderly process, however, as changes for women do not predictably bring equivalent changes for men.

Gender Roles in the Household Context

From 1960 to 1990 the labor force participation rate for married women doubled, reaching 58% (U.S. Census Bureau,

1992a). The proportion of working mothers increased most with 59% of mothers of preschoolers working and 74% of mothers with school age children employed outside the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 1992a). By 1990, 70% of married couples with children were dual-earners. Married-couple families with three children or more dropped from 15% in 1970 to 6% of families in 1991 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1992b). Whether or not a cause-and-effect relationship exists between women's labor force participation and contemporary family constellations, as Scanzoni et al. (1989) suggest, family size is shrinking. Labor trends lend support to the apparent need for the renegotiation of household work.

Quantifying Household Labor

Utilizing survey data and diaries kept by participants, Berk (1985) examined labor division in 335 American households. Conceptualizing household labor along three dimensions- 1) the amount, 2) the allocation and 3) the responsibility "for" household work, Berk found that while all family members made significant contributions, women assumed most of the work and, largely, the responsibility for that work. Children, whether helpers or recipients, had the greatest impact on the volume of work and time spent in household production.

Work allocation, both within the home and between home and market endeavors, revealed a "gendered" allocation system where women's contributions to market time, while

eliciting assistance from men, did not bring about a substitution of effort in the home by the rest of the family. Berk concluded that the working wife's decreased availability may promote help from husband and children but only as a secondary source of labor; they remain more the benefactors than the producers of home labor. Unlike Scanzoni et al.'s (1989) system where the home share is more predictably bargained, based on the market share, Berk found a more complex exchange mediated by children and various role demands.

Families where husbands' home contributions were equivalent to wives, comprising 10% of the sample, had more and younger children, the parents were slightly younger and poorer and the wives worked full time (Berk, 1985). Homes with both preschool children and full-time working mothers constituted "labor-intensive" households where Berk believed fathers had little choice in their level of contribution. The sheer volume of home labor and economic demands informed the division of the home share, allowing less room for gendered patterns.

Berk (1985) sees a circular relationship between home and market forces that serves to excuse the lopsided division of labor in the home. Women's lower earnings from market labor renders her supreme household share legitimate. In turn, women's commitment to home and children assumedly precludes commitment to market labor, justifying lower

wages.

Berk views the household as a "gender factory" where the division of home and market labors results not only in the production "goods and services" but in the "...production of gender" (p.201). Berk concludes that a future "degendering" of home and market labors will be mediated by the "...intractability of the dominance and submission orchestrated around gender" (p.210). Equalizing labor force participation does not negate a long history of power inequities.

Over a ten year period, Douthitt (1989) found significant reductions in the overall amount of home related work among working wives. Both the presence of children under five and larger numbers of children increased home labor for women. Men's contributions to the home were largely a weekend phenomena. Time spent in childcare occupied a larger percentage of total home labor at the expense of meal preparation and house chores. Regardless of the wife's employment status, men showed increased percentages of time spent in childcare and meal preparation. However, men of employed wives did not spend more time with children than men whose wives were not employed. Douthitt concluded that while working couples showed a decrease in home related work, they devoted a greater portion of that time to children, revealing a shift in priorities.

Blair and Lichter (1991) argue that, to better understand gender roles in family, the segregation of tasks must be explored along with time spent in home related work. In their study of household labor division, utilizing data from a 1988 National Survey of Families and Households, the researchers found a high degree of sex segregation of tasks (Blair & Lichter, 1991). They found that women performed twice the household labor of men. Task segregation, while still remaining high, decreased with increased female education; long-term couples showed more segregation than new couples; female employment and relative increases in earnings acted to increase the male's hourly performance and decrease task segregation; and, the presence of children reinforced traditional sex segregation of tasks (Blair & Lichter, 1991). These researchers concluded that even when men contributed a larger proportion of time to home related work and embraced an egalitarian ideology, task segregation and gender role inequality persisted, mediated only slightly by women's increased earning power (Blair & Lichter, 1991).

While survey research taps a larger segment of the population, the statistics may oversimplify the processes studied. When Blair and Lichter (1991) reported that men averaged 14 hours a week in household labor, the standard deviation was ten, meaning most men spent anywhere from four to 24 hours a week working in the home. For women the average hours was 33 with a standard deviation of 17.

Averages may obscure or fall short of apprehending what is happening in families. Turning to qualitative research reveals more about the process of labor division in, albeit, fewer families.

Qualitative Views on Family Roles

Qualitative investigations provide a micro-view of life that reveals the every-day realities and interaction processes that guide behavior. Silberstein (1992) and Hochschild (1989) both examine role division in marriage for gender implications. Their findings illuminate the influences of primary and secondary socialization in the construction of gender roles within families.

Whereas Bernard (1982) considers the middle class as the "advance guard", and the working class as the "rear guard", in changing sex role patterns, Silberstein (1992) views the dual-career marriage, where educational attainments and job commitment for both men and women remains high, as holding "...center stage in the drama of changing gender roles" (p.2). Silberstein interviewed, individually, 20 dual-career couples with children, to examine the politics of gender in marriages where work and family roles collide.

Silberstein (1992) explored the transgenerational continuities and discontinuities in gender roles. Most of the participants grew up in traditional, one-career households. In spite of changing career patterns, the

primacy of careers for men and the primacy of family for women held across generations. Men in the study, however, believed they were giving more attention to childcare than their fathers, expressing a need to compensate for the dearth of fathering they had received. For most of the men, transgenerational gains in childcare outweighed gains in housework, seen as less rewarding and undermining their masculinity.

A larger generation gap was reported between women and their mothers with the addition of careers. The majority of women considered the costs of full-time home-making, including the dependency and insecurity of not being able to provide, greater than the benefits home-making could provide; that is, more leisure and less stress.

What changed between generations was that men ceased to be "sole providers" and became somewhat more involved in family life; women ceased to be full-time mothers and homemakers, opting for careers. As priorities, however, the importance of work roles for men and family roles for women endured.

Expectations for home and career begin in the family of origin; subsequent experiences are "...layered on rather than replace prior expectations" (Silberstein, 1992, p.34). Individuals bring expectations about both their own and their spouse's role into marriage; the experience of the marriage can lead to the coexistence of dissonant beliefs.

When the expectation of two careers was in place from the outset of marriage it was "...not synonymous with an expectation of two equal careers" (Silberstien, 1992, p.40.). One quarter of the participants entered marriage with the expectation of equal careers; the rest assumed the woman's career was neither psychologically nor financially as necessary as the man's; men needed to be more successful. Even when women expected to be a primary economic contributor, the expectation of primacy over the home persisted. Many women reflected the need to be a "superwoman", unwilling to give up their influence over the domestic and childrearing domains. Silberstein (1992) speculated that the unrealistic desire for supremacy in the home, besides a reflection of mens' resistance and lack of involvement, could be womens' compensatory reaction to their threatened feminine role. Egalitarian couples who shared a great deal of the housework still retained the wife as "chief executive". She was both the initiator and enforcer of changes in labor division with increased career demands and the advent of parenting.

Although both men and women reported that the arrival of children led to the greatest conflict between work and home related roles, two-thirds of the women accommodated careers to fit family needs. Both genders considered similar accommodations of the man's salient career as unfeasible. For some couples, those with more traditional

arrangements in the home, the arrival of children "propelled" them toward more egalitarian practices. Adding childrearing to the woman's assumed domestic role became an over-burden. For other couples, children led to a more traditional, gender segregated division of the home as women accommodated their careers to allow for more of the home share.

Regardless of ideology, sex-linked segregation of tasks endured with women assuming the bulk of domestic tasks (meals, housework and childcare) and men tending to repairs, cars and garage. Many men considered their giving permission to hire domestic help as their contribution to the housework. One-third of the women were conflicted about hiring help for "their work" and only women expressed guilt over the decreased cleanliness of their homes.

Silberstein (1992) concludes the "...asymmetrical foray into the opposite gender's domain..." (Silberstein, 1992, p.159) is explained by power dynamics: Women gain power moving into the male's economic domain whereas men lose status and suffer greater threats to their identities by assuming domestic roles. Women's success becomes the sum of home and career accomplishments (providing a back-up role should careers fall short); men still rely, perceiving less choice than women, on career for self definition (Silberstein, 1992). It is the clash between expectations and ideologies on one side and economic and behavioral

realities on the other that yield the greatest tension and challenge in dual-career marriages. Overall, Silberstein found the dual-career marriages to be stable and somewhat satisfying yet devoid of romance. Lack of "couple" time and hindered sex lives were frequently reported as the "costs" of dual careers.

Silberstein's small sample precludes grand conclusions about the evolution of sex roles in working families. However, many of her findings are supported by other research and her in-depth investigation exposes the heretofore little understood processes attending the work/family dilemmas of our time.

Hochschild (1989) qualitatively investigated the "second shift", the extra month of work a year required at home for working parents that is mostly relegated to mothers. Hochschild (1989) interviewed 50 working families and entered the lives and homes of 12 of the families as an unobtrusive observer (likening herself to the family dog). She followed the households' development, the "footsteps" of home related work roles, for two to five years, ascertaining the processes, or "strategies", that keep the second shift intact for working women.

Many of the trends previously cited (Berk, 1985; Silberstein, 1992) were observed in Hochschild's (1989) participants; faster changing women, slower changing men; the perseveration of gender segregation of tasks even when

the amount of work is equalized in the home; women showing more transgenerational changes than men; "supermom" strategies (women "doing it all" while oblivious to their own needs); the lack of attention to the marital relationship when work loads escalate; women making the greatest career adjustments to accommodate home, children and husbands; women as chief executives of the home regardless of sharing of tasks; and the reluctance of most men and some women to share the homemaking role.

Hochschild (1989) described three types of ideologies or beliefs about the roles of men and women in marriage depending upon their culture and experience: traditional, transitional and egalitarian. Traditional ideology led to the expectation that the woman's sphere is the home and the man's is work, with a power differential favoring the man. Egalitarians embraced an equal share of home, work and power for men and women. Transitional ideology, the most common, valued the woman's work but as subordinate to the man's; she maintained primacy over the home.

Though gender ideology provides the surface, a veneer of what people think; it may be contradicted by the actual feeling experience of role division (Hochschild, 1989). The contradictions, arising within and between individuals, motivate couples to devise strategies, frequently without awareness, to resolve the tension between what is believed and what is felt regarding the allocation of the second

shift. Strategies may keep the ideology in place in spite of incongruent behaviors and, ultimately, keep the marriage intact.

Even though two-thirds of Hochschild's couples shared ideologies, reconciliation of behaviors with beliefs revealed, at times, the shallowness or vulnerability of ideologies in the face of intractable realities. Over half of the women tried to change role division in the home. Strategies were used to either equalize the burden of home and work labors or to rationalize the failure of those attempts. Men and women often utilized different strategies. Cutting back on work, redefining and minimizing personal needs and the needs of the family (another form of cutting back), employing an "underclass" of female domestic help and "supermoming" were among the strategies used by women with egalitarian or transitional ideologies. Traditional women elicited "help" from husbands with indirect strategies, pleas of incompetence and illness, thus keeping the surface ideology in place.

Male strategies for avoiding the second shift included emotional support and appreciation for women's work, that stopped short of sharing in the home, and the "substitution", with one or a handful of tasks (always feeding the dog, baking all the bread), of equal sharing.

A notable strategy that couples shared was the "family myth" (Hochschild, 1989), a literal misrepresentation of

behavioral realities that provided the "cover story" to the home/work arrangement in light of contradictory expectations. Family myths are "...versions of reality that obscure a core truth in order to manage a family tension" (Hochschild, 1989, p.19). Hochschild (1989) provided the example of a couple with mismatched ideologies, she egalitarian and he transitional, where her exerted efforts to equalize the home share failed. When faced with the immanent choice between equality and divorce, a family myth, the illusion of parity, rescued the marriage and kept her ideology intact: His assuming responsibility for the "downstairs" (the garage) was equal to her primacy over the "upstairs" (everything else). Whereas he "...won on the reality of the situation..." (Hochschild, 1989. p.57) by getting out of the second shift, she "...won on the cover story; they would talk about it as if they shared" (p.57). The "cover story" represents what they needed to believe, that parity existed in the marriage.

Hochschild (1989) found three types of tension in the work/family dilemma: between couples with mismatched gender strategies; within individuals trying to resolve economic necessity with the desire for traditional family life; and, most insidious, the tension "...between the importance of a family's need for care and the devaluation of the work it takes to give that care, a devaluation of the work a homemaker once did" (p.204). The first tension requires

resolution of the differences with strategies that undermine the sincerity of the relationship. The second tension requires a strategy that portrays things as more unequal than they are to "save face". The third tension requires the diminishment of family work and people's needs as women seek equality "...on traditionally male terms" (Hochschild, 1989, p.211). All three tensions and the incumbent strategies are manifestations of the "stalled revolution" (Hochschild, 1989).

Current economic opportunities and necessities, for women, demand a realignment of gender roles. This contingency is weighed against the reality of persistently high divorce rates and wage gaps between genders, "stalling" change and fueling the continuation of traditional strategies for women and resistance to sharing for men (Hochschild, 1989).

Hochschild (1989) discovered sharing the second shift, regardless of ideologies, led to happier marriages. Men's sharing the work of homemaking, work devalued by men and increasingly by women, can lead to a revaluing of the endangered role that is central to family life (Hochschild, 1989). She concluded that, for the benefit of marriage and family, both working parents must conceptualize their relationships to the home as a primary focus.

Summary

The literature reveals, in part, how the increase of women working outside the home guides the gender-making processes in contemporary families. The cultural and economic milieu is a major player in both the changes and resistance to changes in sex roles and gender meanings. Primary socialization provides a foundation of meaning that is selectively edited and reshaped to accommodate the contemporary demands of close relationships. Today, the socio-cultural configuration encourages and requires greater impetus for women to instigate change in family to suit economic needs. Men and family join women as the recipients of change. Interactions around the needed adjustments are the vehicles to new gender meanings. Generally, both men and women recognize the necessity of new meanings for their genders, espousing a doctrine of greater equality and more sharing. Many behaviors, however, show reluctance to change, failing to keep pace with practical importunity.

While both Silberstein and Hochschild initiated in-depth analyses of gender processes in marriages, Silberstein conducted individual interviews and Hochschild, although she observed a number of whole families, also mostly spoke to her participants individually. While rich and enlightening, the research fails to adequately address the co-construction of gender meanings, the unified

understandings of couples. This study aims to amplify the gender-making processes as revealed by the conjoint dialogues of married couples.

The theoretical questions to be asked from the dialogue of long-term, dual-earner couples in this study regarding work/family organization are: What part does gender play in their meanings of their shared life? What do the subjective gender meanings reveal about current micro-social gender processes? The particular questions that will inform the theoretical questions are:

1. Which gender-typical sex role patterns persist and which are reconstructed in these families?
2. As roles evolve over the course of their marriage, what factors contribute to changes?
3. To what circumstances or contingencies do couples attribute their roles?
4. To what degree are couples conversant about gender as an organizing principle in their role division?

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The gender-making experience in long-term, dual-earner marriages was examined utilizing a qualitative design in order to ascertain the subjective realities of the participants. In such a study, the data is the content and process of ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979). The theoretical basis of the design, the process of participant selection, the collection and analysis of the data and issues of research authenticity will be addressed.

Theoretical Basis of the Design

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as a social research paradigm that seeks to discover or generate theory, as opposed to proving or verifying theory, throughout the research process. Theory emerges as the researcher collects, codes and analyzes data; theory is grounded in the data. The researcher is "theoretically sensitive" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.46) by being attuned to the process and meanings of the data, open to multiple realities as the data unfolds. Theoretical sensitivity leads to the accurate discovery of meanings, ensuring greater validity.

In this study the researcher utilized, in part, the principles and methodology of grounded theory to guide the interview process and to illuminate, through the data, nuances in gender relations as understood through current theory. The data analysis procedures are elaborated later in this chapter.

Selection of the Participants

The participants in this study were 16 married couples residing in the Bozeman, Montana area who volunteered their experiences. Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend the number of interviews be guided by saturation; when new, relevant information ceases to present, saturation is reached and no further interviews are needed.

The criteria for inclusion was that couples be married or cohabitating for ten years or more, were between the ages of 25 and 55, where both the husband and wife were employed outside the home. It was assumed that couples who had been together for ten years or more had invested enough time to establish identifiable patterns in their labor division, decision-making, leisure and relationship work. Although children were not a requirement, it was assumed that most couples married for ten or more years would be parents. The age parameters were intended to identify couples who were in the throes of family life before the launching of children or retirement. Working wives suggested the increased

likelihood of shared involvement in home life by both partners. Professional and non-professional workers as well as both full- and part-time work were suitable for inclusion.

Potential participants were identified through personal and professional contacts of the researcher. The researcher informed acquaintances and professional colleagues in the community of the parameters of the study and the criteria for participation. They were asked to identify and contact potential participants to ask permission for the researcher to contact them. When potential participants were identified the researcher contacted them by phone to further explain the study and what would be required of them.

In addition to the particular needs of the researcher (in-depth, audio-taped, conjoint interviews around the relevant domains), issues of confidentiality and the possible hazards and benefits of participation were addressed in the phone interview. Confidentiality of the audio-tapes and the identities of the participants were assured. It was made clear that the interview process could bring up sensitive issues for the couples on the one hand and provide an opportunity for exploration of the relationship on the other. Right of exit was assured should subject matter be deemed too uncomfortable. When the potential participants expressed a willingness to take part, an appointment was made to conduct the interview in their

homes (or,in a few cases, their places of business). A second contact was made by phone prior to the interviews to confirm the appointment, affirm their desire to participate and to address any remaining questions or concerns.

Sixteen couples volunteered for the study. All but one couple, who were from Whitefish, Montana, resided in the Bozeman, Montana area. The couples had been married from 12 to 25 years, averaging 17.25 years. Three of the men and three of the women were between the ages of 25 and 35. Ten of the men and twelve of the women were between 36 and 45 years of age. Three men and one woman were between 46 and 55 years old. All the couples had children in the home except one couple who had no children. Parents had one to five children, ranging in age from 3 to 18.

All of the men worked full-time, forty or more hours a week, in diverse occupations including education, sales, real estate, mental health, government, school administration, engineering, library science, accounting, pastoring, retail self-employment and seasonal self-employment. Seven of the women worked full-time, reporting 40 or more hours a week; four reported working between 30 and 40 hours a week; three reported working 20 to 30 hours; and two reported part-time work without designating their hours. One of the latter had recently terminated outside employment and was keeping books for her husband's business in their home. Four of the women were

self-employed, owning retail businesses. Four women were working in medical fields, two in mental health and social work, two in banking and bookkeeping, two were teachers and two were employed by Montana State University in non-teaching professions. One of the women, who worked 20 hours a week outside the home, was home schooling two children. Hours and incomes are reported in Table 1.

Annual incomes for the men ranged from under $20,000 to over $40,000. One man reported making between $15,000 and $20,000 annually, four reported making between $20,000 and $30,000, four reported making between $30,000 and $40,000, six reported making over $40,000 and one income was not disclosed. Women's incomes ranged from under $5,000 to $40,000. One women reported less than $5,000 annually, one reported between $5,000 and $10,000, three reported between $10,000 and $15,000, one reported between $15,000 and $20,000, seven reported between $20,000 and $30,000, two reported between $30,000 and $40,000 and one female income was not disclosed. Five of the seven women working full-time reported making between $20,000 and $30,000 annually. The remaining two full-time women earned less than $20,000 and more than $30,000 respectively.

All but two of the men reported having been employed all the years of the marriages. The two exceptions, combined, were unemployed for one and one-half years. Five of the women reported having worked all their married years.

Five reported working approximately 90% while the remaining women reporting working between 60% and 80% of their married lives.

Table 1. Description of Participants

Couple #		Full-time (Hours)	Part-time (Hours)	Annual Income
1.	Male	X(40+)		$15,001-$20,000
	Female		X(35)	$20,001-$30,000
2.	Male	X(40)		$20,001-$30,000
	Female		X(20)	$10,001-$15,000
3.	Male	X(40+)		$40,000+
	Female	X(40+)		$20,001-$30,000
4.	Male	X(40+)		$30,001-$40,000
	Female		X(32)	$20,001-$30,000
5.	Male	X(60)		$20,001-$30,000
	Female	X(60)		$20,001-$30,000
6.	Male	X(40)		$30,001-$40,000
	Female		X(20)	$5,001-$10,000
7.	Male	X(40)		$40,000+
	Female		X(34)	$30,001-$40,000
8.	Male*	X		
	Female*		X	
9.	Male	X(40+)		$40,000+
	Female		X(24)	$15,001-$20,000
10.	Male	X(50+)		$20,001-$30,000
	Female	X(50+)		$30,001-$40,000
11.	Male	X(40+)		$30,001-$40,000
	Female	X(40+)		$20,001-$30,000
12.	Male	X(40+)		$40,000+
	Female	X(40)		$10,001-$15,000
13.	Male	X(60)		$20,001-$30,000
	Female	X(40+)		$20,001-$30,000

Table 1, CONTINUED

Couple #	Full-time (Hours)	Part-time (Hours)	Annual Income
14. Male	X(40+)		$40,000+
Female	X(40+)		$20,001-$30,000
15. Male	X(40+)		$40,000+
Female		X	Under $5,000
16. Male	X(50+)		$30,001-$40,000
Female		X(30)	$10,001-$15,000

*Hours and income not reported

The Interview Process

The ethnographic interview provides one of the best means to comprehending the "complex features of modern life" (Spradley, 1979, p.12) and produces empirical data that "...allows us to see alternative realities and modify our culture-bound theories of human behavior" (p.13). The data for this study was the result of in-depth, conjoint interviews. All the interviews were conducted by the researcher in the homes of the participants except for two interviews conducted in the participants' places of business. The interviews were conducted between December of 1992 and August of 1993. All of the interviews were audio-taped, providing an exact record of the interviews, and note-taking by the researcher provided process observations. Two initial interviews were also video-taped. It was determined that video-taping in the homes of the

participants, while providing valuable insight into couples' interactions, was too cumbersome and time-consuming. The first couple was interviewed both conjointly and individually. The individual interviews did not reveal significantly new or different information. However, the difference between the conjoint and individual interviews revealed the tendency of the couple to be more diplomatic and tentative in their responses when together and the tendency to speak more from an individual perspective in the one-on-one interviews. It was decided that conjoint interviews revealed more of the process of role negotiation within each couple, as they formulated their responses as a couple, and that more accurate responses ensued from conjoint recollections.

Upon arriving at the participants' homes or places of business, the couples were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) that briefly described the purpose of the study, stated the content areas of the interview, assured confidentiality and anonymity and provided the phone numbers of both the researcher and her Thesis Committee Chair for any follow-up communication. Once gaining consent, the participants were asked to complete a demographic data sheet (Appendix C). Demographic data included marital status, length of marriage, number and age range of children, age of participants (non-specific), occupation, whether full- or part-time and number of hours

worked per week, annual income (non-specific) and the number of years, since together, each had been employed outside the home.

Following the gathering of demographic information, the researcher reviewed the content areas of the interview and iterated the expected length of the interviews, approximately 1.5 hours. It was explained that as each content area was addressed, the researcher would ask probing questions to determine the process by which arrangements in the relevant domains evolved. After soliciting the questions and concerns of the participants, the interview and audio-taping began. All of the interviews lasted between one and two hours. The informed consent form, the demographic data sheet and the list of interview questions were approved by the Human Subjects Committee at Montana State University.

The researcher worked from a prepared list of questions and probes (Appendix A) divided into three content areas: household tasks, decision-making and leisure/relationship. The areas were addressed in the given order but content often overlapped or appeared out of sequence with participant's responses. The researcher attempted to elicit a response, or a confirmation of a response, to each question from each individual to discern agreement or differing perceptions. The researcher requested clarification and elaboration of unsolicited references to

gender to fully reveal the subjective meaning of such statements and to avoid biased interpretation by the researcher in the subsequent analysis. Each domain will be briefly discussed.

In the household tasks domain participants were asked how domestic labor was distributed in the family, how the distribution evolved over the course of the marriage, how and what brought about change. Satisfaction with current arrangements was solicited. Participants were asked to describe the role division in their families of origin and what their own expectations were at the outset of their marriages.

Within the decision-making domain, participants were asked how they handled both day-to-day decisions and decisions having a greater impact on the future of the family. Money management and the evolution of the division of financial tasks were explored. Couples were asked to define the meaning of "power" in the relationship.

In the leisure/relationship domain, participants were asked how they manage their free and social time, their extended-family relationships and relationship maintenance within the marital dyad.

When the first five interviews revealed virtually no direct references to gender, a question was added to subsequent interviews to elicit more information regarding gender.

At the conclusion of the questioning, participants were asked if they had anything further to add or questions for the researcher. All of the participants requested a report of the results of the study. The audio-tapes were placed, with the paperwork, in manilla envelopes and, subsequently, identifying information was removed from the data with consent forms stored separately.

Analysis of the Data

While the analysis of the data was largely descriptive, attempts were made to introduce the procedures outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) for qualitative data interpretation and generation of grounded theory. Their systematic process of coding the data ensures theory construction, provides the rigor necessary for good science, undermines the biases and assumptions of the researcher and provides the "...grounding...needed to generate rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.57) that fits the reality of the data.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress the importance of finding differences and variations in the data as well as similarities. These discoveries do not "...negate our questions or statements, or disprove them, rather they add variation and depth of understanding" (p.109) and thus add "...density and variation to our theory" (p.109).

As recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990) the

researcher made full transcriptions of two early interviews, analyzing them for the purpose of guiding subsequent interviews and analysis. When the interviews were completed, the responses were coded using key words and entered into a dBase file. The dBase program was instrumental in coding, storing and organizing the data for retrieval. However, using the dBase program was found to inhibit the sorting or re-sorting of the data by conceptual and process properties that would lead to grounded theory generation. While the researcher did strive to be sensitive, as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990), to conceptual categories of behaviors and their meanings, data entry followed the content of the interview questions. The volume of the data produced by the lengthy interviews and the investigation of multiple domains of the participants' lives made it necessary to organize the data in a less abstract, more descriptive fashion.

Authenticity of the Study

Because the qualitative researcher is an integral part of the inquiry and the goal is to discover multiple realities and generate hypotheses instead of seeking singular realities and conclusions, the issues of validity, reliability and bias diverge somewhat from conventional, positivistic research. Guba (1978) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest research techniques that enhance the rigor of

qualitative inquiry.

In qualitative study internal validity, "...[t]he degree of isomorphism that exists between the study data and the phenomena to which they relate" (Guba, 1978, p.62), is the "intrinsic adequacy" (p.62) of naturalistic study. Therefore, internal validity is the degree to which the findings accurately capture the experience of the participants. It is insured by the vigilant awareness of the researcher, avoiding distortions that may be inherent in both the researcher's and the participants' impressions. Both "cross-examination" (Guba, 1978), ie., seeking confirmation, clarification and elaboration of the participants' statements, and critical questioning of participants and the data for all possible meanings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were employed by this researcher to enhance validity.

External validity, the degree to which the findings can be generalized from the laboratory to the real world, does not present as great an issue for naturalistic research (Guba, 1978). It is strengthened by the degree to which the real world of the participants represents the larger real world. It is not expected that the participants in this study are necessarily typical or atypical of our greater society. It is believed, however, that their lives are realistic examples of the possibilities within our society. Neither sweeping generalizations nor conclusions are

intended by this study. An examination of families who share certain characteristics in a given place and time to provide substance for speculation and further inquiry is the intent.

The researcher and the participants brought to the task an inevitable, idiosyncratic array of personal experiences, beliefs and assumptions that threaten the neutrality of the observations. Disposition must not restrict the researcher's ability to be "open" to the phenomena under study, but need not "obscure vision" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.76). Techniques such as seeking clarification from participants, reflective listening and repeating words or rephrasing to insure accurate understanding of their meanings helped to move the researcher away from the influence of personal history, literature and taken-for-granted realities and helped to minimize bias (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The data were scrutinized for all possible meanings.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are the inherent characteristics of the researcher and the participants. This researcher represents one gendered reality, that of a female. Attempts to objectively derive meaning from the gendered realities of the participants was intended. However, it cannot be assured that the researcher's gender

bore no influence on the choice of research topic and understanding of the data. Interpretations of the data, therefore, must be considered provisional and contextual (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Another source of bias for this study lies within the participant sample. All of the participating couples volunteered to be interviewed. Numerous couples who were contacted declined to be interviewed, with many citing discomfort with the subject matter. It is possible that the couples willing to discuss their family roles had found some level of comfort in their role division, perhaps excluding those couples who had not found a comfortable parity. For many of the declining couples, the wives were willing but the husbands not. Perhaps the men in the participating couples were more amenable to sharing personal information or felt less culpable in the discussion of family roles. These men may or may not be exceptional examples of husbands in dual-earner marriages. If so, their qualities may represent a more narrow male reality. However, for many of the participating couples, the women expressed a greater enthusiasm and willingness, at the outset, to discuss the subject matter. The men expressed tolerance if not enthusiasm.

The geographical location of the participants represents another limitation to the study. For many, life in Montana exemplifies the pursuit of life-style qualities

that eclipse economic agendas. Indeed, many sacrifice financial prosperity for the riches of a clean, healthy environment where outdoor recreation abounds. Although it was not within the scope of this study to discern the relative values of the participants, it seemed possible that couples who apparently valued the quality of life in Montana irrespective, and often in spite of, economic contingencies represent a somewhat unique configuration. Their priorities for a desired lifestyle may place family and recreation over socio-economic status in such a way that they are unique dual-earner couples, and unique men and women.

Memory bias may have presented in the interviews. Couples were asked to trace role changes through the course of their marriages, to discern the secondary socialization process, and to describe their families of origin, seeking information about their primary socialization. This may have resulted in a reflexivity (Gergen, 1982) that represented the past in light of present meanings. Conjoint interviewing, however, seemed to provide a check and balance for some of the information as couples questioned and corrected each other.

Summary

This is a qualitative study of the process of gender construction through role-sharing in long-term, dual-earner couples. Grounded theory assumptions, procedures and

techniques contributed to the research process which was largely descriptive. Ethnographic interviews of 16 volunteer couples residing in the Bozeman, Montana area provided the data. The data was sorted and analyzed with the aid of a dBase program. Rigorous procedures were employed to enhance authenticity and manage bias in the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The gender-making process was examined in the context of home and relationship work roles, focusing on three domains: 1) household chores, 2) financial management and decision-making, and 3) leisure and relationship maintenance. Interview questions were designed to discern the current labor division and arrangements, the contingencies that compelled their respective roles and the process of change over time. Eleven couples were asked about the influence of gender in their role division.

Qualitative data in the form of direct quotes from the audio-taped interviews comprise the findings. Over 1,100 quotes were entered into a dbase software program and subsequently sorted by key words. The exemplary quotes are presented verbatim except for minor adjustments to provide clarity or insure anonymity. Names are either replaced by [he], [she] or [child].

Most of the couples in the study organized their work roles with junior/senior Partner structures. Men were more often senior in the economic realms. Men mostly worked more, made more, had more stable work lives and retained ultimate authority over finances. Women, regardless of

time spent in paid employment and earnings, and regardless of the amount of help they received in the home, were resoundingly senior in the domestic realms. Women directed and managed the home and children and many assumed responsibility for day-to-day financial matters. Women measured the equity of role division and instituted realignments of roles in the home with fluctuations in their work lives. Reorganization was largely handled with diplomacy. Overt conflict was rarely recounted.

There was a great deal of variation in the relative amounts and gender segregation of tasks in the home. Men were great "helpers" with home and children, maintaining primacy over the "outside" (lawn and garage), while women took more responsibility for meal preparation and management of the children.

Women expressed greater interest in, and more responsibility for, instigating social contacts and couple time. Both men and women were highly autonomous in their leisure pursuits. Women almost exclusively attended to the couples' extended families on special occasions; men expressed a distinct disinterest in the role.

Although they indirectly revealed their respective power over their primary domains, both men and women denied or minimized their power and emphatically stressed a lack of hierarchy and the prevalence of teamwork in their relationships. Some women expressed reluctance to

surrender their primacy in the home. Gender was understood as reflected in what they did (their roles), as growing out of primary socialization (their role models) and was measured, especially for men, against a traditional model.

Balancing the Household Share

Slightly more than half (9) of the couples showed work/home arrangements that would conform to Scanzoni et al.'s (1989) typology of junior/senior partner (JSP) or Hochschild's (1989) transitional couples, where the man's primary role is in the work sector and women assume primary responsibility for the home. For the remaining seven couples, women reported spending approximately equal time as husbands outside the home in full-time employment. These couples co-provided for their families economically.

Time and availability, determined by labor force involvement and number and ages of children, were the yardsticks by which couples primarily measured the amount of the home share. Who was available, when, and how much. The amount of time each devoted to housework was not always relative to the amount of time available. Some women worked four full days a week, trading the fifth day for the bulk of the domestic share throughout the week. Alternately, some men (all with full-time career wives) were reported, by them and their wives, to be doing more than half share of the domestic load, excluding child care.

In reality, women largely made themselves more available to maintain their primacy over home and children.

Transitions

As described by Scanzoni et al. (1989), some couples reported shifts in the structure of the home share with fluctuations in the market share. Changes in employment, usually when women terminated or reduced employment with the advent of children and later returned to work, brought about a realignment of the home share. It was almost exclusively women who instigated a redistribution of the home related roles, employing tactics that ranged from conflict to bargaining to simply asking their partners for help. A few women found it easier to adjust their standards for the home when they themselves could not maintain them, learning that the help they bargained for could not be on their own terms. What motivated and guided the negotiations for the redistribution of the home share was the need for fairness and balance.

One couple best exemplified a transition from a traditional to a junior/senior partner (JSP), or transitional structure when the wife entered the work force, for the first time, many years into the marriage. Working 35 hours a week and currently out-earning her husband, who had recently changed his career, the wife said:

I do everything (laughing)...[he] helps but I still do

most of it.

Their marriage had begun with he as the sole provider and she a stay-at-home wife and mother. His returning to school had thrust her into the primary provider role. She explained the changes:

> Both of us were fairly traditional when we first married. I did a lot of things a woman is used to doing without thinking...I've always done and started doing things and never thinking, until it starts to build up. It's too much and then I blow up and that's when I will ask for help. I couldn't understand why I had to do a lot more.

This couple recounted the most conflict and the greatest push for change, by the wife, of any of the couples in the study, describing the most traditional beginning. He described his perception of the changes:

> [We] fought. Yelled and screamed. [She] would get mad, then I would take that as her telling me what to do and then I would resist.

Her push for parity, as Scanzoni et al. (1989) predicted, led to a bargaining rife with conflict. Push came to shove as he perceived her trying to control him. The conflict was exacerbated by their different standards. He said:

> What [she] sees that needs to be done and what I see needs to be done are two different things. I could live differently than [she] could.

She tried to make sense of the struggle, crediting his early experience or primary socialization:

> He doesn't see things that need to be done. I attribute some of it to how he was raised. Being an only boy, his mother did everything for him and his sister. They didn't have any chores.

Over time, greater equity was achieved but characterized by

gender segregation with her assuming most of the inside (cooking, cleaning and shopping for the children) and him contributing more to the outside (car and home maintenance, transporting the teenage children). She compromised her standards:

> I don't think I'm quite the perfectionist I used to be. Especially after working full-time, you realize you can't do it all perfectly so why fret about it? If it's done good enough, then that's fine.

He described himself as "...a traditional male getting better", reflecting an ideological shift. Economic contingency preceded ideological shifts for this pair, perhaps adding to the struggle. Full-time work made her re-think her role at home and he, too, when thrust into her realm, discovered the unexpected:

> Before it started to change I was working a job where I'd get laid off and I would stay home with the kids. I began to realize what a chore that was.

Whereas this couple was exceptional, reporting hard-won changes, most couples described more diplomatic maneuvering.

A woman who reported working 20 hours per week in her own business and home schooling their two children reflected on the changes in the home share, moving from a more equal share to a more JSP arrangement, with the advent of children. Balance and fairness were the goals for restructuring. She discussed their subtle strategies for change:

> It was 50/50. Then, when the kids came it was 68/32.

> I think it's a conscious effort to keep things as balanced as possible so that both of us feel that we're being treated fairly. I don't think we actually talk about it, but if one of us feels things are out of balance...we'll communicate like: "I feel a little overwhelmed". You don't go: "I can't believe you never...!!" because I tried it with him. He'd get defensive and shut down. If I ask nicely he's happy to do it. He'll help me out a lot. He's very responsive.

Her husband concurred:

> Over time I've learned the best way is basically... I'd say something like "It would be really great if you could work on this", like a friendly reminder. We find if we let animosity build up it will burst in other areas...it will come out...in some other thing.

Their arrangement showed some gender segregation of tasks. She assumed most responsibility for the children and home and he claimed feeding the dog ("he loves me more"), tending the yard, and assuming car and home maintenance. He also had an exclusive claim on certain domestic chores:

> I do the grocery shopping. I like to shop for bargains. I agonize over buying detergent for the regular price. I do the showers and tubs.

She elaborated:

> Saving money is his concern, he knows I won't bargain as well...I don't do tubs.

Exclusive aspects of their role division, established when they had a more equal share, persisted into the transitional share, driven by economics (saving money) and personal preferences or skills.

A couple who experienced a more radical shift, moving to a traditional arrangement with the recent adoption of a child after many years of a transitional, JSP structure,

discussed their roles:

> She: I'd say I do 95% of it. He does go to the grocery store once in a while, if he has time. I do all the yard work, too. I mow, always, everything, I do the garden, laundry. I think it has always been this way.
>
> He: It changes with how much she has to work. When she was working full-time, I'd do a lot more. I think it works fairly well, but she does most of the work around the house. She'll tell me if it's not working.
>
> She: If I want him to help and he's not listening, I go get stuff and put it in his lap.

He considers it fair, as she is not employed outside the home, for her to assume most of the home share (inside and outside), knowing she will redefine it if necessary. Explaining how she was able to make the transition after so many years of working, she recounted her early expectations and more traditional ideology:

> She: I didn't think I had to work.
>
> He: Did you really?
>
> She: I thought we could have kids earlier than we did. I thought it would be just like my mom. He would go to work and I would get a tan. And [he] said [no]. I didn't really expect, in reality, without children at home, that I'd be able to sit on my butt all day.
>
> He: It didn't make sense to me, that's for sure.
>
> She: That vision went away quickly. I've always worked. It's definitely nice having money, more self worth. But now, I like not having to get up and go to work, having time to be with [daughter]. I'm really thankful to be able to do that this year.

Her traditional ideology was, for years, eclipsed by economics and unexpected delays in parenting. And, having

assumed a more traditional share of the home when she worked, leaving the work force led to nearly complete assumption of the home.

None of the men's employment patterns were affected by the contingency of parenthood. Well over half of the mothers reported leaving their employment for varying lengths of time when children were born. Returning to work was not solely motivated by economics but reflected the need for independence. One mother, who had embarked on a nursing career, leaving the work force when the children were born, remarked:

> There was a period, 8 or 9 years ago, where I was having some problems with depression. That's when I started working more. I felt I needed to get more independence.

A woman who held an advanced degree and was well established in her career before children reflected:

> I was originally going to resign with both pregnancies. I decided I just couldn't do that. I couldn't stay home.

She and her husband went on to describe the transitions in their work roles when children arrived:

> He: We have constantly re-evaluated the allocation of tasks based on the percentage of time one has other responsibilities. Before we had children and both worked full-time, we pretty much split things down the middle. When we had children [her] hours at work dropped commensurately and she shouldered more of the responsibility around the house.

She described the trip back to a more equal share:

> She: I gradually worked up from 20 hours a week to 24 then to 32 and 36 and was doing the same amount of everything else and I thought "Wait a minute, I know

> he'll be receptive to helping me out here...I'll give him a choice".

Many of the couples described a similar dance where her leaving or reducing employment naturally resulted in the assumption of most of the home share; the subsequent return to employment became overwhelming, leading to an inevitable bargaining for redistribution of that share. There was frequently a time lapse, however, before women negotiated change, before they realized they were overwhelmed. Most, then, reported they received help merely by asking.

The Home Executive

The women in the study resoundingly retained the executive role in, and the ultimate responsibility for, the home. They were the organizers, the schedulers, the managers of home and children. Men were consistently described as "helpers" even when their labor share appeared equal. Women often kept men from greater responsibility in the home; women wanted help while maintaining control over "their" domain. One glaring exception presented. It was the husband who valued the home, who pushed for change when he was overwhelmed, who wanted acknowledgement. The wife described their respective priorities:

> The house is his first priority. He does that first, then he feels okay about going [to work]. I'm the other way. If I don't have my work done (employment), I'm really stressed. So I do that first. Then, as time allows, I do other things around here.

He went on to describe his view of his responsibilities:

> I like housework. It's a real institution in our relationship, it's set in stone, the way I jump in and do it. I train myself, when dinner's over, to do the dishes right away. When it comes time, on Thursday afternoon, I think about the weekend. I start getting the laundry gathered up, then I'm done by Saturday at noon.

It was he who pushed for change when needed:

> She: He's wonderful. He does more than the lion's share of housework. Everything. I bet in our 12 years of marriage, I've made the bed five times. He does the majority of the laundry.
>
> He: I had a revolt about that (the laundry).
>
> She: He was getting tired of it, so I've been trying to consciously make an effort to pitch in.
>
> He: We had an exchange about it that was a little angry, we're in the process of redefining that. I find I don't mind doing the laundry if I'm appreciated for it. But I jump in and do it because I prefer to have the housework and laundry done over [outside work].

Her not prioritizing the home opened the door to him while his assumption of home duties gave her permission to prioritize her career.

Switching roles was less easy for a couple where the husband typically "helped" a great deal, but took on her share when she suffered an injury. For him, it was an inconvenience; for her it was disconcerting to give up her role. They explained:

> He: It was a strain.
>
> She: He was really busy. He was really sweet about it but he was really busy. I could see him feeling intense and put upon but he tried hard not to be mean about it, or grouchy. It drove me nuts that I couldn't do anything but then I finally gave in to

it.

There were limits to the degree she could relinquish control over her domain without discomfort.

A number of men acknowledged their wives' added burden of responsibility, even when they were contributing substantially, as this man did:

> She's the brains of the organization here and that is a responsibility she doesn't get to put down. When I'm done with my list, I'm pretty much done. Even when she goes to bed at night, the wheels are still turning. I can turn it off.

Most women explained their retention of the executive role largely as a function of their greater, albeit mandated, availability, and secondarily as their skill and attachment to the role. Some women struggled with the amount of "help" they received.

One Woman's Guilt Was Another Man's Therapy

An ethic of fairness sometimes turned on women when their husbands helped too much. It wasn't fair if the wife's income didn't "earn" the amount of help received from the husband. This exchange exemplified that process:

> He: What have I said to you about you making more dinners all the time?
>
> She: He has said many times: "You're cooking a lot more and I can do it, I'll help you". I feel I need to do more because I'm working part time and he works full time. He's really, really busy and sometimes I start to feel guilty because I don't make the income that I am capable of making.

Another woman commented:

> Our life is so good that to ask for anything different would smack of greediness.

It was "fair" for women to have help, but not too much. Women, as the overseers, were as concerned about what was fair for him as for her.

Although most of the women appeared to need to retain primacy over the home, none of them remarked that housework enhanced their mental health. A couple of the men did:

> To me I feel like it was really good for me to do some of the [housework]...I seek therapy in doing some menial tasks.

A professional couple with an egalitarian arrangement had this exchange:

> She: I'm going to come out sounding like I don't do anything, but [he] loves dishes...it's relaxing to him.
>
> He: With my work, it's just soothing, relaxing to me to be able to do something physical. We had a dishwasher, and still do, but I would still wash dishes in the sink as often as I could.
>
> She: Yeah, that's sick to me.
>
> He: I could go over the day in my mind.
>
> She: If I had to do it, it would be something I <u>had</u> to do, it's not therapy for me to do dishes. I've done them a lot, it's nothing I would choose. He likes bathrooms, too. I love it because I hate them.

While she worked full-time as a professional and retained the executive role in the home, she feared she might appear to be doing too little as he so easily assumed menial tasks. Although few men reported this therapeutic effect, it is interesting to note that some men could find housework as balancing their work lives much like women try

to find balance by seeking outside work.

One woman, embarking on a new career that was requiring a great deal of time and energy, expressed her concerns about the attention her struggle was garnering:

> [He] has been real supportive of me in this new job and I've felt selfish about it because the pendulum has swung the other way. It has been hard to accept a lot of that support and not beat myself up for it.

For this woman, receiving help in the form of "care" created personal conflict. For her and some others, it appeared to be difficult to place equal value on their time and effort, creating the concern they might get too much, or more than they deserve.

Welcome Home Daddy

Almost all of the couples described the women as the "managers" of the children. They were more aware of school-related concerns, they scheduled doctor's appointments, shopped for kids' clothes and took more responsibility for care and feeding of children. However, none of the women expressed a need for the fathers to be more involved. Indeed, parents mostly reported the fathers as highly involved with the children, while the mothers were in charge. Men were often "on call", providing support when women were unavailable.

A tag-team approach to parenting was a common strategy. Feeding and transporting children depended largely on who was available, based upon work schedules.

One husband explained:

> Whoever is home first picks up the kids. On the days that she works, I pick them up. If the car isn't in the driveway, I pick up the kids.

One couple had an elaborate strategy to keep the wife working without incurring a great deal of child care expense and to keep the children mostly at home. She explained:

> I got exactly what I wanted-evening shift- so I wouldn't have to worry about child care, and gradually worked up to six days every two weeks. We didn't have kids to have somebody else raise them.

They described a typical weekday:

> She: I have the mornings off so I pretty much do all the cleaning. [He] will put wash in in the evening. We don't have any delegation.
>
> He: She does most of it, takes care of the house in the morning before she goes to work. Then she works every other week so she has a stretch off where she can shop and that kind of stuff.
>
> She: When it's school days I'll get up and fix [daughter's] breakfast and [husband] fixes his own breakfast. Then [son] gets up and I fix him breakfast. I try to have something ready, dinner, in the oven. It's either on time-bake or I let them know I haven't done anything so they can get pizza or something.
>
> He: So [daughter] comes home (from school), we've got pre-baked, timed dinners pretty much ready, we do dishes, then...play time, then bath time, then we read books...and then we go to bed.
>
> She: He's a pretty good dad.
>
> He: They're really not that much hassle...I'd rather have it that way...that way they realize that I'm part of the responsibility, too. I'm the guy that can give them a bath, read them books, take care of problems. That way they know it's not just mom. It's better than leaving them in day care all day long, I guess. I wouldn't have it any other way.

As involved as this father was, it was the extra effort in the wife's "second shift" that lightened the load of his second shift. She may have avoided the expense of child care, but she retained the expense of responsibility.

Some men described the influence of primary socialization, their own fathers, as motivating their own redefinition of fathering. One man explained:

> My dad wasn't a real emotional person. He would hold stuff in for a long time, then he'd get real mean, for punishment and stuff. His dad was a terror, an old sod buster farmer, tough guy, spare the rod and spoil the child. He was a terror with his kids and dad was hard on his kids, and I'm trying not to do that. After the way my dad was, absentee father, I wanted to spend all the time I could with my kids. You talk to parents in my parent's generation and they all say "Gee, if I had life to live over I'd spend more time with my kids, watching them grow up".

More mothers than fathers reported being involved in disciplining children. Mostly this was explained as their being more present with children and being the "taskmasters" or directors. Three women actually used the words "no waiting for dad to get home" to describe their strategies with the children, indicating a change in a historical trend, a social reconstruction. Dads reported stepping in when things got out of hand; either the mothers became exhausted or the fathers were pushed to a breaking point.

While the mothers were largely the managers, feeders and custodial keepers of children, they also reported being the emotional caretakers of the kids. Fathers largely

retained the role of playmate. The following interchange exemplifies these points:

> He: Definitely [she] manages the boys. She's far more organized about keeping track (doctor, dental).
>
> She: We never let [discipline] slip, like "wait til your dad gets home".
>
> He: Sometimes she will get exasperated and hand it over to me, even on the phone.
>
> She: They're more afraid of [him], of his temper, if the pot boils over. It's probably me who does 2/3 of the [emotional nurturing]. He does fishing, canoeing and trap shooting.

While mothers described being spectators and supporters of their children's activities and sports, only fathers talked about coaching and playing sports with their children.

Like the housework share, the child care share for these couples showed similar processes. Both men and women described a pattern of helpful involvement by the men, often achieving a perceived equal share. Women, however, largely retained executive and managerial responsibility over this domain. Primacy, for women, over home and children defined an equal share. One man's comments provides a good summation:

> I'm the plow horse. You tell me what to do, point me in that direction, tap the reins and I'll plod ahead and do it. I don't see things that are out there, but if you tell me what you need done, I'll do it. I respect the fact that [she] always has the responsibility on her shoulders...and with the kids, that's the critical thing.

Money Management and Decisions

The couples were asked how money was managed in the family on a routine basis, how the arrangements had evolved and how major decisions were handled. After addressing these aspects they were asked how they perceive power in the relationship. These questions revealed a great deal of overlapping issues. Discussing money led to issues of power, decisions led to issues of money, and power led to issues of decision-making and money.

Control With the Checkbook

Most of the couples described a junior/senior Partner structure when discussing how they shared responsibility for money management. While women exercised a lot of control over money, men retained ultimate authority. Half of the women were the designated keepers of the checkbook, paying the monthly bills; two of the couples had separate accounts, splitting the monthly share of bills; and for the rest of the couples the man was in charge. While some couples reported a stable arrangement throughout their marriages, a number of them had switched back and forth, settling either with the partner who was more frugal, "better" at managing money, needed increased control to keep it "fair", or with the one who was less put upon by the responsibility.

Where a few of the men had absolutely no connection to the family finances, besides bringing home "the bacon", many of the men, regardless of who managed daily outflow, were involved in the overall "big picture" and long range planning. A number of couples referred to the arrangements between their own parents as influencing their roles.

Only one man expressed a particular, exclusive attachment to control of the money:

> I pay the bills. I told [her] early on..."even if I'm senile, I want you to pretend I'm paying the bills".

He went on to explain:

> My dad is very book conscious...it's his responsibility. How good I am at it is another story.

A wife who had always paid the bills expressed ambivalence about the responsibility and her need for control:

> I do the bills...and sometimes if we are in a financial bind I will get upset. [He] will tell me that I need to save money and I get upset because I'm doing the bills. I figure if he's upset, he should be helping me out.

Her sense of control became an illusion when he intervened. They explained how primary socialization for both of them led to her assumption of the task of managing the money:

> She: When I was younger, my father had a few apartments and he found that it was a good thing for me to handle responsibility. So I would take in the rent and pay the bills.
>
> He: I don't care. I want to go out and make money and have things for my family. My mother always did the money and my dad never cared. That's kind of how

> I was raised. I have no problem giving [her] the money.
>
> She: Even if [he] were handling it I would still have to have my nose in it because I want to know what's going on. I think it's a thing a woman needs to know. There are too many women who don't know how to handle [money]. I'm more of a person who likes to be in control.

For this couple, the arrangement appeared to be based less upon skill and more upon primary socialization and her "female" security needs, as this interchange revealed:

> He: I don't spend much, I really don't.
>
> She: Actually, I should give him the cash and have him dole it out to me.
>
> He: I keep the credit cards.
>
> She: No, I have my own credit cards. But for awhile I had to put mine in the drawer because I used it too frequently.
>
> He: She's on probation.

Like this couple, some other couples referred to the man's ultimate authority over spending even when he had relinquished the mundane duty of check writing and bill paying. Another couple mirrored the above exchange:

> She: We have one checkbook and I pay the bills. I like to know what's going on, what the cash flow is and what the bills are. I guess it would be difficult for me to give up. [He] is more frugal than I...I've tried over the years to be more frugal.
>
> He: As far as I know she's not bad with the checkbook. She has problems with credit cards. I monitor credit cards...I see [them] as a threat, she sees them as something she can use.

For one couple in particular, her total management of the money, including long range planning, was inextricably

tied to trauma in her childhood. Her father had fallen ill and died when she was a teenager and the family was not financially prepared. She explained:

> I'm much more of a saver than [him], much more cognizant of where our money is. I think about what would happen if one of us became disabled. It really scared me a lot, when you see your parents lose their home and everything but the clothes on their backs.

While these couples had stable arrangements throughout their marriages, others had jockeyed the money management, often in an attempt to adjust the balance power.

The Power of Money

Usually when the checkbook changed hands over the course of the marriage, it was explained by skill or the need to balance the burden of money management at work with that of the home. For some, however, it was an attempt to balance power in the home. This couple described their struggle:

> He: I think as much either by default or my strength of argument I became the self-appointed master of the checkbook. I didn't realize it at the time but I put [her] in a corner at the time. I was a real penny pincher. [She] accosted me at one point and laid it out for me how it felt for her...like I was more of an equal partner than she was, that she shouldn't have to justify [her purchases]. I was having her account very tightly. It was the background I came from and the way I was. The light went on for me, it was real consciousness raising, I saw the truth in what she was saying. We worked that out. We both get an allowance at the end of the month. How we spend that money is not to come under the purview of the other person.
>
> She: I pay the bills.
>
> He: She took that over.

> She: I said "Tell me what you want to save a month, I'll make sure we save that. Don't ask questions, trust that I know what I'm doing". And he was able to let go of that...many years ago. What he does with what we save is his business.

She successfully equalized the daily balance of power, he retained control over the long term savings.

Another couple had a unique circumstance where money had a powerful role in defining the relationship, especially for the man. They owned a small business but she had an independent and plentiful source of income in the form of trust funds from her family. They explained:

> He: We used to keep our money separate until a couple of years ago. I could never keep up with the bills with the money that I make, which was real nominal. [She] always paid the bills with the money that came from [trust funds]. It worked out pretty good. I tried to keep separate money but I was always busted. So we decided to have a joint account. Now I pay the bills.
>
> She: He got into other little businesses and I basically took over running the store. He's always trying to make up for the money, he feels he's not making enough, so he's always trying to find ways to make money. I get money from my family, from stocks.
>
> He: That's one of the hardest things in our marriage. It doesn't mean anything to her. I'll never make what she makes. There are trust funds, so much money that it boggles the imagination. I could work 10 years and never make what she does in a week. I got my real estate license. I know it will save us money when we sell the house. It's the least I can do.
>
> She: It doesn't bother me that he can't contribute as much. I think we're lucky to have what we have and should take advantage of the situation. He shouldn't worry. He gets so down.

Her money gave her the balance of power, putting him in the junior partner position. Her abundant income defined their

lifestyle, one he could not support. Where most couples worry about how to make ends meet, for this couple the concern was how to make the man's self concept meet his own expectations. Perhaps, like some women who perceive their contribution as inadequate, his effort to save (her) money and his assuming the check-writing became the only way to achieve a more equal balance.

Two couples acknowledged how changes in relative incomes affected the balance of power in the relationship. A couple who had made the transition from a traditional to a more equal structure with her employment, and his reduced employment, had this to say:

> She: I've wondered, because our positions changed where I became the main breadwinner and started earning more, if that doesn't give a woman more respect in the eyes of her husband, when we're in the position that they used to be in.
>
> He: Yeah, I thought it was neat. It changed something, a little power change, although it was never spoken, but unconsciously.

Her superior earning power, while a radical shift for them, did not result in an ascendancy over him. It did, however, gain her status. Just as men are often shut out of primacy over the household regardless of their contributions, women tend to be limited in the power they can achieve with money.

Another couple who had shifted toward a traditional structure with her recent departure from the work force revealed how he used his superior earnings to assert his

power:

> She: Sometimes it bothers me. He says, once in a while, "It's my money".
>
> He: No, I don't say it's my money.
>
> She: That's what I don't like about not working as much.
>
> He: That's when she gets on me about doing something.
>
> She: So that's your way of getting back at me?
>
> He: Pretty much.
>
> She: It's self worth or something...
>
> He: I only bring it up when she's bugging me, and it usually puts an end to it.
>
> She: I'll shut up...and think about it.

Reminding her of his earnings (and her lack of earnings) was his strategy to regain power when she was exerting hers in the home, and it worked.

For the most part, couples expressed sharing and equity where money management was concerned, at least on the surface. A closer look revealed few equal partners and mostly junior/senior partner arrangements where most women retained control over daily expenditures and bill paying; men had ultimate authority and control over long term financial planning. Greater income by women did not inevitably bring them more control or power. For the three who out-earned their husbands, one woman was acknowledged as having greater power and control because of money.

Decisions as Reflections of Power

When the couples talked about their decision-making processes, they referred mostly to money (making large purchases), job changes or career considerations, and family relocations. All of the couples described their decisions as shared, with much discussion and mutual consideration. However, "shared" did not mean "equal" power in decisions but that women had a voice. The ultimate authority, although usually unspeakable, often rested with the man. Some couples openly acknowledged his ascendancy in decision-making.

A woman talked about the decision to relocate so the husband could go back to school, requiring a great deal of change and sacrifice by the whole family. She perceived choice in what appeared to be a no choice situation:

> She: A lot of talk, three years, discussing every aspect ..all concerns weighed. [He] knew he was going to do it. That's just the way it was. When I had my doubts he said "Well, either you do it with me or you don't. I'm doing it". And so we all did it. But I wasn't forced into the decision.

When asked about power in the family, one man equated his power with decision-making:

> I think [she] respects me for making decisions on my own if I have to, and the need for me to feel like (back to traditional family with me being father, husband and majority breadwinner) I have some added authority. Even though we make decisions as a couple, I still feel like it's still ultimately my decision, but I wouldn't do that without knowing what [she] is feeling.

Another couple described their perceptions of how they,

as individuals, impact decisions:

> He: We never have hit a wall.
>
> She: I really want to say, you really are the stronger personality and perhaps a stronger influence.
>
> He: [She] is very adaptable and will go along with anything.
>
> She: Unless something really, really bothers me. I'd have to say [he] is the idea person and I'm the detail person...I take care of the details after things are established...he's the establisher.

Another man acknowledged the advantage of greater earning power. He said:

> I guess, financially, I probably have the contribution that way...my role as father, I guess. I never think of it...that I've got the upper hand here.

While these couples describe a complementary pattern of decision-making with her the consultant, him the ultimate authority, most couples described the belief of a more symmetrical style. A small number of couples recounted relocations based upon the wife's as well as the husband's job considerations or preferences.

One couple described the failed attempt to put her career needs ahead of his early in the marriage and the ensuing process:

> He: I wasn't looking forward to moving away but I felt, at that particular time, that [her] need to establish herself professionally, after having gone through the educational experience, was probably more important.
>
> She: We had agreed when I graduated from grad. school we would move to a place where I found a job. I sent out resumes to places I thought would be appealing to [him].

She took a job out of state, but, they said, circumstances in his work kept him here, leading to a two year separation before she left her job and returned. He remarked:

> We had wholly committed to [her] move [out-of-state] and it was an excellent job, she loved it. It was not an easy decision to come back here and give that up. You couldn't have both. As much because of my love for the area, she made that sacrifice.

They had committed to her move, temporarily. The "cover story" looks like her job was, at least, equally important, but he didn't leave his job and she ultimately sacrificed hers for his preference.

Still, couples emphatically spoke of their decisions as shared. For many women, this seemed to mean that they were consulted and heard. One woman explained:

> Power is getting my way, even if it involves compromise...my wishes are considered...it's having considered what I want considered. I don't have to win so long as we're sharing in the process.

For some women, just perceiving they had a voice, that the process was shared, left them feeling equal in the decision-making.

Husbands Empowering Wives

Some of the couples spoke of the husband's efforts to increase the wife's power. Two important processes are revealed in the following examples. First, the collision of primary and secondary socialization where ideology is shaped by early role models and subsequently reconstructed by the significant others of adulthood, and the

contingencies of adulthood in today's world. Second, men using their paternal power to relinquish that power, directing women toward greater autonomy for the woman's protection and to protect the man from over-responsibility. One wife said:

> He'll say the positive and the negative. He always knows which one I should do. He always wants me to decide for myself.

A husband described his attempts to increase his wife's autonomy, beginning with the purchase of a car:

> I said "You go buy the next one, put your name on that and put some credit in your name. I think it's real important. I've seen a lot of wives get destituted by not planning to be alone and I've always wanted to have the freedom to relax because [she] is prepared. Now she's got her [career] and knows how to do most stuff around the house. We've been training her a little...about fire, the firewood and stuff. I wanted her to get her own credit card and establish her own credit.

Another couple described their incongruent expectations early in the marriage and how hers were reconstructed by his:

> She: I think definitely that I thought I'd be home like my mother. It was quite obvious in the college degree I ended up with, I really didn't intend going anywhere. Both my parents graduated from college... mom graduated with a Home Ec. degree. She used that knowledge in the home but never worked outside the home.
>
> He: I pushed her.
>
> She: He pushed. He was a thorn in the side. It started with "What are you going to do if something happens to me. You've got to have a marketable skill, be able to be financially independent".
>
> He: I could see her being her mom very easily and I didn't want to be married to her mom...not able to

think for herself.

She: She didn't have an identity.

He: The idea of having responsibility, the male being responsible, I don't like having that much pressure on me.

The wife returned to school for a degree that was more practical and, when the kids were school age, she entered the work force on a full time basis. She remarked:

> He verbalized that, with my first full-time job, it was nice to have someone share, contribute to the financial needs.

The last two men took charge of re-socializing their wives. It is not always the case of faster changing women, yet paternalism persisted.

The "Where" and the "Power" of Power

At no point in the interviews were couples more confused and challenged than when asked about power in their relationships. The couples were first asked "How do you think power manifests in your marriage?". When this question was met with long silences, as it often was, the question was re-stated as "How do you think you share power between you?". Then, when power apparently was perceived as a dirty word, they were asked "What do you see as your relative spheres of influence in the family?". When answers were finally elicited, an overriding theme was the reduction or rejection of hierarchy in their perceptions of power. Couples mostly expressed teamwork, occasionally acknowledging a leader.

When asked about power one woman said:

> Power? (Long silence) Huh. I don't know, I usually don't think of things in terms of power. I don't know.

When the question was reframed, she acknowledged her sphere of influence:

> I would say, in terms of the kids, that's real important to me...that the kids learn respect and self sufficiency to a certain extent...learn to appreciate others and...confidence in themselves.

She then went on to describe a point in the marriage where she discovered her seemingly self-imposed powerlessness:

> I think I felt I was too reliant on [him] and I didn't like that. A lot of times when it would come to decisions around the house...I was too willing to say "Well, whatever you think" and let the decision be up to him. And then I got to realizing "Wait a minute, who am I? He's making most of the decisions. I have these kids that I take care of, what do I really think?" So that was part of it.

It seemed as though, during this stay-at-home, mothering phase of her life, she relinquished power unknowingly. Once she connected her uneasiness to her dependency, she was able to seize more autonomy. Fortunately, her husband was able to adapt to her changes.

Another couple showed their discomfort with the word "power":

> He: I don't really, I don't think...as far as having power over her?
>
> She: I confuse the word power with control. I don't have a desire to have control. But I do with [our daughter], pretty much [have control].

Yet another couple qualified the "p" word then he

elaborated and acknowledged their relative influence:

> She: It's hard for me to say power without seeing negative. It's not a struggle in our relationship, as in power struggle.
>
> He: I think it's kind of balanced. It hasn't always been balanced...through the years I've tempered a bit toward being mellower about things, I'm not as volatile. Because I came from a volatile, emotional type family. And [she] has always been even keeled. I've depended on her evenness. If I blow up she's not going to react the way my mother did with my father and end in a lot of violence in the family. Even though I might have pushed for that in the formative years. I think I realized that was her power area. I've always had a lot of respect and admiration for [her] in that area. As far as I'm concerned, I've always felt my power area is [she] has always given me a lot of leeway in my decision-making, never questioned, never badgered, even when things were really bad financially, she never made me feel like I was inadequate...never any pettiness to chip away at anybody's foundation.

His primary socialization brought him into the marriage predisposed toward equating power with anger and violence. Her Gandhi-like response, over the years, was the power that, perhaps, transformed a hurtful family legacy. She was able to diffuse his concept of "power in violence" while not undermining his positive sense of himself even when he was admittedly vulnerable, during financial crisis.

When the men were acknowledged for holding greater power, it was tempered by complementarity. One man said:

> I think [she] and I live our lives scripturally. The Bible puts our relationship with me, as the head of the household, being the one most responsible to God. [She] recognizes that authority. I feel I have greater power than she does in the family...not that I want it. Even though I have the bottom line, that bottom line is reached with agreement.

Another couple discussed his superior share of power:

He: If I had to give percentages, I would say 60/40.

She: [Him].

He: I am generally the one who keeps things moving.

She: The initiator.

He: I drive the train wherever it goes...the leader.

She: And I'm happy with that.

He: And I would say in a democratic way. I would never insist that we do anything. When [she] gets her mind set on something, there is no deterring her.

She: It's a power and it's not a power. I don't ever feel powerless in our relationship. I always feel I've got a voice and if I've got an opinion, [he] hears it.

The complementary nature of the above interchange reflects the complementary nature of the relationship they describe.

Although all of the couples spoke of power as something shared, sometimes acknowledging different areas of power, many couples stressed an equal share of power or an equal lack of assuming power roles. For example, two very busy professionals said:

She: I'm not caught up in power. I guess I see a lot of people get caught up in power struggles in marriage.

He: I feel very comfortable with myself, I feel pretty much at peace with myself...I don't feel threatened by her at all. There's some things she's better at than I am, and that's a realization you come to early in life.

The husband whose wife had independent wealth discussed the importance of equal power:

We've had talks about that and I've told her that just because she has money, it doesn't mean she's right in any kind of decision. Money doesn't mean

> anything when it comes time to make a major decision. My contribution is to realize that a marriage is a 50/50 relationship. The ultimate power isn't like in my family. My dad had the ultimate power, made all the decisions. It seemed like a natural arrangement when I was a kid. But now that I look back...he was a dictator. [In this family] the kids have a fair share.

In a reflexive way, he reconstructed the past and his understanding of power: the power exhibited by his father during his primary socialization was re-conceived as a dictatorship through the eyes of adulthood and secondary socialization. Marrying a woman with wealth, and her contingent power, left him valuing and pressing for equal power.

Some couples referred to the power that unity and teamwork brought to their lives. The man who acknowledged his 60/40 share of power ended by saying:

> [She] has taken my rough direction and smooths it all out and gives it a style that has turned out, over 17 years, to be us.

A woman said:

> I think it's mutual, there's never been an unresolved issue for any length of time. We have two unique and different styles, when you bring the two together, you have a broader base to work from.

Another couple exhibited the need to reflect the balance in their power:

> She: Certainly, in recent years, our relationship has been absolutely void of a power struggle. Both of us are very powerful...it's never a struggle. My ability to be a delegator, the foreseer, the orchestrator, the coordinator of all family activity.
>
> He: I have to step down from that word [power]. The loser in the house is the one who would have to reach

> for power, to use it on the other one. That would be an unempowering experience. I'm a great team player. I'm happy to lead and can lead forcefully. I am equally comfortable being led providing I have confidence in the person who is [leading]. I'm more than willing to be the good soldier and follow the lead in a lot of instances...when you've got a good leader, you're an idiot if you don't use that resource.

Two other couples described the unified, complementary distribution of power, while acknowledging her surplus of power. One couple said:

> He: I really think we have pretty much a democratic household. I think we share power.
>
> She: We're kind of different thinkers. I'm sort of long range...a sense of what needs to be done, and [he] is a detail person. I've got more of a sense of us in the power sort of sense. [He] has the daily kind of detail things that make our lives run, practical.
>
> He: But as far as who decides who gets what done, it's pretty balanced.

Another couple said:

> She: We have much more power as a couple, as a team we are very powerful.
>
> He: She has the final authority over [money]. If I want to buy something for [our son], I clear it with her because a lot of times she doesn't agree. I have to wear her down. If money gets tight we both back off. She is very powerful.
>
> She: We have some property in litigation. I brief him. I'm much tougher than [he] is doing battle with attorneys...so I've been the one to go to court.

While the last two women's power was acknowledged as extending beyond the home, some women located their power within the confines of the home. One couple said:

> He: I'd say [she's] the organizer, the decorator.

She: I'm the featherer of the nest.

He: She makes the house a home.

Most couples revealed a complementary coming together of their skills and influence. Women's power was frequently located in the home, men often held more power economically. All expressed teamwork and democracy in their sharing of power; democracies are not leaderless but they are "fair". For some it had taken years of work and effort to achieve a satisfactory balance and a reduction of perceived hierarchy.

Leisure and Relationship

Couples were asked how they spend leisure time, both as a family and individually; how they maintain relationships outside the nuclear family, with friends and extended family; and how they have preserved their relationship, including how they show caring to each other. Many couples expressed a lack of leisure time with their harried schedules. Leisure was often family centered, around children's sports or other activities, and adults often pursued leisure independently whenever they could fit it into their schedules. Both men and women claimed more leisure time than their spouses, sometimes citing entitlement, and both men and women described leisure pursuits with children, excluding the other spouse.

Parents of children who had reached more autonomous ages were reclaiming the couple relationship and some couples had made special efforts to maintain the couple relationship with prescribed dates or other rituals throughout most of their married lives. Some couples admitted that their affection toward each other had been neglected over the years, often replaced by task-giving and providing role relief for their partners.

Women assumed the responsibility for maintaining the couple relationship and social life more often than men. Women largely assumed the role of sustaining extended family relationships around holidays and birthdays. It was a task that had not entered into the negotiable realm as many men expressed no interest in, or value of, remembering relatives with cards and gifts.

The Leisure of Separateness

The most remarkable aspect of the couples' leisure lives was how separateness and aloneness, sometimes equated with relief from role demands, sometimes a relief from the relationship, defined leisure. One wife said:

> There are times we like to be away from one another. Like this summer when [he] took off with [his friend] for a weekend. It was wonderful. I had a weekend by myself. I like to have my quiet times, and so does [he]. I think he enjoys it when [the kids] and I go [out of town to visit family].

Another wife said:

> [He] and the boys really like fishing and canoeing. The four of them ski. I would rather push them out

the door, read my novels.

While she enjoyed being home alone, her husband enjoyed a solitary pursuit outside the home:

> He: I'll go to movies by myself. I love to go to movies by myself. I wait til it has run its course. I love going to a theater with ten people in it and just relax.
>
> She: [He] likes a lot of different kinds of movies. For 20 years you've gone to movies by yourself... that's something I would not choose to do, I don't think I'd be comfortable going alone.

A number of women remarked how they liked being home alone, where none of the men did. This couple's interchange reflects the comfort a woman finds in the home, not always experienced by the man:

> She: We'll tend to spend quiet time in the same room but not interacting.
>
> He: I think it's [her] house and I need my own room.
>
> She: I'm happy anywhere in this house.

Yet another woman said:

> I am just perfectly happy when they (husband and son) go to Alaska. I'll come home and putter around in the flowers, raid the refrigerator and read a book.

Men spoke more of going off by themselves or with others to pursue outdoor interests. One couple said:

> He: I do get away...take a day and go canoeing on a river.
>
> She: And that never, never bothered me. I take trips [out of state].

One couple with three pre-adolescent children described their tag team approach to escaping:

> He: Because of the kids we can't afford to take that

> much time off. She'll go someplace for a week and I'll watch the kids and I'll go someplace and she'll watch the kids.

A couple of men stated the need to be separate:

> We've made adjustments in our personal life to compensate for the fact we work in such close proximity...you need time for you.

> There's times you don't want to be with your spouse. You want to go and do your own things, you don't want to play sports with girls, you want to be with your friends...time is so short.

Mostly men's leisure time outside the home was described as balanced by women's leisure time in the home, either when the men and kids were gone or when the wife was not working.

Entitlement to Leisure

Sometimes a sense of entitlement to leisure defined the relative pursuit of personal leisure when both men and women said their spouse was entitled to more leisure. The couple where the wife worked the night shift while the husband cared for the children had this to say:

> She: I feel like [he] doesn't get a lot of his own time because his evenings are taken up with the kids. So I try to make sure he gets leisure time on weekends to ski and golf. I like to golf, I like to ski for four hours or so, but I don't believe in putting my kids in day care so I can go...that's what it has come down to. When we can do it as a family, I'd be glad to.

> He: [Our daughter] goes with me now. I'll ski one day with her then one day on my own.

> She: And the other thing is I do like them gone, too.

His extra shift earned him a greater share of leisure

outside the home. Her greater responsibility to children over-rode her entitlement to outside pursuits; she felt compensated by alone-time at home.

A professional couple who both worked more than full-time and had six children seemed to embrace an egalitarian relationship both ideologically and in practice. She had no trouble entitling herself, with a clever strategy, when opportunities for travel arose. They explained:

> He: Like travel...I don't like to be away from home. I don't like to be away from my family, no one really does.
>
> She: And I'm a traveller. That's a vast difference between us.
>
> He: The kids and I will stay and kind of do our thing.
>
> She: I'll have my mother come. And I have no guilt about it. A postcard every day and that's about it.

Interestingly, although only women talked of the joys of being home alone, no women but a few men were referred to as home-bodies, either because they didn't like travel or socializing; they liked being home alone, with family.

Two spouses wished their mates would feel more entitled to leisure. The wife who had independent income expressed her husband's inability to take leisure time for himself:

> I like to do artistic type things. I throw pots, go to art classes. He doesn't do as much. I take more advantage of our situation. He needs to manage his time better so he can have leisure time...he's always doing something for the store.

He had trouble relieving himself of the pursuit of the more equal economic share. The husband who felt more responsible for the home share, who's wife was more work oriented, said of her:

> [She] just doesn't give herself any time. I give myself, at least, time on the exercise bike every day.

One couple described their strategies for earning the entitlement to leisure:

> She: If he comes home and it looks like I didn't get anything done and the house looks really bad...
>
> He: [She] skied all day or rode her horse...
>
> She: Then it's like, I'm on duty. If I'm smart, to keep him happy, I'll do extra work the night before.
>
> He: There's a softball tournament in the summer on a weekend. I'll do laundry the night before, really late...get up early on Saturday and hang it out on the line and after the day's games, come home...I feel a little guilt for getting something extra.

While for this couple individual leisure was a luxury strictly accounted for, most couples did not appear to hold each other accountable for their respective shares of leisure. Indeed, some felt their spouses were entitled to more than they would allow themselves.

Social Ties

While a number of couples reported the dearth of social contact, because of time and family constraints, women showed a greater propensity and push for social interaction. None of the men reflected, as a number of the women did, on their spouse's reluctance or their own

efforts to increase social ties. Only a couple of men expressed an equal or greater valuing of social life.

One couple had this to say about their discordant social styles:

> She: You're a real homebody.
>
> He: I do nothing very easily...[she] doesn't do nothing very easily. Even outside the home she can't do nothing...like sit around a pool. Her interest is people, my interest is mental effort, so when I do nothing with my brain that's really relaxing...because I've been using it all day long. But she's more of a people person.

Another couple talked about their respective comfort levels with people:

> She: I used to tolerate big parties a whole lot better than [he] and [he] would always say "There's too many people" and it's interesting because we've kind of evolved into always it's more of a small group.
>
> He: I don't really like large groups of people that mill around and talk about really trivial things. But I think I probably invite more people over here...I probably have a bigger list of people I want to invite but don't always get around to it.

Another wife remarked:

> We tease him about his becoming such a homebody. He would prefer him cooking on the deck to going out...the latter requires effort, not in a familiar environment. I'm trying to get him out of a rut by having people over, going out or doing something, but I don't feel that big of a loss.

One couple, where the wife had an active but separate social life attributed the husband's lack of social involvement to the fact they had three teenage sons, his playmates:

> She: I do have a lot of women friends. My sister and

I go out to dinner and we travel.

He: [I have] not so much friends as acquaintances. For one thing I have three sons. I think maybe if they were a different gender and I felt alienated I may want to do more. We go out and shoot pool, and fishing, or go bump around in motorcycle shops...I'll just let the kids drive me around.

For three of the couples, church provided the social contact that was missing. One couple said:

He: We don't have very many people over for dinner.

She: I think that's why church has been important. We get invited to people's homes for holidays.

For two couples, it appeared to be the man who perceived a deficit in social contact:

He: We don't have enough of it.

She: We have friends, we're fairly involved with church, we have dinner with other couples, we're both pretty social.

The other couple had a similarly disparate perception:

He: I don't think we have a whole lot of social time outside the family.

She: I [think we] do. We'll ask someone to go to the movies and he likes to have people over to barbecue on Sunday. If we get invited, we usually go.

A striking contrast was the one couple who did not have children. They reported a very active social life which they attributed to their working together so closely in their business. He said:

He: It's a function of us working together. We bring other people into our dinner time so we have different things to talk about, other people to talk about things with.

While a couple of men expressed either an embracing of

social life, or missing it, it was mostly women who expressed a greater value of social ties.

Family Ties

The women in this study clearly took more responsibility for maintaining connections to extended family. Certainly, when it came to gift buying and Christmas cards, the women were the doers or, at least, they provided the reminders for their husbands. Men were rarely interested in assuming or negotiating the obviously "female" domain. Some women assumed the role automatically, even when it was distasteful or burdensome.

One couple expressed her attention to dates, his attention to one date. They said:

> He: [She] remembers all the dates, including our anniversary.
>
> She: I have them on a calendar.
>
> He: I remember [her] birthday, but no one else's.

Some couples revealed the wife's reluctant but compelling assumption of role of "rememberer" and "doer" and the husband's explicit lack of interest. One couple said:

> She: He sort of will forget and I push him into it... make sure you go out and buy something for your mother. I would rather not take that on, it's his responsibility.
>
> He: [She] always does the Christmas cards, it doesn't mean that much to me.

Another woman expressed her resistance but ultimate

assumption of the connecting role:

> He: I fill out a couple of cards...I hate to shop.
>
> She: I don't really like to Christmas shop, I'll do it if he tells me enough in advance...or he'll do it two days before...so it's me. I call his sisters, I write, but if I don't get a response, I quit.

Another couple remarked:

> He: We're closer to [her] family...my family is broken and fractured. With mine, I go in spurts. If [she] reminds me that it's my sister's birthday, or my mother's birthday...and she does.
>
> She: For some reason I have this data bank in my brain.

One woman revealed her reasoning in the assumption of the task, he revealed his ambivalence:

> He: If she didn't do it, it wouldn't happen. It's not important...I guess it's kind of careless, but it just isn't important to me to remember.
>
> She: I like to be remembered on my birthday so I think other people must [too]. I know it would hurt them if they weren't.

Her doing of the remembering related to her own need to be cared for, extending that to others. Another couple talked at length of her struggle with a similar issue. They said:

> She: It used to be [my job]. I started to resent it, almost.
>
> He: Like, why do you have to get my mom a Mother's Day gift?
>
> She: Yeah. There was no reason to resent it.
>
> He: She just took care of it.
>
> She: I just took it on.
>
> He: Then she got tired of it.
>
> She: Because I wanted to be loved by everybody. I

> wanted everybody to like me and get along with everybody, and then I got to a point and everybody liked me, then I didn't care if everybody liked me (ha ha) and then it got to a point where it started bugging me and I said "This bugs me, can you do it more?". And now I'm back to doing it...but now I'm comfortable saying "Why don't you get something this time", and he would.
>
> He: If I knew she wasn't going to do it.
>
> She: I do the Christmas cards, but [he] is the monitor...to make sure I make a list because I've forgotten. I haven't ever resented doing the Christmas cards. If I ever start to resent them, I won't do them. In the beginning I did it all, to be liked. It probably goes back to mom and dad, the mother does those things.

The allusion to primary socialization may reveal why so many women assume the task of remembering his family as well as hers, in an automatic fashion, even when they find it an unfair burden. It is more the woman's legacy to maintain connections. Men are holding out on this job; women perceive it as an important concern.

Managing the Couple Relationship

When couples were asked about one-on-one time with each other and dating habits, many couples acknowledged a deficit and a number of the women indicated they took more responsibility for pursuing the relationship. Children were often mentioned as hindering attention to the couple relationship. Three of the couples with children had institutionalized frequent dating in their relationship; one couple had a yearly romantic ritual; all cited it as an essential element of the marriage.

One of the couples who had ritualized dating habits acknowledged that she was the driving force behind the practice:

> He: Dates? We have to do that...we go out every ten days. [She] tells me that we have to go out, she's more keen on that, we both do it more because of her. I guess I would want to go out but the desire's not as strong if she doesn't push for it. Once we're out, then it's great. It's back to some of the old relationship transaction.
>
> She: I have a strong need for intensity in the relationship...not to take it for granted, to keep it valued.
>
> He: I think it's good, it keeps alive our relationship. I now expect that. She's the catalyst. She'll know when to trigger it.

Another couple took a tip from an outsider early in the marriage:

> She: We go out every Thursday night, since [our oldest son] was little, for 12 years. Someone told us that we should go out every week. We look forward to it.
>
> He: I think it's good for couples to have quiet time, away from the kids.

For more couples, however, children impeded couple time. One couple said:

> She: It's been a while [since we've been out alone]. That's one of the things on my list to talk to you about.
>
> He: If we get to go somewhere and the kids are interested, then they like to come along. I think we've consciously said we're going to have some time alone when they leave, let's be with them as much as we can.

It was she who seemed to be taking responsibility for attending to, and missing, the couple relationship and he

who didn't want to exclude the children. Another couple showed similar sentiments. They described a family vacation where an attempt was made to get time alone without their son. She relished the time with her husband. He saw it as empty time, excluding their son. They said:

> She: The last time we got away as a couple was eight years ago. I do [miss it], I was telling [him] that this morning.
>
> He: I'd like to, we just don't seem to have time to do it. We went to Hawaii and left [our son] one night and stayed in a hotel. But then...
>
> She: He kept calling [our son].
>
> He: We were just sitting around doing nothing.
>
> She: He missed him terribly....I was just thoroughly enjoying my husband, he was calling this kid every three minutes.

Another wife expressed her greater push for couple time:

> She: I'd want more time for us, me and [him].
>
> He: We do something once a week or so...
>
> She: I'm thinking date, dancing, I have to urge more.
>
> He: A lot more. I hate going and listening to the music, it's too loud.
>
> She: I try to keep that alive because that's the nucleus of the whole thing. If he and I fall apart... that's important.

This couple had different ideas about what constituted a satisfactory date. What he perceived as noise, she perceived as important couple time.

A number of couples reported their children reaching ages where they were spending nights out with friends,

opening time for dates. One woman said:

> We don't [date] very often. I think we went out to dinner...about three weeks ago. That was the first time in a long time. The girls were both invited to spend the night so we decided to go out to dinner and it turned out well.

Another couple said:

> He: We [date], not real often.
>
> She: When [our son] spends the night, here lately, we find an opportunity to do stuff, go to movies, eat. As soon as we know he's going to spend the night, we look at each other.

One couple reported a yearly ritual:

> She: The time we have the most fun is when we're alone together, and that's what we have the least of. Two weeks a year in Mexico...that's the time we non-stop dialogue and laugh...
>
> He: We pull our souls out of our business and family lives and become two people devoted to each other.

As infrequent as it was, it sounded like this couple equally valued their yearly date as an opportunity to reclaim their romance.

One couple with three children had creatively worked their way around child-care to institutionalize the couple connection early in the marriage. They said:

> She: [He] and I started a fabulous thing when the kids were real young. Usually about one night a week, sometimes two, we'd have dinner at home, a nice dinner, just the two of us. So the kids would eat early.
>
> He: [Now] we'll include one of the kids in our dinners, we feel we do our little thing frequently enough we don't have to shut the door on them.
>
> She: When they were younger it was exclusion. We'd wait until late at night when they were in bed. We tried it and found how stress free it was. It was

> usually preparation together. We'd have a glass of wine or a cocktail while we were fixing it. It just kind of evolved to where it was preferable to going out, until they were older and we felt comfortable going out. I think cherish is an excellent word for [why we do it].

They brought their special date into their home until their children were old enough to be left. As the children matured, they were invited as guests (one at a time) to share in the date.

The one couple who didn't have children stood in sharp contrast to the other couples. Childlessness, combined with co-owning a business, kept them very connected. They said:

> She: Our connection is just everything we're doing, and that makes us very close.
>
> He: What makes it work is we have all the individual freedom we could possibly want. And with all this freedom we find we want to spend a major portion of it together...we're a unique couple because we don't have the diversions in our personal lives, no children.
>
> She:...we're up in the special zone all the time.

At one point the husband said:

> Children would change our lives about like a terminal illness would.

This couple had cohabitated prior to their marriage. Although they avoided the intrusion of children into the couple relationship, they acknowledge it was she who pushed for the marital bond. They said:

> He: When I got home on Thursday, I did not know I was getting married on Saturday.
>
> She: Well, you did! But I took care of all the

details. I was the driving force in that.

They discussed how they came to not have children:

> He: I guess one of the reasons we don't have kids is because we wanted to have time for us...us collectively or us individually. We realized that 17 years ago.
>
> She: And as the biological clock ticked away... and it was imperative to make a decision about that, I wanted to make sure how important that was to [him]. I always felt that I would have liked to have been pregnant. I would have liked to have given birth and then I would have liked to have given it away.

She sensed she missed something fundamental in not bearing a child but she followed his lead by choosing the relationship and independence as a couple.

While a few men remarked that they did not, as couples, spend enough time together, only one man, the husband who took more responsibility for the home and whose wife prioritized work, appeared to pursue more intimate time with his wife. They said:

> She: [He] is awfully good about affection...I think he initiates more than I do.
>
> He: Yeah, I think so.
>
> She: Conversation time, like "How did your day go?", is something we're working on...making time for that dialogue. That's something he has verbalized to me lately. I tend to give him dialogue in pieces and that feels okay for me. But [he] really wanted more time for dialogue, time for he and I rather than me giving it to him as I'm cooking dinner.

Overall, more women indicated pursuance of one-to-one couple time. Few men expressed reluctance, however, citing children and time constraints as impeding couple time. Two different themes emerged: family time precluding couple

time and the institutionalization of dating. Far more couples expressed the former theme and men more than women accepted the intrusion of children. The couples who made dating a regular part of their lives appeared to appreciate the benefits of the time together (both men and women).

The Task of Caring

When asked how they showed caring to each other on a daily basis, some couples reported making phone calls to each other during the day, some referred to physical affection, and some referred to gifts and flowers. A few of both men and women said they didn't show caring enough or as much as they used to. Both men and women reported being initiators of, and having a greater propensity for, physical affection. Many of the couples talked about assuming tasks in the home and providing role relief for their partner as gestures of caring.

The one couple who had struggled most with their redefinition of roles over the years discussed how they had come to show caring:

> She: I used to be better, but I don't show [him] very much, I have to admit. I'm not real affectionate like I used to be, wouldn't you say?
>
> He: Probably not. You're not not...
>
> She: I will give [him] hugs and tell him I love him and give him a kiss. But it's not like it used to be.
>
> He: She'll do things for me...like fix me something, food. I think you show it differently after being together so long. [She] doesn't have to

> hug me or kiss me for me to know. And I think it's true coming this way to her.
>
> She: I think it's easy when you get to the point in life that we are at to forget about showing affection, and I think when we don't show on another affection our life doesn't go as smoothly.

She went on to describe what had replaced affection in their expression of caring:

> Like [him] getting me a hamburger yesterday when I felt badly and picking the kids up. He pretty much did everything. [It takes] the pressure off or lets you sit back and take a breather. I think that's one of the ways we show caring. Because life gets pretty stressful so if you can take that stress off one another for a while and maybe do seventy percent and not expect so much in return then it let's the person know how you feel.

Half of the couples talked of doing tasks as a way of showing caring. The above couple was the most eloquent in their expression. Perhaps with their long and hard battle over task allocation, the deeds had come to represent a valuable commodity in the relationship. Another couple talked of the tasks of caring and the husband examined the value of task-giving in their relationship:

> She: I'll have the house together, offer to get him something to drink if he's watching TV.
>
> He: [I do] things traditionally labelled as what the wife should do...cleaning the kitchen, cleaning the appliances really good.
>
> She: That's your label...
>
> He: For a long time, to me, I'm showing caring by doing this stuff. But, what I didn't realize, is this stuff doesn't mean nearly as much to her as it does to me. My doing these chores are my way of showing caring but in reality it doesn't mean much to [her], not that important. So I think holding her, cuddling [is] very important and being perceptive of when she

needs that without [her] having to ask for it.

This husband held a fairly traditional ideology and assumed that his doing "woman's work" would show caring. She, however, didn't place much value on that work but knew he did. Hence, she'd put the house together for him, not for any intrinsic value of her own. Perceptively, he reconstructed his understanding of "women" and what they value from his experience of secondary socialization.

Both women and men referred to cooking and food as a way of caring, either a special meal (usually by women) or routine relief (usually by men). One wife, however, explained:

> Things like making his lunch in the morning. It's an extra, loving thing. It has nothing to do with nutrition. I know he'll get fed.

Another wife expressed a similar sentiment:

> For me at this point, it's preparing meals, or even shopping. Until my kids reached these ages, I felt it was something I had to do. Now I feel they should be gaining independence with that. If they come in and say "What's for dinner?", I say "I don't know, what are you fixing yourself?". So if I do a nice dinner, or even shopping for it, getting special things for them and [my husband], that's the way I express affection.

Another husband said:

> I bought [her] the gas grill for Christmas and I told her "You're getting the slave that goes with it". It becomes incumbent on me to become the weekend chef and take that responsibility off her.

Another couple revealed how tasks had survived where physical affection had dwindled:

> She: [I'd show caring by] knowing he was overwhelmed

with time and doing a chore he would normally do. We used to have a routine of always kissing goodbye that we've fallen out of.

He: For me it would be kind of a mundane thing like try to take care of a chore for her.

She: He's brought home flowering plants for me.

He: I don't do it as often as I should.

Both men and women referred equally to the deficit of affection and the substitution of more instrumental gestures of caring. Women more frequently gave the gift of food (special meals) while both men and women provided role relief.

The Measure of Gender

Eleven of the couples were asked directly how gender plays out, or what gender means, in their relationship. Although many of the couples struggled with the question, they had a lot to say on the subject. The themes of nurturing and independence for women emerged while greater involvement in the home, being the primary earner and physical strength for men emerged. Some of the couples were adamant that gender was inconsequential in the relationship.

A number of men and women, while defining their perceptions of gender, compared themselves to others or to a prevailing social yardstick of gender meanings. Sometimes they measured themselves against their primary socialization models, their parents; sometimes they

measured themselves against their acquaintances or the public images of men and women, i.e., the secondary socialization models. Mostly, comparisons were made against a traditional model. Men's foray into the domestic realm was more noteworthy than women's pursuit of careers.

One couple who shared a transitional ideology revealed their meanings and how they measure themselves against the outside world:

> She: I probably would have to think about that. The word that came to mind immediately was care-giver. I was thinking more nurturing. I have a pretty comfortable position, I only have to work part-time and I don't have to care for a child by myself. It's not equitable as far as bringing home the bacon, but it balances out. Maybe not completely. I'm starting to feel, when I see people struggling around me, single moms, I start to feel a little bit guilty. I have a lot of acquaintances who have better situations and worse situations and more people have less fortunate situations. I have friends whose husbands can't even make themselves peanut butter sandwiches, still, and that makes me sick. I find myself as the woman in this family having to stop and count my blessings and not think the grass is greener.
>
> He: From my perspective, I bring home more money.
>
> She: You're the provider, you are.
>
> He: I'm home less because of that, that's my responsibility. I feel that [she] is more than competent to handle the things she does handle, that we have a good balance in that way, there's not glaring inequities in that way. As far as my contribution I think it's appropriate for a husband and father to share not only in the household duties but the emotional life of the family. I do that to the extent I'm able.
>
> She: You do to your full extent.
>
> He: My models are my father and my maternal grandfather. For the most part I don't compare myself to my friends. I know plenty of people, from my

estimation, who don't measure up, they're selfish.

She: It drives him nuts when he reads in the news how men are helping more. He wasn't raised that way and it's hard for him to see how things have really changed. He feels like it's reverse discrimination, like reverse sexism because his was never that situation.

He: Well, it makes me angry because it reflects on me and I don't want it to. I have a vested interest in maintaining a positive self image. When I hear about other men and other situations, I'm kind of angry and I think about what I have in common with these guys... not much. It bolsters my self image.

As a transitional couple, they measured themselves against a traditional model. Another couple expressed disdain for what they saw outside of themselves and resisted comparison. They denied gender as an organizing principle but noted their gender idiosyncracies. They said:

She: [It's] unique for me because I'm in this house of testosterone, the only female. I have it all. It's not because I'm a woman, it's because I'm [his] partner and have two wonderful children and all my needs are being met. I've really had an easy time of it. I'm in a very positive place and I happen to be a woman.

He: My gender is an accident of birth. My gender is not the focal point of who I am or what our relationship is. Gender issues are issues we both see pretty much the same. We both laugh raucously at boisterous feminists, we have no use for them. We laugh equally raucously at Archie Bunker and people of the MCP (male chauvinist pig) persuasion. Whatever works for you is fine. But when you bring it to my door or walk around in public wearing it on your sleeve, that's when I've got a problem with it. I don't make beds (ha ha), I'm certainly into a lot of the male trappings, I like to spectate at sports. I'm the man of the family because I'm the man of the family. [Leadership] is a travelling trophy, today I am, tomorrow she is.

She: But I like someone to open my car door... attentions associated with my being a woman and his

being a man. His interests are definitely more masculine.

He: I'm not trying to say that I feel like my gender is clouded or obfuscated...I'm clearly a male, I feel and think like a male. But in terms of my relationship in the family, [gender] is really a secondary issue. You look at them as being different, but the value, in terms of the relationship, is their interdependence.

She: I think maybe the maleness has a lot to do with my expectations. I don't call upon him to function in that way that often. But if a bird gets stuck in the stove, that's [his] responsibility, it's a male responsibility. I don't know how to orchestrate the fishing net, that's a man's job.

This couple rejects the public extremes and the power hierarchy of gender without rejecting, indeed embracing, the aspects of gender that feel comfortable for them.

The couple whose wife had independent wealth discussed their gender meanings:

She: He mows the lawn, that's about it. And raising the kids, he's taking them fishing. And I think I play the mom role as far as snuggling up and giving to the kids. I would say, compared to other people, we have less of a division. He does a lot of housework and I'll do a lot of mechanical things, fix things.

He: I'm not good at that.

She: Psychologically, I'll do things I don't think he realizes...

He: I don't think it's fair to exercise my power, physical power, over her and she could certainly exercise her feminine power over me and say "You're not getting any for six months unless we get a new car". [She] likes her car door opened for her, she's not a libber in that way.

She: I think I already went through that stage in my life..."I'll pay for everything and open my own door". I think as I get older I'm getting the idea that I should let men do more things for me, that I like those little things. I grew up thinking [from] my

> mother how I should be treated by men...bringing flowers and things like that. And [now] I won't lift the furniture any more. I will do it...
>
> He: Just being treated equally is all I ask for.
>
> She: Don't you like to put the worm on the hook?
>
> He: That doesn't mean I'm a man. The kids probably see me do more housework than they see [her] do.
>
> She: I don't think that's right at all!
>
> He: I mean, most men wouldn't be caught dead in the kitchen washing dishes.
>
> She: I think you're more masculine than most men, the way some men primp themselves now.

This interchange revealed that, for her (and perhaps for the woman in the previous citation), the petty battles for gender equity (opening her own door) had fallen away when the larger battles of power equity were seemingly won. For him, her financial power had him asking for equal treatment, a unique stance among the men in this study. She assured him that he still looked masculine when he noted his departure from "most men".

None of the women examined their own roles and questioned how they fulfilled their expectations of being a woman. The man above and the man to follow both revealed an inner dialogue that seemed to beg the question "How does what I'm doing, or how I am, fit with being a man?". The husband who took the more responsible role in the home struggled with his gender identity:

> I don't know. I'm going through a mid-life crisis. My oldest son (from a previous marriage) decided he's gay and it plays on gender. I've given a lot of

> thought about my...I'm not typical...I'm not competitive, manly, I think [my wife] wishes I were more assertive at times, as opposed to being aggressive. I'm kind of in flux. I'm finding also that relationships are a lot more important to me...that I'm understood by my colleagues at work that are all women, that [my wife] and I have a good, sharing relationship. I think relationship is more important to me than most men.

This man examined intrinsic characteristics, his lack of competitiveness and value of relationship, for his measure of gender while the man before him took definition from his roles, his contributions. Both compared themselves against the traditional notions of being a man.

While some couples referred to "her" emotionalism and propensity to nurture and many alluded to "his" superior physical strength as endemic qualities of the genders, couples mostly spoke of their roles, of what they do. Men, in the doing of gender, added to their primary provision the assumption of home related roles. Women's work outside the home, however, was rarely mentioned when discussing gender. Women's outside work was assumed while men's work in the home was emphasized in gender meanings. Women's employment is more fully institutionalized and normative while men's in-home work remains an immature social construction, not yet a norm.

The newly traditional wife (as far as her role), when asked about gender, had this to say:

> I think I'm going with [tradition] in some ways, because it's more the norm to be working. But I like it. I wonder if [my husband] feels the extra pressure to be the breadwinner. I would hate to have that

pressure.

Her husband responded:

> I think, however it worked, we'd adapt. I think if she had a job that made a lot more money, then we'd probably switch. I still enjoy hunting and stuff like that. I think I do more in the home than traditional men. I spend more time with [our daughter].

Her traditional ideology is exemplified by her posture toward being the primary earner, while he admits he could give that up. He has made the ideological transition. She lived the transitional life for years but didn't make the ideological shift. Both perceived themselves as deviating from the norm, she from the contemporary norm of women working, he from the traditional norm of absent fathers. The traditional yardstick, for most of the couples and especially for men, prevailed as the standard measure of gender roles.

Gender-Making

The findings will be summarized as they pertain to the research questions: how the couples both reflect and deviate from gender patterns indicated in gender literature; how roles evolved over the course of the marriage and the factors that induced change; the perceived circumstances and contingencies that informed couples' respective roles; and, the acknowledgement of gender, by the couples, as an organizing principle in their roles.

The Old and the New of Gender

The men and women in the study largely conformed to the prevailing typology of a junior/senior partner arrangement as it informs economics. Men as a whole earned more money and all of the men worked full-time. A few of the women's earnings matched or exceeded their husband's, however. Regardless of women's time in the work force or earnings, women retained the executive role in the home and primacy over children. There was one near exception where the husband appeared to assume greater responsibility for the house, but the wife maintained ultimate responsibility for their child. Nearly a third of the couples expressed egalitarian ideals that approached reality for some, save the woman's executive role over home and/or children.

While some of the women acknowledged their hope for, and the possibility of, decreased employment, and some of the men said they could switch roles if their wife could earn enough, none saw the latter as an eventuality or a goal; it was a theoretical concept.

While many exceptions to gender segregation of tasks presented (for example, a man who sewed and darned his socks and a woman who performed household repairs) outside work (yard and auto maintenance) was mostly segregated. Men were mostly the mowers of lawns, with women the flower tenders, and men were almost exclusively in charge of auto care and the garage.

Inside the home, segregation of tasks was less pronounced. Women assumed more of the meal preparation, expressing a preference for cooking that they bartered for clean-up by their husbands. Many men, however, reported a liking for cooking, especially barbecuing. Men were enlisted as "helpers" and even "partners" in housework while women largely retained the executive role, with the assignment of tasks.

Women mostly assumed management and nurturing of children with men as "helpers" and "playmates". Virtually all of the couples described the men as highly involved with children. None of the men's employment had been preempted by children whereas most of the women had, at least, cut back on employment with the advent of children.

Financial matters reflected a mostly junior/senior partner arrangement. Women were highly involved in daily and monthly management of money while many men retained primacy over long-term planning and credit management. Only one woman reported having nearly complete control over financial matters whereas a number of men reported a greater authority over finances.

While some couples conceded greater power to the man in decision-making, most couples spoke of equal, shared power in the marriage. There were two allusions to greater power in the women; one was the woman who controlled the money, the other was the wife of the man who held primacy

over the housework. The husband whose wife had independent wealth was struggling for equal power. Earnings were directly tied, for some couples, to greater power for men. Most notable, however, was the discomfort with the concept of power and reluctance by most couples to define the locations of power in their marriages as power.

More women mentioned being motivated toward social pursuits than men and the same was true for pursuing the couple relationship. Both men and women reported the imposition of family life on the social and dating life of the couple. Both men and women exhibited autonomous pursuit of leisure. Only women, however, expressed joy in being home alone while the rest of the family recreated. Yet, only men were referred to as home-bodies who didn't like travel or social events. Men appeared to tolerate the imposition of children into the couple relationship better than women.

Just as women assumed the bulk of the nurturing roles in the nuclear family, they also contributed more to maintaining extended family ties. Some women had examined their compulsory role as holiday doer/rememberer, expressing the ethic of care behind it. A number of men expressed no interest or no skill in that role. One man expressed a greater value of the role than the wife. It was clearly a domain where men were happy to be excluded.

Men and women equally expressed a greater or lesser propensity for physical affection. Both men and women noted declines in their displays of affection. Many couples reported showing caring with instrumental tasks: preparing a meal, assuming a chore, providing role relief for their partner. The genders were equally disposed to give with tasks although women reportedly offered food as affection more than men. Physical affection and gifts were equally noted.

Many of the findings support the status-quo of transitional couples and there were many deviations from gender typifications, reflecting the ongoing reconstruction of male and female roles. Many of the men reported comfort with traditionally female tasks and satisfaction with their involvement with children. A few men found housework to be enhancing as either diversion or relief from their outside work. For one man, housework was a prerequisite to outside work.

Women described themselves as departing from their parents' roles in their discipline of children. Women perceived a great deal of power in decisions and money matters while many men expressed relief in giving up the checkbook. Both men and women were autonomous in their leisure pursuits; women's leisure was more grounded in the home than it was for men.

A few of the men acknowledged their discomfort with

their wives' dependence and the burden of primary wage earning, encouraging greater independence in their wives. While they directed their wives toward greater financial autonomy, it was the man's decision to liberate them both from her dependence. None of the men expressed a preference for their wives to work less while some women did express such a desire. In a few cases, it appeared the mens' ideological shifts had exceeded or preceded those of their wives. Although the same was true for some of the women, it was not always the case of "faster changing women". A number of women held tight to their power over the home and children. Overall, greater work force involvement and earnings by women resulted in more involvement in the home by men; men assumed Junior Partner status in the home.

Contributors to Change

For the couple without children, labor division had been mostly stable throughout their marriage. The few women who had maintained full-time employment with the arrival of children reported labor division in the home had remained relatively equal and stable over the span of the marriage. However, for most of the couples, changes had mostly been precipitated by the arrival of children and decreased work force involvement by wives. When women left or decreased their employment as a result of childbearing, they automatically assumed a greater share of the home and

children. This achieved balance and equity in their role division. However, as mothers returned to the work force, men did not so automatically re-enter the home. Negotiating the re-balancing of roles inevitably fell to the wives. Women were the evaluators and directors of the balanced share.

Only one couple reported overt conflict over the redistribution of the home share. Many of the women spoke of more diplomatic strategies for change, using reason and, often, merely asking their spouses for assistance. Male resistance was rarely mentioned. Some women were concerned about getting too much help or support, suffering guilt. The three couples where the wife had maintained full-time employment with the advent of children not only reported the most stable work roles in the home, they were the three couples who reported the husband did more housework (excluding child management).

A final factor that contributed to change in home roles was the maturation of children. The arrival and presence of young children, combined with mothers' fluctuations in employment, destabilized home roles. A number of the couples' children had reached adolescence, providing role relief and more stability for parents.

Why They Do the Things They Do

Couples attributed their amount of role sharing in the home to time availability and the pursuit of balance and

fairness. Less time in the work force, for women, created more time for the home. Part-time women assumed a greater share of the home; husbands of full-time wives assumed a more equal share. Men and women talked of balance and fairness in explaining their share of the amount of home labor but the equity was defined more by women. For most, it was more "fair", economically and intrinsically, that women should work less outside the home and more inside the home. The women whose earnings matched or exceeded their husbands did not leave the work force; their husbands did enter the home to a large degree to achieve equity.

Task segregation was explained by a number of variables. Personal standards, skills, likes and dislikes often motivated partners toward certain tasks. Gender was alluded to and primary socialization (usually the same-sex parent) was frequently cited as contributing to these factors. This was especially true of money management for both genders; holiday shopping, correspondence and nurturing for women; and lawn mowing and auto maintenance for men. Conversely, primary socialization informed what individuals didn't do, or discarded, as when women expressed their desire for greater autonomy than their mothers and men valued greater involvement with their children.

Women spoke of guilt or unconscious processes driving their assumption of tasks. Women were more prone to

examining and questioning their motives toward certain tasks. One woman said:

> No, it never feels balanced. I feel I do a lot of the cleaning and ironing and stuff...it's not like he tells me to, I expect it of myself. He doesn't expect it of me. It's some internal kind of thing...I cannot go to sleep with dishes in the sink. It's my house, it means something to me. I don't know whether it's pride or something genetic or driven into me as a child or what.

A few of the women expressed a similar internal controversy, none of the men did. While the internal controversy for women was about letting go of the female typifications, men examined the addition or confounding of their gender with female tasks. Both men and women must retain an intact sense of membership in their genders.

Gender meanings appear, for these couples, to be socially constructed from the knowledge brought into the marriage (primary socialization) and reconstructed as the contingencies of economics, current social values and interactions with partners (secondary socialization) interface. Most of the couples had apparently brought transitional or egalitarian values into their marriages and most spouses held similar values; perhaps explaining the dearth of conflict reported. Gender meanings informed both primary and secondary socialization as well as the understanding of fairness and equity. Globally, the men and women in the study reflected transitional, gendered living.

Gender Awareness

Couples were not highly conversant about gender in the context of the interview. The issue of gender presented occasionally when defining their roles; usually in reference to their parents as primary socialization models. However, when asked directly, couples spoke at length about gender. Men's physical strength and women's nurturing or emotional roles were alluded to as more endemic. Men spoke of their primary earnings and their active roles in the home. One man, in an egalitarian marriage, said "I prioritized a long time ago: God, country, family and work...and that's the way it goes".

Overall, when speaking of gender, men introduced home roles as increasingly valued aspects of their gender identities. Women, too, frequently introduced their husbands' roles into the gender discussion whereas men rarely alluded specifically to their wives assumed roles. It suggested that mens' issues were more salient, or closer to awareness, for these men and women. Men appeared to be more actively under construction. The contemporary man is less normative than the contemporary woman.

There was an overriding theme of sharing, equity and balance between partners when discussing gender. For most of the couples, it was apparently most fair and balanced for the man to be senior, and the woman junior, in economic realms. For more of the couples, it appeared most fair and

balanced for the woman to be senior, and the man junior, in domestic realms. Reasons for this are speculative. It may be that men's economic advantage, and women's relative disadvantage, kept his primacy in that realm intact. This dynamic may have contributed to women's grip on the home as assuring the much valued balance of power. Hierarchy, when noted, was emphatically de-emphasized. The couples largely perceived power and choice in their role division. It was dialogue that gave them power. They did not view gender as dividing their world but as filling their world.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The implications of the findings must be tempered by the limits of the study. The participants were a homogenous group of volunteers. Their marriages were stable and enduring and their willingness to participate may have been indicative of the satisfactory resolution of the issues discussed. Conjoint interviews may have negatively influenced the degree to which they reported conflict or discrepancies between them. However, conjoint interviews exemplified the dialogue that constructs their shared meanings. The discovery process of combining meanings that defines secondary socialization was evidenced.

That the interviewer was female may have led to bias in the participants' responses. It may explain, in part, why men's home roles were stressed and applauded. Far more men expressed trepidations about being interviewed. Whether this was due to a discomfort with discussing relationship issues (with a female outsider) or due to the sensitivity of the issues is unknown. The men who were interviewed were, for the most part, very engaged in the interviews. Women were highly enthused about the

interviews.

While the researcher's gender may have unavoidably colored the analysis and interpretation of the data, as viewed through a female lens, it was not the researcher's particular intention to apply a feminist view to the findings. An attempt was made to let the participants speak through the quoted dialogues. Every attempt was made to remain agenda-free in the compilation and presentation of the data.

Implications for Theory

The findings have particular implications for the theoretical understanding of gender processes in the structuring of roles in marriage. Additionally, the variables that guided couples' allocation of tasks were remarkably congruent with equity theory fundamentals. First, the application of structural typologies (Hochschild, 1989; Scanzoni et al., 1989) to the findings will be discussed. Then, some of the basic assumptions and aspects of equity theories (Cook & Messick, 1983; Cook & Yamagishi, 1983; Keil & McClintock, 1983; Messick & Sentis, 1983; Wilke, 1983) will be summarized and applied to the findings.

Role Structure

The findings largely support existing knowledge of contemporary marriage: men continue to assume primacy over

instrumental, work roles; women continue to assume primacy over expressive, nurturing roles and home management; and, there is a great deal of overlap and sharing in the examined domains. Using Scanzoni et al.'s (1989) typology of junior/senior partnership largely captures the structure that organizes economic life for the couples in the study. However, Scanzoni et al.'s definition subordinates the home and child-rearing roles, perpetuating the measure of men and women with a masculine yardstick of economic success. If junior/senior partnership is applied to the domestic realm, the women in the study become senior partners in the home.

Hochschild (1989) recommends, for the future well-being of families, that the economic and domestic realms must be embraced and valued equally by men and women; that the importance of the domestic realm must not be minimized while men and women chase the masculine ideal of economic success. If the couples in this study were evaluated with this assumption in mind, the women in this study would appear overall as senior as a number of the womens' economic orientations and contributions equalled their husbands' and virtually all of the women held senior status in the home.

Using Hochschild's ideological designations of traditional/transitional/egalitarian, the latter couples would appear more egalitarian while the remaining couples

would mostly appear as transitional. While these terms are less value laden than Scanzoni et al.'s hierarchal typologies, "transitional" implies "temporary", moving from and toward another ideology and "egalitarian" implies equal. The couples in this study, however, reflected a stabilization based on balance, fairness and the equitable combination of their skills and preferences. While they were reluctant to acknowledge gender as an organizing principle, many of the role arrangements were consistent with transitional gender roles and consequently could not be described as egalitarian.

For the most part, the couples expressed no need for change in their arrangements; they perceived they had arrived. In actuality, they had arrived at their commitment to equity. Regardless of who did what, or how it changed, an equitable labor division was achieved. The structural typologies fail to incorporate important processes, like equity, that appear to be essential in role structuring. To better discern the processes leading to the various ways couples reported their balanced and fair distributions of roles the theoretical foundations of equity theories must be examined.

The Subjectivity of Equity and Fairness

This study provides an exemplary look at equity processes in the context of marital roles. Equity theories define the processes by which "distributive justice" is

achieved, the social forces that impact perceptions of equity and the conditions that determine fairness (Cook & Messick, 1983). It is important to note that perceptions of equity from the point of view of outside observers vary from the perceptions of equity for the principals (Cook & Yamagishi, 1983). There are objective and subjective assessments of equity.

Justice, fairness and equity, as somewhat synonymous processes, are considered by some social theorists to be the primary force in social relationships (Cook & Messick, 1983). Simplistically, perceptions of equity are based upon the assessment of the proportion of resources due, or deserved, by an individual to the relative contributions made by that individual (Keil & McClintock, 1983). Equity, then, is the satisfactory ratio of inputs and outcomes. It is assumed that fairness is determined by social rules that are bestowed by socializing agents across generations and that personal values interact with situational variables to influence fairness judgements (Keil & McClintock, 1983).

Judgements of fairness inevitably require social comparison (Cook & Messick, 1983). Comparisons can be made of the direct input/outcome ratios of self and others or they can be made with a particular, relevant social group. Comparing one's outcomes with the outcomes of others informs the measure of satisfaction with oneself (Messick & Sentis, 1983). Interdependencies influence the evaluations

of fairness; long term relationships and the probability that assessments of equity will be an ongoing concern is factored into equity evaluations.

Equity achievement is complicated by various kinds of input. Input can be comprised of "contributions" such as time and effort or as "attributes" such as age and gender (Cook & Yamagishi, 1983). The qualitative nature of attributes may result in a differential distribution of outcomes that does not necessarily relate to quantifiable measures of contributions; attributes hold different "status-values" (Cook & Yamagishi, 1983). "Comparisons of effort, suffering, or importance indicate that the establishment of fairness or equity involves interpersonal comparison of subjective quantities" (Messick & Sentis, 1983, p.69).

Citing the work of Homans, Leventhal, Walster and others, Wilke (1983) describes the "outcome coordination perspective" (p.48). This view assumes that an "equity norm" is helpful in long-term relationships for both reducing conflict and for assuring satisfactory outcomes; it provides stability, predictability and optimization. The balance of inputs and outcomes, while based upon normative expectations gleaned from early learning, must have specific relevance for the relationship (Wilke, 1983). Conflict around equity may appear when one person considers his or her contribution as relevant while the other person

does not. However, socialization contributes to consensus regarding the relevance of various inputs (Wilke, 1983).

Preferences, too, contribute to equity evaluations (Cook & Yamagishi, 1983). Cook and Yamagishi (1983) believe that fairness evaluations are rationalizations of preferences where "...one starts with what is wanted and then tries to justify that outcome as fair" (p.87). However, if fairness is important, preferences are mediated and may be reordered by what is considered to be just.

Considering the salience and complexity of equity, as espoused by equity theories, it is not surprising that the couples in this study professed equity and balance regardless of structure and the apparent ratios of inputs and outcomes. They were governed by an equity norm. The endurance of the marriages may be explained, in part, by the perceptions of equitable distributions of efforts and benefits. That equity and fairness stabilize relationships and reduce conflict is implicated by the remarkable lack of conflict reported by couples in this study. The one couple in this study that was vocal about their conflict around roles may be explained by the fact that the man had never, in his life, been appreciably subjected to domestic roles. They were the only couple where the wife had not worked early in the marriage, before the advent of children. Perhaps it was the "status value" of his gender, learned from primary socialization and maintained early in the

marriage, that made it more difficult for him to assume home roles. Another explanation, from equity principles, could be that domestic chores lacked relevance in his eyes.

Just as individual talents and preferences are the culmination of primary socialization combined with secondary socialization, so, too, are evaluations of equity and fairness. Cultural norms impact the skills and preferences imparted through socialization as well as the beliefs regarding the fair and just distribution of inputs and outcomes between men and women.

While cultures are ever in transition, it remains the norm in this culture for men to be advantaged in economic pursuits. Men often provide the greater input of financial resources into a marriage. That the men in the study held fast to their employment, while women showed more fluctuation, was perceived as efficient, balanced and fair (for survival) in current society. Preference may have played a part in this while the influence of differential pay and opportunity for women, too, could explain this "norm". Women may prefer to not devalue their home roles by exchanging them for inferior wages. If women appeared to do more in the home than the discrepancies between their and their husbands' incomes and other contributions could explain, it could have been due to the "status-value" of his gender and/or preferences of the couples.

The attributive nature of gender as an input variable was evidenced in this study. Gender status may have rendered the contributions made in the home by men as more "valuable" than if done by the woman. So, when one husband in this study brought home the greater share of income and also spent a few evenings with the children while his wife worked, his contribution in the home earned him a seemingly disproportionate share of leisure time. His efforts in the home may have held a relatively higher premium compared to her efforts in the home. In other words, traditional "woman's work" performed by a man may have greater exchange value than when the woman performs it. Perhaps his overtime was worth more than hers. Perhaps his superior earnings and his greater amount of time expended in paid labor upped the premium on his home time. However, preferences, too, may need to be integrated into this evaluation as his was the wife who could not stop herself from sometimes paying needless, blind attention to the house.

A number of women expressed a preference for working less outside the home so they could devote more effort inside the home. This may explain how women who were especially home-centered justified their greater share of home roles even when making substantial financial contributions. They preferred to be home and managed to incorporate their preference into the equity equation. A

good example, in this study, is the woman whose traditional ideology conflicted with her husband's transitional ideology. In order to "earn" her preference, to quit working and stay home with their young daughter, she had to assume 95% of the home share (in addition to keeping the books for his business). She perceived the outcome as fair; she bargained to gain her "expensive" preference.

The automatic and stable assumption of preferred tasks was often considered as fair by virtue of the preference. Consequently, the greater and disproportionate assumption of home roles by the husbands in this study who preferred them was perceived as fair even though the husbands' and wives' financial inputs were roughly equivalent. One wife, however, preferred to cook dinner and it added to the accounting of fairness. Another wife explained that, although it made her look like she did nothing around the house, her husband preferred to do most of the cleaning.

That equity is mediated by social comparison was also evidenced in this study. Many of the couples looked to other couples with whom they were acquainted for measure and others scrutinized themselves against prevailing norms. All the couples who made their comparisons explicit concluded their own arrangements were fair, or better.

It was perceived inequity that demanded a redistribution of the home share. As the mens' economic provision, or share, remained fairly constant, it was the

womens' task, as managers and executors of the home share, to monitor the equity and balance of home roles. Women were the comptrollers of home roles. As women's employment varied, so did the equitable balance of role division in the home. As children increased the home share, home roles were redefined in the quest for equity. Interestingly, preferred tasks often remained intact when the balance of home roles was redistributed.

The combined, subjective values of attributive inputs, quantifiable inputs, preferences and relevance lead to the unique configurations of fair and balanced distributions of work and benefits for the couples in the study. A model of marital roles that takes into account the "equity norm" would provide greater understanding of the satisfactory and unsatisfactory resolution of role demands in contemporary marriages. Gender, as a salient and differential attribute in equity equations, should be explored further.

Implications for Couples Therapy

Social construction theory holds that gender meanings are derived from interaction and interaction is discerned through conversation (Hoffman, 1990). To understand the role of gender in mens' and womens' relationships, their ever-changing dialogue must be the measure of their realities. The reality embedded in couples' conversations

are "...bestowed by mutual consent" (Hoffman, 1990, p.4). Hoffman (1990) advocates for gender therapy that is "gender sensitive" rather than "feminist", allowing for a "...balanced cultural repertoire for both genders" (p.4). While a feminist lens that advocates for women has contributed to raising the consciousness of therapists, Hoffman believes a gender sensitive stance frees the therapist from value-laden perceptions of problems and insures an ethic of justice. Hoffman (1990) has broadened her view of systemic therapy to include social construction and gender, employing subjective experience and equity in consideration. What she calls the "postmodern" therapist approaches a family without preconceived notions or objective standards of health or ill health, function or dysfunction, of what should change. The family co-constructs those realities and therapy becomes a collaborative reconstruction.

Sheinberg and Penn (1991) concur with the conceptualization of gender as a social construction. While the couples in this study appear to represent, for the most part, gender comfort, people seeking therapy may experience conflict around their gender expectations and realities. Sheinberg and Penn call this "gender failure". Gender failure grows out of the comparisons people make, as was evidenced in this study, between their own realities and the social yardsticks, or stereotypes, perceived from

primary and secondary socialization.

Sheinberg and Penn (1991) propose a therapy that examines and questions the origins of the constructed notions of gender. Utilizing "gender questions", therapists can tease out the assumptions and beliefs people hold and explore how they constrain behaviors. Discovering how beliefs came to be constructed undermines the intractable nature of gender meanings, opening space for the reconstruction of gender and future meanings.

Social construction provides a therapeutic lens that honors the subjective experience and eschews the objective standards of gender. A value-free stance can serve to engage both men and women in conjoint therapy, making room for both their individual and shared realities and providing the foundation for reconstruction.

Implications for Future Research

This study examined home-related work roles globally. Any one of the examined domains- care of home and children, financial management, leisure and relationship, provides a micro-view of gender relations in marriage and could be investigated in greater depth. The relative differences found in this study in each domain warrants further inquiry. Does greater power in one domain assure lesser power in another domain to achieve equity? How do men and women perceive the "relevance" of the domains? What are

the relative weights of role expectations, skills and preferences in determining role division in each domain?

While this study looked at stable, enduring marriages, how would distressed or younger marriages organize around gender and/or equity? How does the developmental stage of the marriage reveal different processes? How do gender and equity interact?

That the men and women in this study had differing notions of the prevailing norms stimulates questions. Are men and women calling on primary socialization for comparison or secondary socialization? Are men adhering to a more traditional norm than women when comparing themselves, as was implied in this study? How do norms differ between domains and how are they changing, or not? Which of the socialization processes have greater impact upon ideologies? What are the relative impacts of education and social class on these expectations? The samples need to be expanded to better understand the variables that confound gender norms.

Future gender research should focus on interaction as the fabric of gender construction. Dialogue and shared meanings best reveal the change processes. More qualitative investigations of gender meanings are needed that are not confined to dyadic discourse between men and women. How do men talk to men, and women to women, about gender meanings? How do parents impart gender knowledge?

What is the influence of siblings?

Finally, how do macro-social processes interact with micro-social processes to impede or facilitate the reconstruction of gender norms and, in what way?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Household Tasks

1. How do you divide the household labor between you?

Probes: Who does what on a daily basis?
How do you decide what is done by whom?
What kinds of things go into those decisions?
Is it always the same?
What circumstances lead to a change of tasks?
How has it changed over the course of your marriage?
What happened to make it change?
How do you bring about a change?

2. How do you handle child-care duties?

Probes: Feeding, bathing, dressing, rides, doctor visits, school conferences, homework, discipline, recreation, emotional needs?
Who delegates jobs to children?
How did you decide?

3. Are there any jobs that are exclusively yours? How was that decided?

4. How was household labor handled in the families you grew up in?

5. What were your expectations when you first married?

Probes: How well have they been met?
How have they changed?
What contributed to changes?
What are your expectations now?

6. How is the way you divide labor working for you? What would you change?

Finances and Decision-making

1. How do you handle decisions between you?

Probes: Day-to-day decisions?

Big decisions that impact the whole family?
The last time there was a job change or a move, how was the decision made?
What was considered?

2. How do you handle finances between you?

Probes: Separate or joint account?
Who pays the bills?
Who manages the daily outflow?
How did you decide who does what?
What about big purchases? How is that decided?

3. What does power mean to you in the context of your relationship?

Probes: How do you share power between you?
What do you see as your relative sphere of influence?

Leisure and Relationship

1. How do you spend your free time on a weekly basis?

Probes: How do you decide what to do?

2. How do you plan social activities?

Probes: Do you consult? Who decides?
What happens when there's a conflict?
What was your last social engagement? How was that decided?

3. How do you take care of extended family relationships?

Probes: Who buys gifts for who around holidays?
Who writes the Christmas cards?
How do you decide?

4. When was the last time you went out alone together?

Probes: How was that decided? Was that typical?

5. How do you show caring to each other?

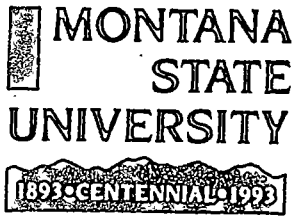
Probes: The last time you did something to show caring to your spouse, what was it?
The last time your spouse showed you caring, how was it shown?
Given all that you do, how do you take care of the relationship?

6. What does it mean to be the woman/man in this family? (Asked of 11 couples)

Probe: How would you describe your gender in the context of the relationship?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM



Department of Health and Human Development

Herrick Hall
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana 59717

Telephone 406-994-3241

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM
FOR
PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

COUPLE INTERACTION STUDY

You are being asked to participate in a study of couple interaction. The purpose of this study is to better understand how working couples organize their lives. The results of the study will be reported in the Master's Thesis of the researcher with the intended purpose of providing insight into contemporary, long-term marriages and cohabitations.

You are asked to participate with your partner in a audio-taped interview, conducted by the researcher, in your home (unless otherwise requested). You will be asked to describe how you organize various tasks, decision-making and leisure in your marriage. The audio-tape will be transcribed and reviewed to gain insight into your interaction around the content areas.

The audio-tapes will be reviewed only by this researcher and possibly one faculty member, the researcher's Thesis Committee Chair, Dr. Carmen Knudson-Martin. They will be kept as confidential as possible. No information identifying participants will be disclosed. At the conclusion of this study the audio-tapes will be retained for their value in applying future research questions. Identifying information will be removed from the tapes and prolonged confidentiality is assured.

If you have any questions or need to talk about your experience in this study please contact the researcher, B.J. Stelmack, at 586-8904 or Dr. Carmen Knudson-Martin at 994-3299.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and I am a willing participant in the Couple Interaction Study. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Address:_____

Investigator:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS FORM



Department of Health and Human Development

Herrick Hall
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana 59717

Telephone 406-994-3241

COUPLE INTERACTION STUDY

Personal Data Form

Names: _____

1. The adults in this relationship are:
   ____ Married, 1st marriage for both
   ____ Remarried, at least one partner previously married
   ____ Never married, living together
   ____ Living together, at least one partner previously married

2. Length of marriage or cohabitation, ____ years.

3. Number of children living at home: _____
   Age ranges of children: _____

Please answer the following individually:

		HIS	HERS
4. My age is:	25-35	_____	_____
	36-45	_____	_____
	46-55	_____	_____
5. Occupation:		_____	_____
6. Outside the home, I am employed:	Full-time	_____	_____
	Part-time	_____	_____
	Hours per week	_____	_____

7. My annual income is:	HIS	HERS
Less than $5,000	_____	_____
$5,000 - $10,000	_____	_____
$10,001 - $15,000	_____	_____
$15,001 - $20,000	_____	_____
$20,001 - $30,000	_____	_____
$30,001 - $40,000	_____	_____
More than $40,000	_____	_____

8. Number of years, since married or together, employed (approx.):	_____	_____

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